Optional Practical Training

Office of International Students and Scholars
120 Fitzgerald Student Services Building/0074
Reno, Nevada 89557
Tel.: (775) 784-6874 Fax: (775) 327-5845
http://www.unr.edu/oiss
oiss@unr.edu
What is OPT?

- “Temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major area of study”

What is Post-Completion OPT?

- 12 months of work authorization
- Starts after program completion
- Employment in field of study (Major on I-20)
Who Can Apply for OPT?

• Student must have been enrolled full-time for one continuous academic year
• Student must not have used full-time Curricular Practical Training for 12 months or more
• Student must not have used 12 months of OPT at current education level. Students are eligible for 12 months of OPT per higher education level
• Student must apply for graduation if graduating in the semester before OPT starts
• Student must be maintaining F-1 status
OPT Timeline
(Spring Graduation)

When to get appointment with OISS to apply:
- 90 days: 02/16/2023
- 60 days: 07/14/2023 (F)

Choose a date for work authorization to start:
- 60 days: 05/18/2023 to 07/16/2023

End date*: Up to 12 months after start date
*End date cannot be more than 14 months after program completion

How long should it take to receive the OPT card: 90 days from the date USCIS receives application

What about using CPT to start working earlier:
- CPT
- End date: 05/17/2023
OPT Timeline (Summer Graduation)

Program Completion: 08/17/2023

When to get appointment with OISS to apply:
- 90 days: 05/19/2023
- 60 days: 10/16/2023

Choose a date for work authorization to start:
- 60 days: 08/18/2023 to 10/16/2023

End date*: Up to 12 months after start date
  *End date cannot be more than 14 months after program completion

How long should it take to receive the OPT card: 90 days from the date USCIS receives application

What about using CPT to start working earlier:
- CPT
- End date: 08/17/2023
OPT Timeline
(Fall Graduation)

Program Completion:
12/20/2023

When to get appointment with OISS to apply:
- 90 days: 09/21/2023
- 60 days: 02/16/2024 (F)

Choose a date for work authorization to start:
- 60 days: 12/21/2023 to 02/18/2024

End date*: Up to 12 months after start date
*End date cannot be more than 14 months after program completion

How long should it take to receive the OPT card: 90 days from the date USCIS receives application

What about using CPT to start working earlier:
- CPT
- End date: 12/20/2023
90 Day Unemployment Rule

• You should not accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment from the start date on your EAD card during the 12-month post-completion OPT period.

• You are considered to be in violation of your F-1 status if you accumulate 90+ days of unemployment unless you complete any of the following steps before the 90 days:
  • Applied for a new program or to transfer to another U.S. institution
  • Left the U.S.
  • Applied for a change of status
How to Avoid 90 Days of Unemployment

• Plan your OPT start date
• Find other types of employment in your field of study with at least 20 hours of work per week
  ▪ Part-time (less than 20 hours per week) paid employment
    ▪ Requires more than 1 employer if less than 20 hours per week
  ▪ Volunteering/unpaid employment
  ▪ Employment hours may vary weekly but should average to at least 20 hours per week each month

Always keep documentation for proof all employment – paid or unpaid!
How to Apply

1. Complete the steps at [Optional Practical Training (OPT) Form](#)
   - All documents uploaded to the OPT Request should not be secured.
   - DO NOT include your SSN in the I-765 upload.

2. Make a virtual appointment with an advisor at OISS for OPT and have all required documents at the appointment
4. If you have all the required items, the OISS advisor will create a new I-20 recommending OPT and assist you with your OPT packet
   ❖ The OISS advisor will shorten the end date on your I-20 in order to recommend post-completion OPT

5. Submit the application online or mail the OPT packet to USCIS and wait for your receipt and card

6. Please allow 90 days from the day USCIS receives your application for processing
OPT Online Filing

USCIS has **Form I-765** available for online filing for OPT applications. Go to **USCIS File Online** and **Benefits of Filing Online** for more information.

