

Optional Practical Training for Students on F-1 Visas

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is permission for off-campus employment directly related to a student's major field of study, granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). OPT enables students to gain work experience in their field of study. 12 months of OPT is available per degree level for students of any major as long as the subsequent degree is at a higher educational level. OPT may be used before or after completion of a program. Students with certain majors in science, technology, engineering or math may be eligible for a 24 month extension of post-completion OPT. International Student Services (ISS) must recommend OPT for a student. USCIS then provides final approval and issues an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Individuals must have an EAD before they can begin OPT employment. **OPT authorization granted by USCIS cannot be changed, voided, or canceled.**

Eligibility Requirements:

- Completed one full academic year of full-time study
- Maintained Valid F-1 status
- Employment must be in the student's major field of study
- Have not been authorized for 12 months or more full time CPT (Curricular Practical Training) at the educational level for which the student will apply for OPT
- Have not regained legal status through reentry during the previous academic year
- Have passed the OPT quiz administered by ISS

NOTE: You lose your OPT eligibility if you depart the U.S. during your grace period following the completion of your degree and USCIS has not received your OPT application prior to your departure.

OPT Categories

1. *Pre-completion*
 - a. Academic Year
During fall and/or spring semesters and student has not completed required coursework. On- and off-campus work combined may not exceed a total of 20 hours per week.
 - b. Vacation Period
Authorization may be part-time or full-time.
2. *Post-completion*
 - For students who do not need to complete a master's degree Plan A or Plan B paper or a Ph.D. thesis, the date of completion is the final day of the last semester of required coursework, as indicated on the University's academic calendar.
 - For students who need to complete a master's degree Plan A or Plan B paper or a Ph.D. thesis, the date of completion is the student's choice of either (a) completion of all required classroom credits (including thesis credits); (b) the day the student has completed all requirements for the degree, including submission of the final paper or thesis; or (c) the last day of the month that the student

submits the final paper or thesis. Students may not postpone the completion date by "holding" a completed thesis. Once defense and thesis revisions are completed, the thesis must be submitted within a reasonable time after defense.

When to Apply:

- Pre-completion Applications can be submitted to ISS 100 days before your requested employment start date.
- Post-completion Applications can be submitted to ISS 100 days before your expected date of completion

Step 1: Request an OPT Recommendation from ISS

ISS must process a recommendation for your OPT request and prepare a new I-20. Allow 5 working days for ISS to complete this process. Please submit the following items to the ISS adviser. ISS cannot accept your application for processing unless all these items are completed. Please bring:

- Student Request/Academic Adviser Verification Form
- Form I-765*
- Reduced Course Load form(s), if applicable
- Complete OPT Quiz (in ISS office only)

*Form I-765 and instructions for completing Form I-765 can be found on the USCIS website (go to "FORMS"): <http://www.uscis.gov> (please also see page 6 of this form for addition I-765 instructions).

Step 2: Submit the Following Items to USCIS

Clip the application materials together in the following order:

1. Check or money order, payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" for the OPT application fee (\$410) –or - Form G-1450 Authorization for Credit Card Transaction
2. Two passport style color photos taken within 30 days of your application. Do not use a previously used photo. The instructions with Form I-765 provide detailed photo requirement information. Print full name and most recent Form I-94 number in pencil on the back of each photo. Place the photos in a clear plastic bag or an envelope and attach it to the application. Do not put staple holes in the photos.
3. Original Form I-765, all pages, even if they are blank. (keep a copy for your records)
4. Photocopy of I-20 page 1 with your signature and page 2 with OPT recommendation. OPT applications must be received by USCIS:
 - a. No earlier than 90 days before – and no later than 60 days after – the student's date of degree completion indicated in item #11 on the OPT Student Request and Academic Adviser Verification form.
 - b. Less than 30 days after the student's OPT I-20 was issued.
5. Print out of most recent electronic I-94 (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>). If you have a paper I-94 stapled in your passport, photocopy both sides of the form I-94 (Copy the back side even if it is blank). Do not mail the original paper form I-94 in your passport.
6. Photocopy of biographical page of passport

7. Photocopies of as many as possible of the following that contain your name and photo: entry visa stamp with a photo, driver's license or state ID, student ID, and any previously issued EAD (front and back).
8. Include photocopies of pages 1 and 2 of previous I-20s, with CPT or OPT authorizations. Also include an I-20 with any previous SEVIS ID numbers if different from your current SEVIS number. Do not mail original I-20s.

