OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (Post Completion OPT)

OPT WORKSHOPS: It is strongly recommended that you attend an OPT Workshop BEFORE filing your OPT application. All OPT Advising will take place at OPT Workshops.

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) provides the possibility for you to work in the United States, for **12 months**, in your field of study (as indicated on your I-20). F-1 students in a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree program are eligible to apply for OPT in the following situations:

1. full-time after completion of all course requirements for the degree (excluding thesis or the equivalent);
2. full-time after completion of all degree requirements (including coursework and thesis or the equivalent)

A student is eligible for a maximum of 12 months full-time Post Completion OPT per degree level. A student who completes an approved period of OPT and then returns to school to complete a degree program at a higher level would be eligible for another period of OPT.

Your application for OPT must **first** be recommended by an advisor in CIE and then submitted to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for processing. You may submit your OPT application as early as **90 days prior to your anticipated degree completion and up to 60 days after the program end-date**, provided that it is filed within 30 days of the date the DSO enters the OPT recommendation into SEVIS system.

ELIGIBILITY

You must meet the following criteria in order to be eligible to apply for OPT:

- **Be in valid F-1 status**
- **Enrolled full-time.** Minimum 12 units for undergraduate or 8 units for graduate students. You are also eligible to apply for OPT if you have approved Reduced Course Load (RCL).
- **Fulfilled one year full-time requirement.** You must have been enrolled full-time for at least one full academic year prior to submitting an OPT application.
- **Be in good academic standing.** Defined as a minimum G.P.A. of 2.0 (Undergraduate students) or 3.0 (Graduate students).
- You are physically maintaining F1 status and attending classes in the U.S.
- You have not completed more than 364 days of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT).
- You have not already been approved for 12 months of Post-Completion OPT at the current degree level.
- Job offer is not required.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

In order to apply for OPT; you will need to follow the procedures below:

1. Attend an OPT Workshop via Zoom or review the OPT workshop online version.

2. Complete the OPT Request Form. (Pages 6-7) You should complete Student Information Section and have your academic advisor(s) complete the attached Academic Information Section if you are enrolled full time for your last semester.
   - Graduate students: your academic advisor and your project/thesis advisor
   - Undergraduate students: (1) your major department advisor and (2) a General education advisor (Sam Tran in AACE. Please call email Sam.Tran@csueastbay.edu)
   - At this time, we will accept emails from your academic department in lieu of signatures on the form.
   - If you have an approved RCL form, you do not need advisor's signatures.

3. Email your completed OPT Request Form (and any emails from your academic departments) to cie@csueastbay.edu for processing. CIE advisors will process your request and send your OPT Request I-20 via email.

4. Once you receive your OPT Request I-20, you will need to print and **SIGN and Date** page 1. You are not permitted to use electronic signatures on your I-20.

5. Begin your application online with USCIS. Follow the instructions carefully. Details of each step are located in the OPT Workshop. Once you pay for your application, you are not eligible to edit or change any of the submitted answers.
   a. You must attach your OPT Request I-20 to your USCIS application before you pay!

THEN WHAT?

Receipt Notice:
Your Receipt Notice will be available immediately on your USCIS account under "My Documents".

Processing Time:
USCIS generally processes applications within 90 days but based on the time of year and how busy they are, the "standard" length of time required for processing is subject to change. Processing times can range from 2-4 months.

Approval Notice:
USCIS will mail your official Approval Notice to the address indicated on your I-765. This notice does not permit you to work but please keep it for your records.

EAD
Your EAD will be produced and mailed to you separately from the Approval Notice. You generally will receive the EAD about 2 weeks after the Approval Notice. Your EAD is required to be in your hands before you can start working.

- Please take a picture of your EAD and email it to CIE.

SEVP Portal
You will receive an email from SEVP containing a link to create your SEVP Portal account. You must use this link within 14 days to create your account. Even if you don't have employment to report at that time, please create your account to active it.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

- **How do I choose my post-completion OPT dates?**
  The start date of your OPT period can be any date in the 60 day period following your completion of studies date. The latest OPT end date can be 12 months after the requested start date.

