

## OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR F-1 STUDENTS

PRIOR TO COMPLETION OF STUDY AND POST-COMPLETION OF STUDY FOR STUDENTS  
IN F-1 STATUS

Current U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regulations governing Optional Practical Training (OPT) took effect on January 1, 2003. **These regulations apply to all students in F-1 status (those who were in the United States on or before that date and those who enter the United States after that date).**

Practical training is defined as, “paid employment directly related to your major area of study, following the completion of your academic degree.” **Students in F-1 status must have been enrolled full-time for at least nine consecutive months (one academic year) before they are eligible for Optional Practical Training.**

### **TO OBTAIN A SEVIS FORM I-20 TO APPLY FOR OPT**

In order to receive your SEVIS Form I-20 authorizing OPT, you must submit the following:

- 1. Graduation Application Receipt from the Registrar’s Office, which shows that you are eligible for graduation this academic year**
- 2. Academic Advisor’s Recommendation Form (Attached)**
  - **Undergraduate Students Only:** The academic advisor will require you to complete the academic worksheet before they will sign the recommendation form for OPT.
- 3. Completed Form I-765 (Attached)**

### **WHAT SHOULD YOUR OPT START DATE BE?**

Practical training **must** begin no later than 60 days following your semester end date.

#### **FALL 2019 GRADUATES**

Earliest Possible OPT Start Date: 12/21/2019    Last possible OPT Start Date: 02/18/2020

#### **WINTER 2020 GRADUATES**

Earliest Possible OPT Start Date: 01/24/2020    Last possible OPT Start Date: 03/23/2020

#### **SPRING 2020 GRADUATES**

Earliest Possible OPT Start Date: 05/23/2020    Last possible OPT Start Date: 07/21/2020

#### **SUMMER I 2020 GRADUATES**

Earliest Possible OPT Start Date: 07/10/2020    Last possible OPT Start Date: 09/07/2020

#### **SUMMER II GRADUATES**

Earliest Possible OPT Start Date: 08/14/2020    Last possible OPT Start Date: 10/12/2020

**You may choose any date between the earliest possible OPT start date and last possible OPT start date.**

## **OPTIONAL PRACTICAL (OPT) WORKSHOP**

It is mandatory that an F-1 student requesting OPT attend at least one the International Student Service Center's (ISSC) OPT Workshops. Several OPT Workshops are held each semester. For OPT Workshop times and dates, please see "Immigration 101 Workshops" flyer located in the ISSC office.

## **POST COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING**

A student in F-1 status may apply up to 90 days before the completion date or semester end date and /or during the 60 days grace period after completion of your program. Students **MUST** file their application to USCIS within 30 days of the creation of the Form I-20 with the OPT recommendation. It is important that all students understand that program completion refers to the date that you have finished all coursework and any project/thesis/dissertation for your degree. **It is not your graduation date.**

Optional practical training is **limited to a total of 12 months**. A student becomes eligible for another 12 month period of OPT after he or she completes a degree at a higher educational level.

An extension of OPT is possible only if you have completed a STEM degree and accepted employment with a company enrolled in the E-Verify Program. The extension must be requested after the six months of employment and before the expiration date of the EAD Card. A copy of your degree reflecting the conferred degree as well as your major of study must be submitted. A new application fee is also required. The extension can be requested only for one academic degree only.

An offer of employment is not required to obtain approval for OPT. OPT is recommended by the International Student Service Center (ISSC), and authorized by the USCIS.

### **Studying while on OPT:**

- As per F-1 regulations, authorization to engage in optional practical training employment is automatically terminated once you transfer to another school or begin study at another educational level.

## **PRE-COMPLETION PROGRAM OPT (PRE-OPT)**

A student in F-1 status may apply for Pre-OPT and begin employment prior to the completion of their program. Students engaged in Pre-OPT can work a maximum of 20 hours per week while school is in session\*. During annual vacations and while school is NOT in session, students can engage in Pre-OPT on full or part-time basis.

**\*If you are authorized to work on-campus and also choose to engage in Practical Training (CPT or Pre-OPT), per ICE regulations the total number of hours for the Practical training and on-campus employment can NOT exceed twenty hours while school is in session. You may work full-time during periods when school is not in session or during your annual break.**

[http://www.ice.gov/sevis/employment/faq\\_f\\_on1.htm#\\_1\\_13](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/employment/faq_f_on1.htm#_1_13)

Pre-OPT employment does NOT constitute a reason for a student to be enrolled for a reduced course load.

