

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

OPT is a benefit granted by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to accept temporary employment directly related to an academic field of study (the major indicated on most recent I-20 document).

REQUIREMENTS:

- Must have maintained lawful F-1 status for **one full academic year** (2 semesters or 3 quarters in an academic program at a SEVIS-approved college or university)
- May be authorized for a maximum of 12 months of Optional Practical Training
- May be granted for either part-time (maximum of 20 hours per week) or full-time (more than 20 hours per week) employment.
- May be used during the following time periods as indicated:
 - During the summer term (or annual vacation) — Part time or full time
 - During the academic year — Part time only
 - After completion of all degree requirements — Full time only
- May choose to split OPT in a variety of ways
 - Use all 12 months while pursuing degree
 - Save all 12 months until after graduation
 - Use some OPT before graduation and the remainder upon completion of degree
- Application may be submitted up to 90 days in advance and including 60 days after graduation
- Start dates are chosen by applicant but dates cannot be changed once application is processed by USCIS
- No more than 90 days of unemployment are allowed during the 12 months of post-completion OPT
- Must report current name and address of employer as well as any changes of employer to International Student Adviser
- Authorization to begin work is the Employment Authorization Document (EAD card)

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- Terminate all on-campus employment.
 - May only work until the last day of the term in which you complete your degree requirements
- Verify completion of all degree requirements.
 - All degree requirements need to be completed before beginning post-completion OPT.
 - If degree requirements are not finished, OPT employment cannot begin until degree requirements are completed and OPT employment time already granted by USCIS will be lost
- Verify your mailing address.
 - Home address needs to be valid for at least 90 days after filing application to avoid the return of the application by USCIS. College address may be used if unsure of an address change.
- Be aware of travel risks.
 - Should not travel outside the United States until receiving EAD card from USCIS
 - USCIS may consider pending applications to be abandoned if the applicant departs the United States
 - For travel outside the U.S. after receiving EAD card, a job offer must be received before departing the U.S.
 - Must also have a valid passport, valid F-1 visa, and a valid I-20 document with a travel signature that is less than 6 months old.
 - If F-1 visa is not valid, must apply for one at the U.S. Embassy in home country.

PROCEDURE TO APPLY FOR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

1. Attend a required Practical Training Information Session.
2. Request a Degree Audit from the Records office using the College of DuPage web site (www.cod.edu) and meet with an Academic/Faculty Adviser to discuss the audit and determine how many courses/credits are remaining to complete degree.
3. Have an adviser complete the Academic Advisor Recommendation Form (purple form available from Practical Training Information Session).
4. Schedule an appointment to meet with the International Student Adviser and bring the following documents:
 - Academic Advisor Recommendation Form signed by your Academic/Faculty Adviser
 - Cashiers check or money order for \$380 payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security (no personal checks accepted)
 - Two passport-style photographs (2"x 2" color photo with plain background and full-face view)
 - Completed I-765 form and 1 photocopy
 - Original SEVIS I-20 document (issued during appointment)
 - Photocopy of the front and back of I-94 card (must be able to read the details of the red stamp)
 - Photocopy of most recent visa used to enter the United States (even if it is now expired)
 - Photocopies of the passport pages that contain: name, photograph, passport number, passport expiration date, birth information
 - Photocopies of ALL previously issued I-20 documents
 - Photocopy of Notice of Action approving change of status to F-1 international student status (if applicable)

After reviewing the application with International Student Adviser, take a photocopy of the entire application and mail the original by regular First Class Mail to the following address. Do NOT send passport or original I-94 card to USCIS. Do not send the application by Express or Certified Mail because it may delay the application process.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
P.O. Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036
Attn: I-765 OPT Application

Processing time is approximately 60 to 90 days for the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card to be received; however, during peak season it may take 120 days or even longer.

EMPLOYMENT MUST NOT BEGIN UNTIL EAD CARD IS **RECEIVED** FROM USCIS

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION

All students doing OPT are still considered to be F-1 international student under the jurisdiction of the institution that issued the I-20 for OPT permission. Any changes of name, address or any other changes in plans (i.e. quit or change job, transfer to another school, change immigration status, etc.) must be reported to the International Student Adviser.

Any travel outside of the United States for any reason during the Optional Practical Training requires an I-20 travel signature from the International Student Adviser.