POST-COMPLETION
OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING {OPT} INSTRUCTIONS

Optional Practical Training (OPT) provides F-1 students with an opportunity for hands-on work experience related to the academic field of study.

ELIGIBILITY

You are eligible to apply if you meet the following criteria:

- You are currently in F-1 status.
- You have been enrolled in a full course of study for one academic year (three quarters, including final exams) or will complete one academic year by the date the OPT approval begins.
- You have not exceeded 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorization. (Part-time CPT does not affect OPT eligibility.)
- You are eligible for 12 months of full-time OPT per academic level. For example, you may apply for 12 months of OPT after completing a bachelor's degree and then another 12 months after completing a master's degree. An additional 17-month extension may be possible depending on your field of study.

WHEN TO APPLY

- Apply early! Processing by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) can take up to three months.
- You may apply up to 90 days before your program end date and up to 60 days after your program end date.
  Your program end date is the last day of your final quarter, including finals week.
- ISS strongly encourages you to apply prior to your program end date. Though recent rule changes allow you to apply up to 60 days after your program end date, you cannot begin work until the application is processed. This may result in a loss of full eligibility (12 months) due to the 3-month processing time.

HOW TO APPLY

STEP ONE: Complete application & submit to ISS
Submit the following to ISS:

- Completed ISS OPT Request Form
- Completed I-765 Form
  - Tips for completing Form I-765
    - Item 3: Your Receipt Notice and EAD will be mailed to the address you provide. In most cases, we recommend you use our office address:

      c/o UWB ISS/ Box 358500
      18115 Campus Way NE
      Bothell, WA 98011

    - If you will move soon, government mail cannot be forwarded, even if you file a change of address request with the U.S. Postal Service. Our office will need a photocopy of your EAD card. If you use our office address, we will automatically make the photocopy after receiving the EAD and will email you to pick up your card. If it is mailed to your address, you must provide us with a photocopy.
    - Item 10: Use the number from your I-94 card (the small, white card in your passport). It is an 11-digit number.
- Item 11: Check "yes" only if you have previously received an EAD card from USCIS.
- Items 12, 13, 14, 15: Use the information from your I-94 card. If you have changed to F-1 status within the U.S., include a copy of your Approval Notice.
- Item 16: Use one of the three following codes:
  - Pre-completion OPT: (c)(3)(A)
  - Post-completion OPT: (c)(3)(B)
  - 17-month extension for STEM degree recipients: (c)(3)(C)
- Certification: Sign the form in blue ink.
  - Choosing a start date:
    - If you are applying for post-completion OPT, your start date must be within 60 days after your program completion date. In other words, if you graduate or complete your exchange program June 13, your start date can be no later than August 13.
    - Changing the requested OPT dates after the application is mailed can be very difficult. Choose your dates carefully.
  - Photo specifications:
    - U.S. Department of State Guidelines
      - The two photos should have a white background
      - They should be unmounted, printed on thin paper, glossy, and not re-touched
      - The photos should show a passport-style, full-face image, with both ears visible
      - The photo should be 2 X 2 inches, with the distance from the top of the head to just below the chin about 1 3/8 inches
      - Lightly print your name and your I-94 number in pencil on the back of each photo
      - Photographs must have been taken within the last 30 days and not previously used

STEP TWO: Pick up new I-20
The ISS office will review your OPT application and issue a new, updated I-20 with an OPT recommendation printed on the back page. You will receive an email to pick up the application at the ISS office.
- Sign your OPT-endorsed I-20 and make a copy.

STEP THREE: Mail application
Within 30 days of the new I-20 being issued, mail the application, including the following documents, to USCIS:
- Photocopy of signed I-20 with highlighted OPT endorsement on page 3
- Photocopy of all previously issued I-20s
- $340 check or money order payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security"
- Completed I-765 Form
- Photocopy of passport identification page
- Photocopy of F-1 visa page
- Photocopy of the front and back of your I-94 card
- Two passport-style photos
- Photocopies of any previously issued EAD (if applicable)
- E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance Form G-1145 (if you want an email or text message that your petition has been accepted. Attach it to the first page of your I-765 application.)

Do not mail your original passport, I-94 or I-20.

Make sure you send in a complete application – incomplete applications can delay processing and can shorten your approved work time.
If your I-765 mailing address is in Washington, mail the entire application to the USCIS Arizona Lockbox:

For standard U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:

USCIS  
PO Box 21281  
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For express mail and courier deliveries:

USCIS  
Attn: AOS  
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S.  
Suite 100  
Phoenix, AZ 85034

It is recommended that you send your application by certified mail, return receipt requested.

**AFTER YOU APPLY**

Within two weeks of having received your application, USCIS will send you a receipt notice (I-797). Carefully review the notice to make sure your name is spelled correctly. If it is not, contact ISS immediately.

You may use the case number on your receipt notice to check on the status of your application.

You cannot begin employment until USCIS approves the OPT application and you have received your Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

**AFTER BEING APPROVED**

Bring your EAD card to ISS to be copied.

While approved for OPT, you are still in F-1 status and must report address changes and employment information to the UWB ISS office.

At the end of your approved OPT, as indicated by your Employment Authorization Document (EAD), you have a 60-day grace period. During this grace period you must either depart the U.S., be issued an I-20 for a new program of study, or change to a different immigration status.