- You will still need to follow the steps to request an OPT recommendation I-20 to upload to your online Form I-765 application.

- Download the draft PDF of your filled in online I-765 to upload to the OPT Application below.
  - The "View draft snapshot" link to get the PDF is found in "Review and Submit" under "Your application summary".
OPT Online Filing (cont.)

▪ **DO NOT** pay the filing fee and submit the online I-765 before getting the OPT recommendation I-20.
  – You will need to upload the OPT recommendation I-20 to your online I-765 application.
  – Upload only the supporting documents requested on the online I-765; they will be different from what is listed for the mailing in option.

▪ **If you file online, DO NOT mail in an application; use only one filing option.**
1. Optional: Students may attach Form G-1145 (E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance) to the 1st page of the application to request an e-Notification (email or text) of the receipt of the application at the USCIS Lockbox facility. There is no fee for this service.
2. *Money order, personal check, cashier’s check, or credit card using Form G-1450, Authorization for Credit Card Transactions in U.S. currency for the filing fee payment of $410.00 (four hundred and ten).

❖ Make checks and money orders payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security with “OPT filing fee” in the memo line

❖ Remember to sign the money order, personal check, or Form G-1450

* Filing fee subject to change, check [http://www.uscis.gov/i-765](http://www.uscis.gov/i-765) for the correct fee
3. 2 identical passport photos (2” x 2”) taken within 30 days of filing your application with your name and I-94 number lightly written on the back of the photos using a pencil or felt tip pen and in a small envelope or the vendor provided photo sleeve. Go to https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/photos/photos.html for specifications
   - Read the instructions and questions carefully
   - We recommend you type your responses
   - If a question does not apply to you, type or print (handwrite) “N/A” unless otherwise directed
     - If you are typing your application, the form does not allow you to enter the “/” therefore you will have to handwrite “N/A” in black text after printing the application
   - If your answer to a numeric response is zero or none, type or print “None” unless otherwise directed
   - Use black ink to print and sign
5. Copy of the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} pages of I-20 with OPT recommendation
6. Copies of the bio page of your current passport (include extension page if applicable), current visa (even if it is expired), and Form I-94
7. Copies of the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} pages (or 1\textsuperscript{st} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} pages for I-20s issued before July 2015) of any I-20s with employment authorization (CPT, OPT, STEM OPT)
8. If you changed your status to F-1 within the U.S., make a copy of Form I-797 Approval Notice
9. Front and back copy of any previous EAD card(s), if applicable
Where to Send the OPT Packet

Filing address subject to change. Refer to the “Where to File” section at http://www.uscis.gov/i-765 for the correct filing address.
Where to Send the OPT Packet (cont.)

- To reduce the chances of your OPT application being rejected or denied by USCIS, the OPT application packet must:
  - Use USCIS forms with the correct edition date
  - Not be received by USCIS more than 90 days before your program end date
  - Be received by USCIS within 30 days of the I-20 issue date listed at the bottom of the first page of your I-20 or 60 days of your program completion, whichever comes first
What to Expect After Filing Online or Mailing

• In 2 to 4 weeks USCIS will mail your Form I-797C Receipt Notice that will have a Receipt Number and Received Date confirming that USCIS has received your OPT application
  – For online filing, you will get an email message notification with your receipt number within 24 hours of USCIS accepting your application – you will still get a receipt notice in the mail
  – If you included Form G-1145 with your application packet, you will get an email and/or text message notification with your receipt number within 24 hours of USCIS accepting your application – you will still get a receipt notice in the mail
What to Expect After Filing Online or Mailing (cont.)

• Check the status of your OPT application online with your receipt number at [https://www.uscis.gov](https://www.uscis.gov)

• About 90 days from the receipt date on the receipt notice, you should receive the OPT card

• If you receive a Request For Evidence (RFE) or Request for Information (RFI), contact an OISS advisor immediately
Go to Sample OPT I-765 for a sample I-765

Make sure you are using the correct edition otherwise USCIS will reject your application. Check "Edition Date" at Form I-765

If you need more space than is provided in Part 6 (page 7), you may use extra copies of the page
FORM I-765 – PAGE 1

- Enter your name as it appears on your I-20
- Enter any previous names, including aliases, maiden name, and nicknames
- If you need extra space to complete this section, use the space provided in Part 6
Your U.S. Mailing Address will be used by USCIS to mail any documents for your application.

