F-1 students wishing to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) should read this guide and follow the instructions carefully. This guide will explain eligibility for OPT and what procedures need to be followed to apply for and obtain OPT.

If you have questions or concerns after reviewing this packet, please call the Office of International Services (OIS) at 210-567-6241 to schedule an appointment with an International Services Representative. An appointment is not necessary if you do not have questions but would like to submit your application.

**WHAT IS OPT?**

Optional Practical Training is defined as “temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major area of study.” It allows for work authorization granted by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for up to 12 months per degree level, for the purpose of gaining practical experience directly related to their program of study. An F-1 student who has maintained lawful F-1 visa status for at least one academic year is eligible to apply for OPT. OPT may be granted before or after completion of a program of study; however, limitations apply.

**HOW LONG IS OPT WORK AUTHORIZATION?**

The maximum amount of time for which OPT may be granted is 12 months full-time per degree level. This means if you have previously completed a Bachelor’s degree and used 12 months of OPT and subsequently complete a Master’s degree, you may apply for another 12 months of OPT. If you completed two Master’s degrees you will only receive one 12-month period of OPT. Part-time pre-completion OPT is deducted from the total OPT period at half rate. For example, if you work part-time using pre-completion OPT for 6 months, you will have used 3 months of your total available OPT work authorization.

**WHEN SHOULD AN F-1 STUDENT APPLY FOR POST-COMPLETION OPT?**

Students applying for post-completion OPT may apply for and submit their OPT applications to USCIS as early as 90 days before the program end date indicated on the I-20 form and NO LATER THAN 60 days after the program end date. OPT applications must be received by USCIS no later than 60 days from this I-20 end date. Late applications will be rejected by USCIS. Also, USCIS must receive your application for post-completion OPT within 30 days of the post-completion OPT recommendation issued by your OIS International Services Representative on your I-20 form. The USCIS may grant a later start date for OPT than you originally requested depending upon the timing of the processing of the application.

**WHEN IS MY PROGRAM END DATE?**

Your program end date can be:

- Thesis/dissertation defense date
- Official end date of the semester in which you will complete your degree requirements (whether it be course requirements or thesis/dissertation)

There is some flexibility in determining your program end date depending on the type of program in which you are completing. If you have additional questions about this, please contact your International Services Representative.
HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE FOR MY OPT REQUEST TO BE APPROVED?

OIS requires 5-7 business days to process your I-20 form recommending OPT. USCIS takes approximately 90+ days to approve your OPT and mail you an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card. If your Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, has been pending more than 75 days, you may contact the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at 1-800-375-5283 and ask that they create a service request. The NCSC will route the service request to the appropriate office for review. Please have your receipt number ready when contacting the NCSC.

You cannot begin working until your OPT is approved and you have your EAD in hand. In addition, you cannot continue any on-campus employment after the program end date indicated on your I-20 form. Therefore, applying for OPT requires careful planning on the student’s part.

WORKSHOP/ADVISING SESSION REQUIREMENT

All F-1 students must attend an OPT Workshop led by OIS International Services Representative before they may apply for OPT. These workshops are held each semester and detailed information, including dates, times and RSVP information, is sent out to all students’ university e-mail. If you are unable to attend an OPT Workshop, you must schedule an advising appointment with your International Services Representative. OPT applications will not be processed by OIS until this requirement has been met.

If any of these situations occur, please consult immediately with your International Services Representative.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

If needed, students can apply for a Social Security Number as of the start date on the EAD. Please keep this in mind when determining your requested OPT start date. For more information, please visit Social Security Administration information sheet.

DOCUMENTS NEED TO BE SUBMITTED TO OIS (TO REQUEST I-20 FORM WITH OPT RECOMMENDATION)

☐ OPT Recommendation Form completed and signed by your Academic Unit
☐ Form I-765 Form: completed and signed by the student.
☐ Form G-1145 Form: to receive E-notification of Application/Petition Acceptance, please submit this form.
☐ Photos: two identical passport-style photographs that meet USCIS specifications. (You must write your I-94 Number in pencil on the back of your photos)
☐ Immigration documents: Please submit copies of passport, F-1 visa stamp, *I-797C Approval Notice, and most recent I-94 record, all I-20 forms that have been issued to you, including previous schools attended and OPT I-20s.
☐ Application Fee: Check or money order in the amount of $410 made payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
☐ Employment Authorization Documents (EAD): Submit any previous work authorization cards you may have ever been issued by USCIS.

*I-797C only for students who did change of status in the United States.
DOCUMENTS THAT STUDENT NEEDS TO SUBMIT TO USCIS (FOR OPT EAD CARD REQUEST)

☐ Form I-765 Form: completed and signed by the student.
☐ Updated I-20 Form: Copy I-20 form with OPT recommendation issued by OIS Representative within 30 days and signed by student.
☐ Form G-1145 Form: to receive E-notification of Application/Petition Acceptance, please submit this form.
☐ Photos: two passport-style photographs that meet USCIS specifications. (You must write your I-94 Number in pencil on the back of your photos.)
☐ Immigration documents: Please submit copies of the following documents:
  - Copy of the newest passport biographical page;
  - Copy of F-1 visa stamp or *I-797C Receipt Notice. (*Only for students who did change of status in the U.S.)
  - Copy of the most recent I-94 Form. If you have an electronic I-94 record, please print and provide to us.
  - Copy of all I-20 forms that have been issued to you, including previous schools attended.
  - Copy of your current unexpired EAD card. (front and back)
  - Copy of any previous EADs you may have ever been issued by USCIS.
☐ Application Fee: Check or money order in the amount of $410 made payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

OPT MAILING INSTRUCTIONS

Students must submit the complete OPT application packet to the correct USCIS Lockbox Facility for processing and adjudication. OIS will not submit the OPT application packet to USCIS for you. Where to mail the application to depends on the mailing address you indicate in Item 3 of the Form I-765. Use the USCIS address below that corresponds with the state of your mailing address (as indicated on Item 3 of the form I-765). Please note that separate addresses are used for delivery by express mail and courier services such as UPS, FedEx, and DHL. All deliveries by U.S. Mail, including Priority, Express or other accelerated mail services provided by the U.S. Postal Service, must be addressed to the U.S. Postal Service address.

OIS advises all students to always check the USCIS website for the most up-to-date filing addresses and other filing updates for the Form I-765:

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<tr>
<th>USCIS Phoenix and Dallas Lockbox facilities</th>
<th>Mail your application to:</th>
<th>For Express mail and courier deliveries:</th>
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<td></td>
<td>USCIS PO Box 21281</td>
<td>Attn: AOS</td>
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<td>Phoenix, AZ 85036</td>
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USCIS Phoenix and Dallas Lockbox facilities

| Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, or West Virginia | USCIS Dallas Lockbox  
For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries:  
USCIS  
PO Box 660867  
Dallas, TX 75266 | For Express mail and courier deliveries:  
USCIS  
Attn: AOS  
2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business Suite 400  
Lewisville, TX 75067 |

Note: USCIS processing time for OPT applications is approximately 90+ days.

Once your OPT request has been approved by USCIS, you will be receiving an email to establish an account in the new SEVP Portal. This has many resources readily available for you to review and they also provide videos. Once you have created your Portal account, you will have access to update your address, phone number, and employment information.