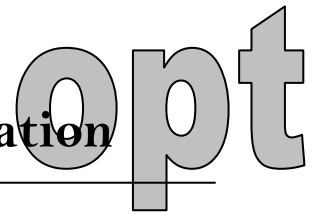


# Optional Practical Training Information



If granted by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Optional Practical Training (OPT) allows you to accept either part or full-time employment directly related to your major area of study. OPT can be authorized before or after completion of studies; however, the total period of authorization cannot exceed the equivalent of 12 full months. Part-time practical training (20 hours per week or less) is subtracted from the available 12 months at *half* the full-time rate (example: If granted 6 months of part-time OPT, 3 months are subtracted from your 12 month total). You may apply for 12 months of OPT during or after an undergraduate degree and then again after a graduate degree. You may **NOT** save your OPT and collect 24 months following completion of graduate studies.

## **OPT may be used:**

- During Summer Break: Part-time or Full-time
- During the Academic Year: Half-time Only
- After the Completion of All Degree Requirements: Full-time Only
- For Graduate Students Only: After the Completion of all Degree Requirements and Prior to Completion of the Thesis (you must continue to make progress toward the completion of your thesis while engaging in OPT)

## **Eligibility**

You **ARE** eligible to apply for OPT if you are currently in lawful F-1 status and have been a full-time student for one full academic year (nine months-even if part of that time was in another non-immigrant status which does not prohibit full-time study).

You are **NOT** eligible for OPT if you have been authorized for 12 months or more (in aggregate) of Full-Time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) during your current program of study.

## **Job Offer**

An offer of employment is **NOT REQUIRED** when requesting Optional Practical Training; however, many students planning to work before the completion of their program of study often receive a job offer and then apply for OPT. **NOTE:** Once authorized by USCIS for work authorization, the time period is deducted from your total eligibility regardless of whether used or not.

## **When to Apply for Optional Practical Training**

The Office of International Education recommends applying for OPT authorization up to three (3) months in advance of the begin date of your proposed employment or completion of your program of study. **Note: You MUST apply for OPT prior to your completion date or you will lose your OPT opportunity.**

## **Dates of Employment Authorization**

When applying for OPT you will designate your proposed start and end date of work authorization. USCIS will authorize your begin date as either the day stated on your application or the date the Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) is approved, whichever is later.

- If you apply for OPT to work before the completion of your program of study, your end date will be as designated on your application.

**OVER=>**

- If you apply for OPT to work after the completion of your program of study, the authorization will be for the duration requested on your application; however, the end date will be no later than 14 months from your date of completion.

You may not begin working until you receive the valid EAD card and its start date has commenced. If you were granted OPT based on working after the completion of your studies, and your graduation was delayed, you must wait until you officially complete your studies prior to beginning employment.

### **Social Security**

If you plan to work in the U.S. you will need a valid Social Security number. OIE can provide with instructions on applying for a social security number.

### **Paying U.S. Taxes**

In general F-1 students who have been in the U.S. for fewer than six years are exempt from social security taxes (also known as F.I.C.A. tax). You should be sure to bring this to the attention of your employer because many employers are not familiar with this provision of the tax laws. If you need more information about the F-1 social security tax exemption, please contact OIE. Students in F-1 status are subject to all other taxes that may apply, including federal, state and local.

### **Travel While OPT Application is Pending**

Before completing your studies, you may continue to travel internationally provided you have a valid travel endorsement by the Office of International Education on your I-20.

If you choose to depart the U.S. after completing your studies but have not yet received an EAD card, you must carry your Receipt Notice from USCIS verifying that your application for OPT is pending. Your Designated School Official will only endorse your I-20 after completion of studies if you provide a copy of the Receipt Notice.

### **Travel Once OPT is Approved**

After completing your studies and receiving your EAD card, you must obtain a travel endorsement from the OIE for re-entry into the U.S., to do so, submit complete an OIE travel endorsement application.

### **Address**

You must keep your U.S. residential address up-to-date with the OIE while on OPT. Failure to notify the OIE within 10 days of moving is a violation of your F-1 status.

### **Disruption of Employment**

You must inform the OIE of any disruption in employment. Failure to do so is a violation of your F-1 status.

### **Resuming Study**

If you return to school you must cease working regardless of your EAD cards validity. Authorization to engage in OPT is automatically terminated your resuming full-time study. If you resume studies at a higher education level (i.e. Masters or Doctorate) you are eligible for an additional 12 months of OPT.

**OVER=>**

**To Apply**

Submit the following documents to the Office of International Education

- Fully Complete OPT Application Form (attached)
- Current I-20
- A Copy of Your I-94 (Both Sides: The I-94 is a small white card stapled in your passport)
- A Copy of Every Page of Your Passport
- A Completed I-765 (attached to OPT Application Form)
- Two Passport Style Photographs
- A Check or Money Order Made Payable to USCIS for \$175
- Verification That You Have Applied For Graduation
- A Copy of Your Previous EAD (if applicable)

# PRACTICAL TRAINING CHART FOR F-1 STUDENTS

<b><u>CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING</u></b>	<b><u>OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING</u></b>
AUTHORIZED BEFORE GRADUATION  No cumulative maximum but use may affect eligibility for OPT (see below)	AUTHORIZED BEFORE GRADUATION CAN BE USED PRIOR TO OR AFTER GRADUATION 12 months allowed for each degree level
To be eligible for CPT, you must have been in lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year	To be eligible for OPT, you must be currently in lawful F-1 status and have been a full-time student for one full academic year (nine months-even if part of that time was in another non-immigrant status which does not prohibit full-time study).
Attain a job which is an integral part of an established curriculum for which academic credit is awarded (Example: alternate work/study, internship or cooperative education)	Includes training (1) during summer vacation if student plans to continue school in fall semester; (2) while school is in session if the training does not exceed 20 hours per week; (3) after completion of course requirements, but before completion of course of study, excluding thesis (graduate students); (4) after completion of the course of study.
Work authorization is for a specific employer	Allows work with any employer as long as job is directly related to field of study and commensurate to level of degree
No cumulative maximum but use may affect eligibility for OPT (see below)	12 months allowed for each higher degree level
<b>CPT USED</b>	<b>OPT REMAINING</b>
No CPT used →→→	→→→ One year of OPT allowed
20 hours or less (part-time) →→→	→→→ One year of OPT allowed
21 hours or more for one year →→→	→→→ No OPT allowed