G-1145 E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance form (optional). This form can be downloaded from the USCIS website at www.uscis.gov (go to "FORMS"). Paperclip G-1145 on top of the application materials.

Keep a copy of the above documents for your records.

Mail the OPT application to the appropriate USCIS lockbox (see pg.7, Form I-765 instructions). ***Students are responsible for mailing the OPT application to USCIS.*** Mail the application materials by certified or express mail to obtain a signed receipt. Keep the receipt for your records.

Step 3: Wait for EAD to be mailed from USCIS

- It usually takes approximately 2.5 to 5 months for USCIS to process your request and mail your EAD to the address on Form I-765.
- Several weeks after you apply, you should receive a receipt notice (Form I-797) in the mail from USCIS.
- If you change your address during this time, you must file form AR-11 online, call USCIS to update the address, AND update it in your MyU.
- If there is a problem with your application, you will receive a request for evidence from USCIS. If you do, bring the RFE and a copy of your OPT application materials to ISS for assistance.
- You may not begin OPT employment until you have received your EAD, even if your requested start date has passed
- You may not continue student employment (including assistantships) after the completion date in section 3 ("Program of Study") of your OPT I-20, even if you have not yet completed your degree. Any on- or off-campus employment after this completion date must be with OPT authorization.
- The EAD will reflect the dates of your employment authorization.

Step 4: Requirements while you are on OPT

- During OPT you are still in F-1 status at UMD
- ISS is required to have a copy of your EAD. Upon receipt of the EAD, email issumd@d.umn.edu a copy. Include your UMD student ID number.
- If you have applied for post completion OPT before you finish your final paper or thesis, you must complete all degree requirements by the OPT end date. A program extension is not possible after this date.
- Official admission to a new degree program or transfer to a new school during OPT will void any remaining time on your EAD. This time cannot be re-captured at a later date.
- Enrollment "for administrative purposes" (Grad 999) is allowed.
- You must continue to update your Current Mailing

address through your MyU

- As a person on an F-1 visa at UMD, you are required to have the University health insurance at all times. If you have an employer-sponsored group health plan, you may request a waiver. Talk to your ISS advisor about how to continue your insurance.
- **You must report to ISS** the following information by completing the OPT Employer Report Google Form:
 - Name of your employer, your address, and your employment start date
 - Any changes in your employer and their address
 - Any interruption in your employment or periods of unemployment.
- You may not accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment during the 12 month period of initial post-completion OPT. Employment must be 20 hours per week or more. Volunteer work or unpaid internships in your field at your degree level count as employment. Keep written documentation of all employment.
- If you have accumulated 90 days of unemployment, you will no longer be in F-1 status. If you contact ISS to report this information before your status expires, you will have a 15 day grace period to depart the U.S. If your F-1 status expires, you are required to leave the U.S. immediately. You will not be granted a 15 day grace period if you do not report to ISS.
- Notify ISS if you decide to permanently depart the U.S. during your OPT
- Notify ISS if you change your visa status during your OPT.
- Students should also report their employment information to ISS every 6 months (even if there is no change)

Travel during Post-completion OPT

- Under normal circumstances, a student who has both
 - (1) an EAD for post-completion OPT and (2) a job or job offer should not experience difficulty reentering the U.S. If either of these two conditions is missing, then the student is assuming risk.
- Travel signatures are only valid for 6 months.
- When you have completed your degree, your expenses and source(s) of funds might have changed. Please complete the Financial Certification for Students on OPT Google form to update your finances. Once you have applied for post-completion OPT, ISS will only produce a new I-20 if you have provided ISS with a photocopy of your EAD

Disclaimer

- ISS 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, 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 experience immigration attorney if you have questions regarding your situation.

Additional Information

USCIS Case Status

- Once you receive your receipt number from USCIS, via a text or email if you submitted the G-1145 form or your paper receipt mailed by USCIS, you can check your case status online:
<https://egov.uscis.gov/caststatus>

SEVP Portal Account

- If your OPT is approved and your approved start date has passed, you will receive an email from SEVP inviting you to make an SEVP Portal account.
- Having an SEVP Portal account is not required, but can be a good way to make sure your reported information is up to date and accurate.
- Please Note: When creating an account, it will use your UMD email address minus the d. (i.e. x500@umn.edu)
- You can update your employer information by completing the ISS OPT Employer Report Google form or by updating the information through your SEVP Portal account.

Optional Practical Training—Student Request and Academic Adviser Verification

STUDENT REQUEST – Student will complete this portion.