If your mail is sent to someone other than yourself, please include an “In Care Of Name” as part of your mailing address.

If “No” to item 6, enter your U.S. Physical Address.

F-1 students do not have an A-Number or a USCIS Online Account Number.

Item 12: check yes if you have previously applied for an EAD.
Go to Get Most Recent I-94 to retrieve and print your I-94 unless you changed your status in the U.S.

- Items 21.a., 22, and 24 can be found on your I-94
- Your travel history is not required

Item 23 can be found on the last admission stamp in your passport

- If you drove across the border, enter the name of the city where you entered the U.S.
Item 27: Enter (c)(3)(B) for post-completion OPT (to start OPT after program completion or during thesis/dissertation stage after completing all required coursework)

Items 28 to 31.b. do not apply to a 12-month post-completion OPT application
Read the full “Declaration and Certification” carefully

Float your handwritten signature inside the “Applicant’s Signature” box, do not touch or go outside the lines

Parts 4 to 5 do not apply to you if you completed the form yourself
Complete this page if:

- You need more space for any of the items in Parts 2 to 5
- You have used a different SEVIS ID in F-1 status in the U.S. (for example, you attended school for a while, left the U.S. to take a break from school, and returned with a new I-20, you would have a SEVIS ID from your first period of attendance that is different than your current SEVIS ID)
- You have been approved for CPT, OPT, SEH, or TPS in the past
What About Travel Outside the U.S.?

- You may travel out of the country and return before the program end date on your OPT I-20 with a travel signature and a valid passport and visa.

- If you want to re-enter the U.S. after your program end date, have the following documents with you:
  - OPT I-20 signed for travel (valid for 6 months) on the 2nd page
  - Valid visa (it is possible to renew a visa after OPT approval)
  - Passport valid for at least 6 months from the date you re-enter
  - Receipt notice if your OPT has not been approved
  - OPT EAD card and job offer/contract if your OPT has been approved

- Please note, re-entry after travel out of the country is never guaranteed. If your application is denied while you are out of the country, it may not be possible for you to return on the F-1 visa or to resume OPT.
What if I Don’t Graduate and Post-Completion OPT Has Not Been Approved?

- You may keep the OPT and take part-time classes while maintaining your OPT
- You may withdraw your application by writing a letter to USCIS requesting the withdrawal with an explanation of the reason for the withdrawal
  - The OISS advisor will email the letter to USCIS
- You will NOT be reimbursed your Form I-765 filing fee
What if I Don’t Graduate and Post-Completion OPT Has Been Approved?

- If coursework is still required during fall and spring semesters only work part-time (up to 20 hours/week). The 90-day unemployment limitation will still apply.
- If you only have your thesis or dissertation, you may work full-time.
- You must complete your program before your OPT ends since your I-20 cannot be extended.
OPT Reporting Requirements

- Use the **OISS Portal** or the **SEVP Portal** to report:
  - Changes to your mailing or physical address
  - Telephone number changes
  - Employment updates
- Report within 10 days of change
- Email OISS after you update your information in the SEVP Portal to confirm the update
OPT Reporting Requirements cont. (2)

OISS Portal

- Login to international.unr.edu using the "Log in with Portal Account"

- Employment update: Go to the "Request & Document Center" to submit the "OPT Employment Update" request in the "What can we help you with?" section. OISS will be notified when you submit an update.

