Optional Practical Training

What you need to know!
Agenda

• Optional Practical Training (OPT)
• Application process & timeline
• OPT STEM Extension
• OPT Reminders
What is OPT?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F-1 work authorization</th>
<th>Usually used after graduation</th>
<th>12 months per degree level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid or Unpaid</td>
<td>Full-Time or Part-Time</td>
<td>Work must be related to degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work anywhere in the U.S.</td>
<td>Do not need a job to apply</td>
<td>Multiple jobs</td>
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Who is Eligible?

F-1 Status for 2 semesters before graduating

Inside the U.S.

Did not use 12 months of Full-Time CPT
OPT Application Process

1. Attend an OPT Session
2. Submit your OPT I-20 Request in iStart
3. Appointment with an ISSP advisor/obtain OPT I-20
4. Apply for OPT online
OPT Application Timeline

Earliest that you can apply for OPT: October 23, 2023

Degree Conferral/I-20 completion date*: January 19, 2024

Earliest OPT start date: January 20, 2024

Latest OPT start date: March 19, 2024

App must be submitted by this date*: 60 day grace period
OPT Application Timeline

- OPT is approved by USCIS
- EAD card is created & mailed (2 weeks after OPT approval)
- SSN arrives (if applied) (2 weeks after OPT approval)

Timeline:
- 2.5 - 3.5 Months
- 1 week after OPT approval
How Long Can I Work?

Can only start working after receiving EAD card and reaching the OPT start date

- Depart the U.S.
- Transfer SEVIS record
- Initiate change of visa status

OPT End Date

EAD Card Start date

End of 60 day grace period

OPT ends with the end date listed on the EAD card

OPT Start and End dates:
Earliest Start/End date: January 20, 2024 – January 19, 2025

Latest Start/End date: March 19, 2024 – March 18, 2025
Preparing OPT Application

OPT Packet (OPT checklist/tips)

- List of required documents
- Instructions on applying for OPT online and paying application fee ($410)
  - Proposed fee increases for OPT Applications up to $200 (decision not finalized)

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Optional Practical Training Application Checklist

OPT is a work authorization granted to F-1 students for employment in their field of study (their major). Most students use it for post-graduation employment.

Learn About OPT

- Attend an OPT Session for the current semester, or watch a session recording.
- Schedule an appointment with an ISSP advisor (optional). Ask application questions during your appointment.

Prepare Your Documents

To make the process of submitting your online application easy, please have the electronic files for these documents ready before you begin.

Acceptable file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF or TIFF.

- OPT I-20. Request this in iStart, using the OPT I-20 Request form. Your OPT dates will be listed on page 2 of your I-20. Print, sign and scan your OPT I-20. Your OPT application will be denied without this!
- I-94 record ("Get Most Recent I-94"). If you last traveled to the US by land, this will be in your passport instead, and you should scan a copy front and back, even if blank. You do not need to upload your travel history.
- Copy of passport identity page(s) showing your biographical info and expiration, valid 6 months in future.
- Copy of 1 color passport style photo, sized 2 inches by 2 inches. Review photo requirements.
ISSP OPT Request Form

F-1 Practical Training

Tasks

- OPT I-20 Request
- CPT-Curricular Practical Training
- OPT STEM Extension I-20 Request
- OPT Employment Update
- OPT STEM Updates and Evaluations
REMARKS
CVT recommended for employment in the field of study.

SCHOOL ATTESTATION
I certify under penalty of perjury that all information provided above was entered before I signed this form and is true and correct. I executed this form in the United States after review and evaluation in the United States by me or other officials of the school of the student's application, transcripts, or other records of courses taken and proof of financial responsibility, which were received at the school prior to the execution of this form. The school has determined that the above named student's qualifications meet all standards for admission to the school and the student will be required to pursue a full program of study as defined by 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6). I am a designated school official of the above named school and am authorized to issue this form.

X DATE ISSUED

SIGNATURE OF:

STUDENT ATTESTATION
I have read and agreed to comply with the terms and conditions of my admission and those of any extension of stay. I certify that all information provided on this form refers specifically to me and is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I certify that I seek to enter or remain in the United States temporarily, and solely for the purpose of pursuing a full program of study at the school named above. I also authorize the named school to release any information from my records needed by DHS pursuant to 8 CFR 214.3(g) to determine my nonimmigrant status. Parent or guardian, and student, must sign if student is under 18.

X SIGNATURE OF:

NAME OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN SIGNATURE ADDRESS (city/state or province/country) DATE

SEVIS ID: ____________________ (F-1) NAME:

EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATIONS
TYPE POST-COMPLETION OPT FULL/PART-TIME STATUS START DATE END DATE

CHANGE OF STATUS/CAP-GAP EXTENSION

AUTHORIZED REDUCED COURSE LOAD

CURRENT SESSION DATES
CURRENT SESSION START DATE CURRENT SESSION END DATE

TRAVEL ENDORSEMENT
This page, when properly endorsed, may be used for re-entry of the student to attend the same school after a temporary absence from the United States. Each endorsement is valid for one year.

Designated School Official TITLE SIGNATURE DATE ISSUED PLACE ISSUED
OPT Appointment with ISSP

- OPT Appointment is **optional**
- Schedule appointment **online**
- Review **OPT Packet** & online application before your appointment
- Ask questions!
Online Application Tips

1. Do not start until you have an OPT I-20
2. Check materials carefully
3. Application receipt notice
4. Check USCIS account for online notifications
Common Reasons for Denials

1. Not including an OPT I-20 in the application
2. Applying more than 30 days after ISSP issued OPT I-20
3. Using a credit/debit card that doesn’t work or an international credit/debit card
4. Not enough money in bank account

ISSP is here to help, but what you submit is ultimately your responsibility
OPT STEM Extension

- Adds 24 months to current OPT
- Certain STEM majors only
- Apply while working on OPT
- Previously earned STEM degree
What you need to know while working on OPT

OPT REMINDERS
Unemployment Limits

• Cannot have more than 90 days of unemployment while on OPT

• What counts as employment on OPT?
  o Working at least 20 hours/week and related to degree
  o Volunteering
  o Unpaid internships
  o Multiple employers
  o Employment agency

*See ISSP website for more info
Unemployment Limits

- Exceeding 90 days of unemployment
  - Denied visa
  - Denied re-entry to U.S.
  - Auto-termination of SEVIS record
  - Denied later immigration benefits
Reporting Requirements

- Address/Phone Change
- Changes in Current Employment
- Relationship between Work & Degree
- New Employer

*See ISSP website for more info*
Travel on OPT

Documents to Re-enter the U.S.

- Unexpired Passport
- Travel Signature Signed within last 6 months
- Unexpired F-1 Visa
- EAD/OPT Card
Immigration Scams

*See ISSP website for more info

**Warning Signs**

1. Government officials will never call you directly regarding your immigration status.

2. Scammers will use intimidation tactics or threats.

3. Government agencies will never ask you to transfer money via phone or email.
Final Reminders

- Apply for OPT once
- Save a copy of your application
- Monitor status of your application on Case Status Online
- SSN will arrive 2 weeks after EAD card
- Keep EAD card for your records
Resources

• Optional Practical Training (OPT)

• OPT Packet (OPT checklist/tips)

• STEM OPT Extension

• OPT & Unemployment