1. Student Name _____
Family name First name Middle Name

2. UMD Student ID# _____ 3. SEVIS ID# _____

4. Email _____ 5. Phone _____

6. Academic Major on I-20 _____ 7. Degree Level on I-20 (e.g., BA, BS, MA, MS, PhD) _____

8. Students completing a master’s program, check on: Plan A Plan B Plan C or coursework only

9. I-20 expiration date _____ Passport expiration date _____ Visa expiration date _____
Month/Day/Year Month/Day/Year Month/Day/Year

10. Type of optional practical training: Pre-completion part-time / full-time
 Post-completion. All coursework finished by completion date.
 Post-completion. All program requirements will be completed.

11. Read below, and write your date of degree completion here _____
Month/Day/Year

- The date written here will be the new end date indicated in section 3 “Program of Study” on your OPT I-20. Any work, on- or off-campus, after this end date will require OPT authorization. Previously authorized CPT will be expired.
- For students who are NOT completing a Master’s degree Plan A or Plan B paper or a Ph.D. thesis, this is the final day of your last semester of required coursework, as indicated on the University’s academic calendar.
- For students completing a Master’s degree Plan A or B paper or a Ph.D. thesis, this date is either (a) the day you complete all required classroom credits (including thesis credits); (b) the day you complete all requirements for your degree, including submission of your final paper; or (c) the last day of the month you submit your final paper or thesis.
- Once you have applied for post-completion OPT, you are no longer eligible for a program extension.

Note: Employment (including assistantships) is not possible after the date of degree completion written above, even if you have not completed your degree until the start date on your EAD. You may not delay completion of your degree to pursue on- or off-campus employment.

12. I want my OPT to begin on _____ and end on _____
Month/Day/Year Month/Day/Year

Note: These dates cannot be changed once your application is sent to USCIS.

13. Describe proposed employment _____

STATEMENT: I have read the information on the attached cover pages regarding optional practical training and fully understand the implications of the authorization during and after my program of study. The information I have provided is true and correct.

Student signature _____ Date _____

ACADEMIC ADVISER VERIFICATION – Academic adviser will complete this portion.

- Please **do not sign this form** if the “Student Request” section above has not been completed.
 - Optional Practical Training (OPT) is work authorization that allows F-1 students to gain practical work experience in their field of study.
 - Most often, students will use OPT to work for one year after completion of their degree, known as “post-completion OPT.”
 - Students are not required to have an employment offer to apply.
 - Review the “Student Request” section (above) and indicate below whether the information is correct (you agree) or incorrect (you disagree).
 - If you have questions, please call an ISS adviser at 218-726-7305
- I agree with the information above. I disagree with the information above.

Academic adviser signature _____ Date _____

Name (please print) _____ Phone _____

Department or college _____

FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADVISER USE ONLY

ISS ADVISER TASKS

- Discuss steps 1-4 with student
- Previous OPT at this degree level?
- More than 12 months full-time CPT?
- Program Plan/Holds/Registration
- Financial Information
- Travel discussed
- Check Assistantship end date, if any
- One Academic Year Met

Date I-765 Reviewed _____

Opt Quiz completion date _____

90 days prior = _____

Date additional OPT info sent = _____

Date submitted to ISS _____

Adviser Comments:

OPT SUMMARY

Type of OPT

- Pre-completion
- Post-completion. All coursework finished by completion date.
- Post-completion. All program requirements will be completed.

Completion date: _____ # of Months: _____

OPT dates: _____ - _____

Form I-765 Instructions
Application for Employment Authorization
(F-1 Optional Practical Training)

These directions are meant to help you with best practices in completing the Form I-765 for an OPT Application. We suggest typing the form. However, your signature must be completed by hand in black ink. Include all pages of the I-765, even if they do not apply to your case. Write "N/A" or "none" for all sections that do not apply to you. Please note this is **not** legal advice! We cannot guarantee that USCIS will agree with all of the following information; it is our best guess based on current info and previous applications.

