

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

This information is provided as an overview for current F-1 international students interested in employment options during their stay in the U.S. This information is subject to change without notice. For individual questions, please contact the International Student Services Office.

WHAT IS OPT?

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

REQUIREMENTS TO OBTAIN OPT

The student must have completed one full academic year of study, be in good academic standing and be maintaining lawful F-1 student status. Student's studying in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program are not eligible. Student's may be authorized for a maximum of 12 months of Optional Practical Training. Application may be submitted up to 90 days in advance and including 60 days after graduation. Start dates are chosen by applicant. No more than 90 days of unemployment are allowed during the 12 months of post-completion OPT. Authorization to begin work is the Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) received in the mail from USCIS. The student must attend a Practical Training Information Session prior to receiving OPT endorsement.

PART TIME OR FULL TIME OPTIONS

OPT may be authorized for either part-time (20 hours or less per week) or full-time (more than 20 hours per week) employment and 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

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Students with authorized OPT must report current name and address of employer as well as any changes of employer to International Student Advisor. The reporting of Employer Information Number (EIN) of employer is highly recommended.

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

Contact the International Student Services Office for further details and to register for a Practical Training Information Session at 630.942.3328 or intlstdt@cod.edu .

PROCEDURE TO APPLY FOR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

1. Complete the “Application for Degree” through myACCESS under Student forms
2. Schedule an appointment to meet with the International Student Advisor and bring the following documents:
 - ❑ Cashier’s check or money order for \$410.00 payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security
 - ❑ Two passport-style photographs taken within 30 days of application filing date
 - ❑ I-765 form and one photocopy (complete online and print) <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
 - ❑ G-1145 E-Notification form (complete online and print) <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>
 - ❑ Copy of I-94 admission number (retrieve online and print) <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>
 - ❑ Copy of most recent visa used to enter the U.S. (even if it is now expired)
 - ❑ Copy of the passport pages that contain: name, photograph, passport number, passport expiration date, birth information
 - ❑ Copies of *ALL* previously issued I-20 documents
 - ❑ Copy of USCIS Notice of Action approving change of status to F-1 international student status (if applicable)
 - ❑ Choose your employment start date (any day within 60 day grace period after graduation)
 - ❑ Original SEVIS I-20 document with OPT recommendation (issued during appointment)
 - ❑ Updated email contact for portal
 - ❑ Official Transcripts as evidence of 1 year full-time enrollment (pre-completion only)

After reviewing application with International Student Advisor, take a copy of entire application and mail the original to the following address.

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

Processing time is approximately 90 days for the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card to be received in the mail.

EMPLOYMENT MUST NOT BEGIN UNTIL EAD CARD IS RECEIVED FROM USCIS

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION

All students participating in 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, phone number, email address or any other changes in plans must be reported to the International Student Advisor. Any travel outside of the U.S. for any reason during Optional Practical Training requires an I-20 travel signature from the International Student Advisor.