- **How can I check the status of my pending application?**
  Visit the following USCIS website: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do

- **I did an Internship last term and was authorized for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for 5 months. Does this mean that I only have 8 months of OPT available to me?**
  No. Curricular Practical Training is a separate category of employment authorization, and does not count towards your 12 months of OPT. HOWEVER, if you do 12 months of Full-time CPT, you lose your eligibility for Optional Practical Training. Anything less than 12 months full-time CPT will NOT deduct from your OPT.

- **If I apply for OPT early (during the 90 days before completing my program), does that mean I will be able to start working before I complete my degree program?**
  The authorized dates of employment will be listed on your Employment Authorization Document (EAD). You cannot start working before the start date on your EAD. The start date is either the start date you requested or the date USCIS approves your application, whichever is LATER.

- **I applied for OPT, but it hasn't been approved yet. I've finished all my degree requirements– can I start working? Can I do an Internship?**
  No. Once you have completed your degree requirements, you are no longer eligible for ANY type of employment authorization, except for optional practical training. Therefore, you are not eligible for curricular practical training or on-campus employment, and your company cannot legally have you begin employment until the start date on your Employment Authorization Document.

- **I am finishing my courses this semester, but didn't apply for graduation on time. Does this mean I should apply for OPT during the NEXT semester?**
  No. USCIS is not concerned about the date that your degree is officially posted (i.e. the semester that you file for graduation). Your status as an F-1 student is based on the date that you actually complete the requirements for your degree. This date is your "completion of studies date." Therefore, if you are completing your courses and all other degree requirements this semester, your application for OPT must be received no later than **60 days after the end of this semester.**

- **I'd like to take a trip home before beginning my OPT, is that possible?**
  If you leave the U.S. after you complete your program and you have not applied for Optional Practical Training, you are no longer entitled to OPT. If you have completed your degree program, and would like to travel and re-enter the U.S., please contact an international student advisor to discuss your plans. CIE recommends that you do not travel and re-enter the US unless you have both OPT approval and an offer of employment. Once you have received your EAD, you will need the following documents to return to the U.S.:
    - Valid passport
    - Valid F-1 visa stamp
    - Original I-20 with travel endorsement not older than one month.

- Employment authorization document (EAD or OPT card)
- Verification of employment (job offer letter) *Please note: the F-1 regulations allow for re-entry during OPT in order 'to resume employment', so you should be prepared to document your employment, or at least your efforts to gain employment.*

Note: If you are absent from the U.S. for 5 consecutive months or longer, your current immigration status is considered 'abandoned'. In other words, you may not be allowed re-entry to the U.S., even if you present a valid OPT authorization, visa, and I-20.

- **If I complete another degree program after OPT, do I get another 12 months of OPT?**
  Yes, you may be authorized 12 months of optional practical training, and become eligible for another 12 months of optional practical training when you change to a *higher educational level*. (i.e. completing a master's degree after a bachelor's)

- **Once I receive my EAD card, do I have to start working right away?**
  No, however, you cannot be unemployed for more than 90 days during the approved 12 months OPT period.

- **I received my EAD and the card mentions that it is "not valid for re-entry to the U.S." What does this mean?**
  It means that you are not able to re-enter the U.S. JUST by showing the EAD. You also need to show an endorsed I-20 with OPT approval, a valid passport, and a valid F-1 visa stamp.

- **Can I change jobs during OPT?**
  Yes. Provided you report any change of name and address of employer or interruption of such employment to your SEVP Portal within 10 days of the change.

- **Can I begin a new program of studies and use my OPT at the same time?**
  No, F-1 regulations state that "authorization to engage in practical training employment is automatically terminated when the student transfer to another school or begins study at another educational level."