Part 1

1. Put an "X" in the box next to the benefit for which you are applying (e.g. Permission to accept employment).

Part 2

1. **Name:** Type last, first, and middle names. This should match your legal documents and there should not be any hyphens (-). If you do not have a middle name, write "(none)".
- 2-4. **Other Names Used:** If you have not used other names, write "(N/A)".
5. **Address in the U.S.:** This is the address where your USCIS mail and EAD card will be sent and should be valid for 5 months after submission of your application. USCIS mail cannot be forwarded to a new address by the postal service. If correspondence will be "in care of" a trustworthy friend or family member in the U.S., write the person's name in number 5a (i.e., C/O John Doe) and the person's address in number 5b-5f.
6. Check one
7. **U.S. Physical Address:** If you said "no" to Item #6, enter the address where you are currently living
8. **A-Number:** Enter your Alien registration number if you have one. Otherwise, leave blank.
9. **USCIS Online Account Number:** Enter if you have one. Otherwise, leave blank.
10. **Gender:** Check one
11. **Marital Status:** Check one
12. **I-765 Question:** Check one
- 13a. **Social Security Number:** Check one
- 13b. **Social Security Number:** Write your SSN if you have one.
14. **Social Security Number:** If you already have a social security number, check "no". If you need a SSN, check "yes" or apply for your SSN at a local Social Security office.
15. **Social Security Number:** If you answered "yes" in #14, check "yes". Otherwise, leave blank.
16. Answer only if you checked "yes" in #14. Otherwise, write "N/A"
17. Answer only if you checked "yes" in #14. Otherwise, write "N/A".
- 18a-b. **Country of Citizenship/Nationality:** List any country you are currently a citizen or national of. If you have only one write "(N/A)" in 18b.
19. **Place of Birth:** List the city/town/village, state/province, and country where you were born.
20. **Date of Birth:** (mm/dd/yyyy)
- 21a. **I-94 Number:**
Use the 11-digit number on your most recent Form I-94 (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>)
- 21b. **Passport Number**
- 21c. **Travel Document Number (if any):** Do NOT write your passport number.
- 21d. **Country that issued your passport or travel document**
- 21e. **Expiration date of your passport or travel document**
22. **Date of Last Entry into the U.S.:** See most recent stamp in passport or I-94
23. **Place of Last Entry into the U.S.:** U.S. city applicant went through U.S. port of entry. See most recent stamp in passport or I-94
24. **Immigration Status at Last Entry:** See most recent stamp in passport or Form I-94. (F-1 Student, B-2 Visitor, etc.)
25. **Current Immigration Status:** See most recent stamp in passport or Form I-94. (F-1 Student, etc.)
26. **SEVIS Number:** (top of your I-20, starts with N00 ...)
27. **Eligibility Category:** The eligibility category for...
Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training is: (c) (3) (A)
Post-Completion Optional Practical Training is: (c) (3) (B)
- 28-32. Leave blank/write N/A or None where possible.

Part 3

- 1a-2. **Applicant's Statement:** Check box 1a.
3. **Telephone Number**
4. **Mobile Phone Number:** (If any)

5. Email Address

6. Leave Blank

7a-7b. Read Statement and Applicant's Declaration and Certification, then Sign and Date. Signature must be less than 30 days old when USCIS receives your Application. Write exactly between the lines. Try not to cross the lines above or below when you write your signature. Use black ink to sign.

Part 4

Write N/A or None where possible

Part 5

Write N/A or None where possible

Part 6

Complete this section only if:

- You have been approved for CPT in the past.
- You have been approved for OPT in the past.
- You have used a different SEVIS ID in the past. (i.e. you took a break from school and returned on a new I-20) your SEVIS ID is on the top of your I-20 and starts with N00.

There are no USCIS instructions on how to complete this section with this information, we suggest starting with the following:

1a-c Legal name

2 A number (if any)

For each of the items listed above (CPT, OPT, different SEVIS ID#) complete one section in Part 6.

- **CPT** pg 3 Part 2 Number 27 (there is no section on the I-765 that corresponds to the information, so this is a guess)
 - CPT Authorizations
 - CPT start and end dates, part time or full-time, degree level (e.g. Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral), SEVIS Number
- **OPT** pg 3 Part 2 Number 27
 - OPT Authorizations
 - OPT start and end dates, part-time or full-time, degree level (e.g. Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral), SEVIS Number
- **Multiple SEVIS IDs** pg 3 Part 2 Number 26
 - Previous SEVIS IDs
 - SEVIS ID# N00..., program start date – program end date, degree level (e.g. Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral)

Mail all of the materials for your application (See "Step 2" on the OPT instruction sheet) to USCIS. The address the materials are sent to depends on how the materials are sent (using USPS or an Express mail service like FedEx).

Please be sure to check the address on the USCIS Website on the day you mail your application as these addresses and information are subject to change. <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses>

USCIS Chicago Lockbox

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS):

Attn: I-765 C03
P.O. Box 805373
Chicago, IL 60680-5374

For FedEx, UPS, and DHL:

USCIS
Attn: I-765 C03 (Box 805373)
131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor
Chicago, IL 60603-5517