- Contact information update: Go to the "Request & Document Center" to submit the "Contact Information Update" request in the "What can we help you with?" section. OISS will be notified when you submit an update.
OPT Reporting Requirements, cont. (3)

SEVP Portal

• On your approved OPT start date, you will receive an email from do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov with instructions on creating an SEVP Portal account
  • If you do not see the email in your inbox, check your spam or junk mail folder
  • If you still do not see it after 48 hours of your approved start date, contact OISS at oiss@unr.edu to request an account reset
  • The link to create your account will expire within 14 days of the date the email is sent
• You may go to SEVP Portal Help for more detailed information and guidance videos
OPT Reporting Requirements, cont. (4)

- If you cannot update your employment in the SEVP Portal because it is past the 10-day reporting timeline, submit the **12-Month OPT Update Form**
- If you need to change your email address, use the **Change of Address Form**
- OPTIONAL: If you want a new I-20 with your OPT employer information, complete the **Student I-20/DS-2019 Request Form** and select “SEVP Portal Employer Update” for the request reason
- You should maintain health insurance coverage during your OPT authorization period
I’m starting a new academic program/level after I graduate, do I need OPT?

1. Must be admitted to new program/school by end of 60 day grace period
2. New program must start at next available term or within 5 months of program end date, whichever is sooner

The 90 days of unemployment rule is still applicable if a student applies for OPT to bridge the gap between academic programs
I’m starting a new academic program/level after I graduate in December, do I need OPT?

1. Must be admitted to new program/school by end of 60 day grace period
2. New program must start at next available term or within 5 months of program end date, whichever is sooner

December Graduation: Admitted: 60 day grace period
Start classes: next available term or 5 months, whichever is sooner

The 90 days of unemployment rule is still applicable if a student applies for OPT to bridge the gap between academic programs
24-Month STEM OPT Extension Eligibility

• F-1 students with **STEM field** degrees
• Must be working for a U.S. employer in a job directly related to the STEM field of study (traditional paid employment)
• Employer MUST be registered in E-Verify
• File for extension up to 90 days before 12-month post-completion OPT ends
H-1B (Specialty Occupations)

- Granted up to 6 years
- Must have at least a U.S. bachelor’s degree (or foreign equivalent)
- Will be working in a job that requires at least a bachelor’s degree
- Employer must be willing to sponsor a visa petition
- H-1B Cap of 65,000 new H-1B approvals each year. Graduates with U.S. advanced degrees (master’s or higher) have an additional allocation of 20,000
- If your H-1B petition is timely filed, you will be eligible for a “cap gap extension”, a period in which a student’s status is automatically extended to bridge the gap between the end of F-1 status and start of H-1B status
OPT / H-1B Timeline
(Spring Graduation)

OPT:

- Employer registers to file H-1B petition by March deadline
- File H-1B petition after March 31 if selected
- OPT Automatically Extended to September 30
- 60 day Grace Period
- H-1B Start (October 1)

Students are not eligible to have their post-completion OPT extended during the cap-gap period if their OPT ends before their H-1B petition is submitted.
Employer registers to file H-1B petition by March deadline

File H-1B petition after March 31 if selected

60 day Grace Period

OPT Automatically Extended to September 30

H-1B Start (October 1)

Students are not eligible to have their post-completion OPT extended during the cap-gap period if their OPT ends before their H-1B petition is submitted
OPT / H-1B Timeline
(Fall Graduation)

- **Current Year**
  - DEC
  - MAR
  - APR

- **Next Year**
  - OCT
  - DEC

**OPT:**
- Employer registers to file H-1B petition by March deadline
- File H-1B petition after March 31 if selected
- H-1B Start (October 1)
- OPT STOPS

**H-1B:**
- 60 day Grace Period
OPT and J-1/H-1B in Higher Education

- J-1 (Researcher/Professor) can be extended to 5 years
- H-1B’s are not subject to the quota or the timeline
- Changing status to J-1 or H-1B can take 2 weeks to 6 months, so OPT is recommended to maintain status while the change of status application is pending
- Possible to leave the U.S. apply for new visa and re-enter under the new status
- Consider dependent’s work and school options
  - J-2’s can apply to work and engage in full/part-time study
  - H-4’s cannot work, but can engage in full/part-time study
Time for Questions