Time granted to a student for Pre-OPT is deducted from the 12 months of Post Completion OPT eligibility. For each month of Pre-OPT that the student is authorized for full-time employment, a month is deducted from the students Post Completion OPT. For every two months of Pre-OPT that the student is authorized for part-time employment, one month is deducted from the students Post Completion OPT.

NOTE: Other employment categories, such as Curricular Practical Training or Off-Campus employment based on Economic Hardship may be better choices than Pre-OPT, provided that the student qualifies for the type of employment. These categories permit the student to work while still enrolled; yet in most cases, the student will still be eligible for the full 12 months of Post Completion OPT.

## **PROCESSING INFORMATION**

**An application filed without the required fee, all the necessary documents, signature and photographs will be denied by the USCIS.** You must be sure to submit a complete Optional Practical Training application to the USCIS. Additionally, all Optional Practical Training applications must be received by the USCIS **no later than 30 days from the creation of your Optional Practical Training Form I-20.**

## **DECISIONS ON YOUR APPLICATION**

- **Approval:**

If approved, your EAD card will be mailed to you at your filed address.

- **Request for further information:**

If additional information or documentation is required, a written request will be sent to you requesting further specific information.

- **Denial:**

If your application cannot be approved, you will receive a written notice explaining the basis of your denial. You can file a “motion to reopen” requesting USCIS to reconsider their decision. A processing fee is required.

## **TIME**

It will take the **USCIS Service Center 60 to 90 days to process your request.** Processing times may vary on the USCIS Service Center’s workload. Employment may NOT commence until you have obtained approval from USCIS and you have received your Employment Authorization Decal (EAD) Card. You **MUST** begin working only as of the start date listed on your EAD Card, NOT before.

## **TRAVEL**

The DHS and the U.S. Department of State (DOS) agree that an F-1 student who has timely filed an application for OPT post-completion of study may travel outside the United States while the OPT application is pending, provided that the F-1 student can present the Notice of Action Form I-797, proving that the application has been filed.

However, once the EAD card for OPT is issued to the F-1 student if a student decides to travel abroad, the student can only re-enter the United States to **resume employment.** DHS has clarified that the F-1 student does not need to have already begun actual employment before leaving, as long as the student has a job offer for which he/she is returning. If you have recently applied for OPT and decide to travel, you will need the following documents for re-entry:

1. SEVIS I-20 signed by the Designated School Officer at Baruch College
2. Valid EAD card
3. Unexpired passport
4. Valid F-1 visa
5. Letter from a U.S. based employer certifying that you are returning to resume or commence employment

## OPT CHECKLIST FOR USCIS

**All applications must be filed with the documents required below**

**You must submit:**

- **A copy of your current SEVIS I-20 - with OPT authorization indicated on the 2<sup>nd</sup> page**
- **Copies of all your previous I-20's** - for the new I-20 format send copies of the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> pages, and for the previous I-20 format send copies of the 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> pages
  - **Important:** If you are missing any of your previously issued SEVIS I-20s, you must submit a police report, which states that your SEVIS I-20s were lost or stolen. The ISSC will not provide you with any copies of SEVIS I-20s without a police report.
- **A copy of your Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record** – retrieve your electronic I-94 number via [www.cbp.gov/I94](http://www.cbp.gov/I94)
- **A copy of your passport identification page** - which includes your photograph
- **Form I-765** - Original
- **Two photos** - with a white background taken no earlier than 30 days before submission to USCIS. They should be un-mounted, printed on thin paper glossy, and un-retouched. See attachment of the composition checklist for detailed information about the photos. **Lightly print your name and your admission (I-94) number** on the back of each photo with a pencil.
- **A copy of your last EAD, if applicable** - front and back
- **Fee** - Applicants must pay a fee of **\$410.00** to file this form. If the request is denied the fee will not be refunded. Pay in the exact amount. Checks and money orders must be payable in U.S. currency. Make check or money order payable to **“U.S. Department of Homeland Security”**. There will be an additional charge and delay if your check is not honored.
- **REMEMBER: Your application must be received by the USCIS no later than 30 days from the creation of your Optional Practical Training Form I-20. If unable to file within the 30 days, please contact our office immediately.**
- **Where to file** - If you live in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, or Pennsylvania, mail your application to:

**For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries**

USCIS  
PO Box 660867  
Dallas, TX 75266

**For Express mail and courier deliveries**

USCIS  
Attn: AOS  
2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business  
Suite 400  
Lewisville, TX 75067

**Note:** Please be sure to write in the lower left hand corner of your mailing envelope:  
**Optional Practical Training – Form I-765.**

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|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>INSTRUCTIONS FOR FORM I-765</b></p> |
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**United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) recommend that you retain a copy of your completed application for your records.**

- Check the correct category in **Part 1. Reason for Applying**

**Part II.**

- OPT Applications **MUST** be done in black ink.
- Item # 1-11: Personal Information
- Item # 8: An Alien Registration (or A Number) is typically given to a person that has applied for immigration benefits (i.e. Permanent Residency). Generally, if you have not made a request to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) for Permanent Residency or Political Asylum, you will not have an A Number. If you have no A Number, you will leave question 8 blank.
- Item # 12: Did you ever submit a form I-765 (Application for employment Authorization) to USCIS?
- Item #13-17: Social Security Information
- Item #18-20: Countries of Citizenship and place/date of birth
- Item #21.a: Form I-94 Number. You can find your latest I-94 number by visiting: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>.
- Item #22: Date of Last Entry into the U.S.
- Item #23: Place of Last Entry into the U.S.
- Item #24: Status at Last Entry (As an **F-1 Student** or **B-2 Tourist** or **Worker, etc.**)
- Item #25: Current Immigrant Status (As an **F-1 Student**)
- Item #26: Current SEVIS ID number as listed on your most recent I-20

- Item #27: Eligibility Categories - **(c) (3) (B)** - *F-1 Students Seeking Post-Completion Optional Practical Training in an Occupation Directly Related to Studies*. The USCIS adjudicates a request for employment authorization by determining whether an applicant has submitted the required information and documentation, and whether the applicant is eligible. In order to determine your eligibility; you must identify the category in which you are eligible and fill in that category in question 27 on Form I-765.
- \*For **Pre-OPT** the code is **(c) (3) (A)**. For **STEM OPT Extension**, the code is **(c) (3) (C)**.
- Part 6. Additional Information: Students that have previously been authorized for CPT, Pre-Completion OPT or Post-Completion OPT must use “Part 6. Additional Information” (page 7) to list all SEVIS numbers and all previously authorized CPT and/or OPT. Students must also state the academic level at which the CPT, Pre-Completion OPT or Post-Completion OPT was authorized. Additionally, Students requesting Pre-Completion OPT must include proof of lawful full-time enrollment for one full academic year. The ISSC recommends that you include a copy of your official transcripts as proof when applying for Pre-Completion OPT.

\*When providing information to the USCIS regarding previous Pre or Post -Completion OPT participation, please be sure to include Page Number: 2, Part Number: 2 and Item Number: 12 above your responses to Part 6 of the Form I-765.

### **Part III.**

- Item #7 - **Applicant’s Signature:** Sign within the white space (do not cross the line) and date

- **Please do not mail your OPT application package until you receive your SEVIS I-20 with the recommended OPT dates indicated on the second page.**
- **Mail your OPT application and supporting documentation via Certified Mail.**
- **Once you receive your EAD Card you must provide the ISSC with a copy of the card (front and back) and a copy of the hiring letter with a description of your responsibilities. We will then issue you a new SEVIS I-20 indicating that OPT has been approved.**

- ❖ For more information regarding Form I-765 application instructions, please visit the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services’ website at: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>.



**Advisor Completes This Section**

**Please note the date of completion is the date of the semester that the student will complete his/her degree requirements.**

The student named above, will complete/has completed all requirements for:

(Check one)

Bachelor's Degree       Master's Degree       Other

Field of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

**I anticipate that this student will complete all the requirements for the current program of study on or about:**

Fall: \_\_\_\_\_ Winter: \_\_\_\_\_ Spring: \_\_\_\_\_

Summer:      Term 1: \_\_\_\_\_      Term 2: \_\_\_\_\_

The student is currently enrolled:       Full-Time       Part-Time

The student is currently enrolled for the following courses:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Print)

Advisor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

**For Office Use Only**

ISSC Action: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_ Entered in SEVIS (Date): \_\_\_\_\_

Student Contacted (Date): \_\_\_\_\_ SEVIS RTI Screen Printed: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM AND ATTACHMENTS TO THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICE CENTER**

Rev 11/13/19

International Student Service Center

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