OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

NOTE: THIS IS NOT THE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Students must discuss Optional Practical Training Four Months before their expected Graduation Date.

I. DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF OPT

A. **Timing** of your OPT application is critical because F-1 Status Benefits end when you complete your studies.

B. **Approval** of OPT allows employment, or other professional activity, that must be related to your completed program of study.
   - **Note (1):** terms like “Post-Doc”, “Intern”, or “Research” are academic terms, not immigration terms. If the OPT job or activity is related to your completed program of study, then it qualifies for OPT.
   - **Note (2):** any OPT activity, paid or unpaid, must be for **at least 20 hours per week**.

C. **USCIS Approval of OPT may take several months**, so we recommend that you **discuss** your OPT plans with an International Student Counselor at least **four months before you plan to Deposit**.

D. If eligible for OPT, you are allowed a **Maximum Authorization of 12 months**. (If your degree is in a **STEM Field** you MAY be eligible to apply for an OPT 17-month OPT extension, but **only if all** of your OPT Extension Employers qualify based upon the US government **E-Verify** Program.)

E. **Consider the following when timing your OPT application to USCIS:**
   - a. An OPT application must be made, and received by USCIS, between 90 days before your program completion date (as adjusted on your I-20 at the time of your OPT application) and 60 days after that date.
   - b. You should choose an OPT Begin Date that best suits your plans. Your requested OPT Begin Date must be after your program completion date and within 60 days after that date.
   - c. USCIS may take 60 to 90 days to process and approve your OPT application.
   - d. Any OPT job must begin within 90 days of your approved OPT Begin Date.

**NOTE:** OPT is not a “status,” **Your F-1 Student Status continues for OPT. You are still a Graduate Center “Student” for immigration, and you still must report regularly to the Office of International Students.**

II. INITIAL APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Before you apply for OPT, discuss these requirements with an International Student Counselor.

1. **Write your own proposal letter** (less than one page, half a page is best) that:
   - a) **Describes the type of OPT job or work activity** for which you will look.
   - b) **Explains how this job or work activity is related** to your completed degree program, and
   - c) **Indicates how OPT experience will help you professionally** when you return to your home country.

2. **Obtain a letter from your Program,** either Advisor, Mentor, or Executive Officer (less than one page) that:
   - a) **Confirms your expected Completion Date __________________________ (either your Deposit Date or your Degree Date – based on our discussion),**
   - b) **Recommends** OPT, and
   - c) **Certifies that the purpose you have described** (in your letter) is **related** to your field of study, and is suitable for your level and area of study.

3. **(OPTIONAL) If you have a job offer, you may include a letter from your employer with the following:**
   - a) **Job description,** which shows the **relationship to your degree,** and
   - b) **Beginning date** of the job.

   **NOTE:** A job offer is **NOT required to apply** for Initial Post-Completion OPT.

   **NOTE:** This Sheet is only **GENERAL INFORMATION. It is NOT the Application Procedure.** Students must make an Appointment BEFORE applying for Optional Practical Training.