POST-COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a 12-month period of work authorization given to an F-1 status student who has completed a program of study. OPT is meant to help students to gain practical work experience.

As an F-1 status student on a period of OPT, you will be authorized to work in both paid and unpaid positions as well as for multiple employers at a time, if desired. However, all employment during OPT must be in positions that are related to your field of study and commensurate with your level of study.

When you are on a period of OPT, you must work at least 20 hours per week or you will accrue days of unemployment. You are limited to 90 days of unemployment during the initial 12-month period of OPT.

Your expected completion date determines when you may apply for OPT and what date you may ask for as a starting date of your OPT. Your completion date is the day that you expect to have completed all the requirements for your degree. (For a doctoral student it is usually the day they deposit; for a master’s student it may be the completion of a capstone project or thesis submission.)

NOTES:

You have a 150-day period in which to apply for OPT. The earliest you can apply is 90 days before your completion date and the latest you can apply is 60 days after your completion date. We recommend you apply as early as possible.

You may request a starting date that is from the day after your completion date up until 60 days after your completion date.

If you have completed one year of full-time Curricular Practical Training, you are not eligible to apply for OPT.

While you are on your period of OPT, you are still attached to the CUNY Graduate Center Office of International Students for immigration-related matters.

APPLICATION PROCESS FOR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

You can start learning about the application process for post-completion Optional Practical Training by reviewing this handout, reviewing our OPT PowerPoint presentation, attending an OPT Workshop, and/or meeting with an International Student Counselor. We recommend you start reviewing such materials at least four months prior to your expected completion.
We recommend you follow these steps during the application process:

STEP 1: Complete and Return the Optional Practical Training Request Form to the Office of International Students.

The Optional Practical Training Request Form is a fillable PDF form that the student applying for OPT and his or her Academic Advisor or Executive Officer complete. This form replaces the individual letters from the student and academic program office that previously were required by the Office of International Students as part of an OPT application.

The Optional Practical Training Request Form is not submitted with your OPT application. It is used by the Office of International Students to prepare a new Form I-20 with an OPT recommendation and to update the student’s SEVIS record with the expected completion date and the requested start date of the OPT.

The Optional Practical Training Request Form requires the signatures of both the student and the student’s Academic Advisor or Executive Officer. These signatures will be electronic (digital) signatures.

Please Note: It is important that you provide a valid email address on the OPT Request Form. While you are on your period of OPT, SEVP will be sending important information to you via email. They will be sending the information to the email address you have provided.

STEP 2: Complete the Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization.

The Form I-765 is the most important part of your application for OPT. If you request it, an International Student Counselor in the Office of International Students will review your I-765 to ensure its completeness and accuracy. The following are a few notes regarding the Form I-765:

- Your OPT application must not arrive at USCIS more than 90 days before your program completion date.
- Check the box “Permission to accept employment” at the top of the form.
- In item 1, write your surname under “Family Name” in all capital letters.
- For item 3, make sure your mailing address will be valid for the next 3-4 months. The U.S. Postal Service will not forward communications from USCIS. (You might use your department or our office as a mailing address if your address is changing.)
- Leave item 9 blank if you don’t yet have a Social Security Number.
- Use (c)(3)(B) as the “Eligibility Category” in item 16.
- Be sure to sign the application where it says “Applicant’s Signature.”
- Attach your check and photos to front of the Form I-765 using paperclips.

Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

Instructions for the Form I-765

Form G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance

STEP 3: Obtain an updated Form I-20 with an OPT Recommendation.

Our office’s main role in the OPT application process is to make a recommendation for your OPT application in the SEVIS system and to issue an updated Form I-20 with the OPT request.

You may obtain our recommendation and an updated Form I-20 by an appointment with an International Student Counselor.
Documents Required by the Office of International Students:

1. The completed Optional Practical Training Request Form.
3. An optional job offer letter from your OPT employer, if you have a job offer.
4. Your current I-94 Admission Record.
5. Your passport.
6. Your current Form I-20, and all previous I-20 Forms.
8. Application fee of $410.00.
   Make check or money order payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
   On the memo line in the lower left corner, write your I-94 number and SEVIS number.
9. Two color photographs which meet US Department of State passport style specifications
   On the back of each photo print lightly your name, I-94 number, and SEVIS number.

NOTES: We will review all your application materials.
We will update your SEVIS record with the OPT recommendation.
We will issue a new Form I-20 with the OPT request.

STEP 4: Organize and Mail Your Application.

OPT APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Submit the following items to the USCIS in your post-completion OPT application:

___  1. Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization: Eligibility Category (e) (3) (B).
___  2. The required fee, currently $410.00.
___  3. Two color photographs.
___  4. A copy of your updated Form I-20 with the OPT recommendation.
___  5. A copy of your most recent I-94.
___  6. Copies of all previous I-20 forms (front & back).
___  7. A copy of any previous EADs (I-766)
___  8. A copy of your passport identification page

NOTES: Staple all documents (except check and photos) at the top of all the forms and letters.
Photos and check should be paper-clipped to the front of the I-765.

MAILING YOUR APPLICATION

Send your application to either the Dallas Lockbox or the Phoenix Lockbox depending on where you live.
If you use the U.S. Postal Service, you can send the application to the PO Box address of the lockbox.
If you use a courier service (FedEx, UPS, DHL, etc.), you must use the street address of the lockbox.

FOLLOW THIS LINK TO THE ADDRESSES OF THE LOCKBOXES

NOTES: Your application cannot be received by the USCIS more than 90 days prior to your completion date.

The latest your application can be received by the USCIS 60 days after your completion date.

Your application must be received by the USCIS within 30 days of the date that our office updates your SEVIS record with the OPT recommendation and issues the updated Form I-20.

If you move and change your address before receiving your OPT approval, your EAD may not be delivered. Inform our office of your new address and we will update your SEVIS record.