CAL STATE EAST BAY | INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

Optional Practical Training (Post Completion) Request Form

STUDENT INFORMATION (THIS SECTION MUST BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT)

Last Name: First Name:

NETID: Phone: Personal Email:

Current Address:

SEVIS # Degree Completion: **Semester:** **Year:**

Student's Major: Degree Level: ☐ **Bachelor's** ☐ **Master's** ☐ **Doctorate**

Requested OPT Period **Start date must be within 60 days after course completion date

Start Date: ____/____/_____ **End date: ____/____/____** (mm/dd/yyyy) *1 day less a year after start date (365 days)

Student Signature: **Date:**

ACADEMIC INFORMATION (MUST BE COMPLETED BY YOUR FACULTY/ACADEMIC ADVISORS)

Undergraduate/Bachelor's Students Academic Verification

Section 1: To be completed by academic advisor - for major and GE requirements

When is student expected to complete all major coursework: **Semester:** **Year:**

Advisor's Name: **Advisor's Signature:** **Date:**

Graduate/Master's/Doctorate Student Academic Verification

Section 1: To be completed by graduate/department advisor

When is student expected to complete all major coursework: **Semester:** **Year:**

Advisor's Name: **Advisor's Signature:** **Date:**

Section 2: To be completed by Project/Thesis/Capstone advisor

I verify that the student is currently making progress towards the completion of their project/thesis/capstone.

Student enrolled in project/thesis/capstone: **Semester:** **Year:**

Student is expected to complete project/thesis/capstone: **Semester:** **Year:**

Advisor's Name: **Advisor's Signature:** **Date:**

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APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Please review the requirements and responsibilities below:
● I cannot work on campus beyond my program completion date, usually the last day of finals of your final term
● I cannot start working until I receive the EAD and the start date indicated on my EAD has been met
● I am only allowed to work in my field of study only during the dates specified on the EAD
● I ensure the information provided on my OPT application is accurate
● My passport must remain valid during my OPT period
● I must maintain health insurance coverage for myself and dependent(s) during my OPT
● My OPT will be automatically terminated if I transfer to another school or start a new degree program
● I cannot be unemployed for more than a total of 90 days during my entire 12 month OPT period, including periods between jobs.
● It is my responsibility to report my employment via the SEVP Portal (www.sevp.ice.gov/opt)
● I must report any changes to the following information within 10 days: ○ U.S. Address and phone number: Update your SEVP Portal Account and your MyCSUEB account ○ Changes to your employment information and report loss of employment: Update your SEVP Portal
● I will email CIE (cie@csueastbay.edu) a copy of my EAD upon receiving it
● It is my responsibility to obtain a travel signature from CIE if I am going to travel outside the US while I am on OPT. A travel endorsement is only valid for 6 months. I must have a valid F-1 visa, valid passport, EAD card and a job offer in order to re-enter the US
● I understand that I am eligible to apply for OPT STEM, my application must be received by USCIS BEFORE my Post Completion OPT EAD expires
● I understand that I should inform CIE immediately upon receiving any notices from USCIS such as Rejection Notice, Request for Evidence (RFE), Notice of Intent to Deny, or Denial Notice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND SIGNATURE	
I have read and now understand the above requirements. It is my responsibility to abide by the regulations governing OPT and to maintain F-1 status. Failure to abide by the requirements is failure to maintain my F-1 status and my result in termination of my SEVIS record and thus my ability to work. In addition, failure to abide by the requirements may could potentially affect any future immigration benefit applications filed with USCIS such as H-1B or Permanent Residency. CIE is able to provide you with general guidance. However, any advice provided to you by our office, as well as the information in this packet, should not be construed as legal advice. Additionally, due to the fluid nature of governmental interpretation, the USCIS may change its interpretation of these immigration laws/regulations and eligibility requirements for benefits, at any time. We will do our best to provide you with the most current guidance. Each case is fact-specific and it is advised that you contact an experienced immigration attorney if you have questions regarding your situation.	
Student Name:	NETID:
Student Signature:	DATE:

OPT REQUEST I-20

Your OPT I-20 will be electronically signed by our office and emailed to you. Electronic signatures on I-20's by DSO's are currently valid per SEVP Guidance. You will be required to print your I-20, sign and date your I-20 with an ink pen and submit a copy of the signed I-20.