Optional Practical Training (OPT) is defined as “temporary employment related to the student’s major area of study.”

The purpose of Optional Practical Training is for the student to gain work experience in his or her field of study during or after completion of a bachelors, masters, or doctoral program. There are two types of OPT. Pre-completion OPT, which is done prior to your program completion and Post-completion OPT, which is done after commencement. The application procedures on the document explain the procedures for Post-completion OPT.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. The student must have been studying consecutively for one full academic year (completion of one Fall and Spring semester), full time.
2. The work must be directly related to the student’s major field of study.
3. The student must be in good academic standing.
4. For Post-completion OPT, the student needs to graduate.
5. The student must not have used OPT at another college.

When is the timeline for filing the OPT application:

1. Students can apply no earlier than 90 days prior to completion of studies.
2. The application must be received by USCIS no later than 60 days after your program completion date. “All OPT must be completed within 14 months of your program end date.”
3. USCIS must receive your paperwork no later than 30 days after the date the DSO produced your new I-20 with OPT recommendations.

Things to Consider:

4. Optional Practical Training may be used before or after completion of studies for a combined period of no more than twelve months per education level. (If you choose to do OPT while still in your program, you can work no more than 20 hours per week.)
5. Full-time CPT for one year or more disqualifies you from applying for OPT.
6. It is not required that the student have a job offer prior to applying for OPT. You can register with the Center for Career Services to participate in their job search programs.
7. You can have more than one employer and the work can be paid or unpaid.
8. You must have at least 20 hours per week and you cannot have more than 90 days of unemployment.
9. TRAVEL: An F-1 student with an expired visa should wait for OPT approval to travel, if a valid visa is required for reentry. The Department of State will NOT issue a visa to an applicant with a pending OPT application.
Student should have a valid F-1 visa, Form I-20 signed by DSO, valid passport, EAD card and letter from employer.

Application Procedure:

   a. **Form G-1145** filled out (attached to top)
   b. **Form I-765**, filled out, signed and dated (check fee amount)
      • Make sure you check off what you are applying for: Permission to accept employment.
      • Item #10 – A-Number or I-94 Number: Put your I-94 number unless USCIS has previously assigned you an alien registration number
      • Item # 11- If you have ever applied for hardship or optional practical training employment before, answer yes, where and when you applied, whether it was granted or denied and attach a photocopy of any EAD care issued for it. Otherwise check “No”
      • Your Certification – Sign in BLUE ink, put your telephone number and the date.
      • Item # 16: Enter the code that applies to the type of OPT you are requesting: Post-completion OPT – (c) (3) (B)
   c. **Two passport photos (2 x 2)** (with name in marker on back)

[http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/photos/photo-examples.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/photos/photo-examples.html)

   d. Photocopies of all other I-20’s pages 1 & 2 (If a transfer student, you must submit the previous school’s SEVIS 1-20)
   e. A copy of your **I-94 sheet**

   f. A copy of your **visa**
   g. A copy of the **ID pages from your passport** (or for applications for renewal of work authorization, a copy of your EAD card)
   h. **The fee** (Money Order, Bank Check or Personal Check) made payable to the [US Department of Homeland Security](http://www.uscis.gov). For the most updated amount, go to [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).

   • Check out procedures for filling out a check or money order on my webpage.
   [http://www.marist.edu/registrar/pdfs/Check%20example2.pdf](http://www.marist.edu/registrar/pdfs/Check%20example2.pdf)
   [http://www.marist.edu/registrar/pdfs/money%20order%20example2.pdf](http://www.marist.edu/registrar/pdfs/money%20order%20example2.pdf)
2. **Print the OPT Recommendation form.** Fill out the form and email it to the DSO for an appointment; so that the DSO can create a new I-20 with OPT recommendations. Make sure all information on current I-20 is correct, when making appointment.
   i. Add **new SEVIS I-20** with **DSO’s recommendation for OPT**
      (original form – DSO will give you) student must sign.
3. Use a large envelope to send all paperwork to:

   **US Postal Service (USPS):**
   USCIS Dallas Lockbox
   USCIS
   PO Box 660867
   Dallas, TX 75266
   - See example on my website for correctly filling out an envelope.
     [http://www.marist.edu/registrar/pdfs/Envelope%20Instructions.pdf](http://www.marist.edu/registrar/pdfs/Envelope%20Instructions.pdf)

4. Use Return Receipt Requested.
   - See example on my website for filling out Return Receipt Request.
     [http://www.marist.edu/registrar/pdfs/Return%20Receipt%20Example.pdf](http://www.marist.edu/registrar/pdfs/Return%20Receipt%20Example.pdf)

   **Note:** Remember to mail your application **Certified/Return receipt** so that you will have a record that the USCIS received and signed for your packet.

**YOU CAN NOT WORK UNTIL YOU HAVE RECEIVED YOUR EAD CARD FROM USCIS, AND IT IS ON OR AFTER THE START DATE LOCATED ON THE CARD.**

**Reporting Responsibilities:**

SEVIS now requires that once employment is secured, you must inform the DSO of this information (name of employer and their address, start date and how the employment relates to their field of study) to maintain your F-1 status. In addition, it is the student’s responsibility to report, within 10 days, any changes in the following:
- Legal name
- Residential and mailing address
- Phone number
- E-mail address
- Employer name
- Employer address
- Job title or position
- Employment start and end date