Optional Practical Training (OPT)

12 Month OPT Workshop

International Student Services

Contact information:

Location: Main campus - 1800 Ward Edwards (WDE), Warrensburg, MO

Missouri Innovation Campus- 1101 NW Innovation Parkway, Lee's Summit, MO

Phone: 660-543-4092

E-mail: ISSS@ucmo.edu

It is important for international students to stay informed on the current regulations and policies. The following webpage provides valuable information and forms for our international students:

Forms page

Your International Student Advisors

Director – Dr. Phil Hull, WDE 1800

Assistant Director – Emily de Melo, Lee's Summit

Advisors:	Last name starts with:
Andrea Wiggins - WDE 1800	A – Chun
Cord Cochran – WDE 1800	Chuo – Kaml
Becky Leevey - Lee's Summit	Kamm - Moh
Jeffrey Couch – Lee's Summit	Moi - Redc
Keith Harrison - WDE 1800	Redd-Z

Advising Hours

- Walk-in advising hours:
- Mondays, and Wednesday through Friday 1 pm – 3 pm, Tuesdays 10 am – 12 pm on both campuses
- Phone in advising:
  - Students living outside of the Warrensburg/Kansas City area can call in Monday - Friday anytime between 8 am and 5 pm to get a message to their international student advisor requesting phone advising

Part 1

- What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?
- What are the Eligibility Requirements?

What is OPT?

- OPT = **O**ptional **P**ractical **T**raining.
- OPT is an F1 visa benefit for *degree seeking* students.
- There is a 24 month extension option for those in a STEM field. This type of OPT will be addressed in a different workshop.
- 12 month OPT authorizes you to work off campus, in a job *related* to your degree.
  - If your job is not related to your degree; you are not authorized to work and therefore are out of status.

What is OPT?

- OPT is approved by USCIS and not by UCM.
  - We will provide the I-20 for OPT recommendation, but recommending OPT does not mean you are approved. All of your documents must be sent to USCIS for approval.
- Once you are approved you will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card which will list your approved OPT start and end dates.

Eligibility Requirements

- Be an F-1 student in valid visa status
- Have completed at least 1 full academic year before applying for OPT.
  - 1 full academic year is defined as 30 weeks, a full fall and spring semester.
  - Students that have changed to F-1 status outside of the U.S. within the last year are not eligible for OPT.
- Have current, non-expired passport
  - Ensure your passport will be valid for at least 6 months at the time of application
- Have valid I-94
  - If your name is incorrect on the I-94, have it corrected with CBP.
- Have applied for graduation and be in your *last* semester of study

Eligibility Requirements-CPT Use

- CPT will affect your eligibility for OPT if:
  - You have worked for 12 months on full-time CPT
    - Example: You worked full-time on CPT from May of 2022-May of 2023. In this instance you are no longer eligible for the OPT visa benefit.
  - If you have worked on full-time CPT for less than 12 months, your OPT is not affected.
    - Example: You worked on full-time CPT for two semesters from August of 2021 to May of 2022. This is less than 12 months of full-time CPT and you are still eligible to apply for OPT.
  - If you have worked 12 months on part-time CPT you are eligible to apply for OPT and have no restrictions.

Eligibility Requirements-Thesis/U grade

- If you are working on a Thesis or Dissertation requirement or a U grade but have completed all other coursework for your program; you are eligible to apply for 12 month OPT.

- CAUTION: you must finish your entire degree program, and have received your degree from UCM before you can apply for the 24 month STEM extension.

  - If you fail to complete your program before your 12 month OPT ends, you are no longer eligible to apply for the 24 month STEM extension and must stop working after your 12 month OPT ends.

Eligibility Requirements-Job

- You do not need to have a job in order to apply for 12 month OPT.

- You can begin looking for a job before your OPT approval from USCIS, but you may not begin working until you receive approval from USCIS, and the start date arrives.

- Even if you are currently working on CPT and plan to work at the same employer while on OPT you must stop working once your CPT end date arrives. You can resume working again once OPT is approved by USCIS and the start date arrives.

Part 2

How to Apply for 12 Month OPT with UCM

How to Apply for 12 Month OPT with USCIS

Common I-765 Errors

How to Request an OPT I-20

1. Apply for Graduation in MyCentral (records and registration)

2. Review this presentation and attend an OPT workshop/webinar

3. Complete the OPT Application on the forms page.

4. Submit payment for our $100 OPT Case Management Fee.

    You may submit your payment online here.

   Allow 7-10 business days for I-20 processing*

*processing will begin no earlier than 90 days before your graduation date and the 7-10 day timeframe applies only to those who have successfully completed all steps listed above.

How to Request an OPT I-20

- When filling out the UCM 12 Month OPT Google Form Request be prepared to answer the following questions:
  - What is your OPT requested start date?
    - You may choose a start date anytime within 60 days of the Thursday after your graduation date.

Graduation semester	Graduation date	Earliest possible OPT start date	Latest possible OPT start date
Spring	May 6th	May 13th	July 11th
Summer	August 4th	August 12th	October 10th
Fall	December 9th	December 16th	February 13th

  - What are your previously approved CPT start and end dates?

How to Apply with USCIS

- Once you have received your OPT I-20 from UCM, you are ready to submit your [I-765 application](#) to USCIS.

- **Notice – The I-765 is a form between the student and USCIS. The information provided below is our office's understanding of the requirements. It is provided for general information only and is not legal advice. Proper completion of the form is solely the student's responsibility. We encourage you to seek legal advice from an immigration attorney on when and how to complete I-765 forms and other USCIS application documents. Selection of an attorney is a personal choice. UCM does not endorse or recommend a particular attorney.**

- You have two options when filing the I-765 form –
  - Mail in application to USCIS
  - Submit application electronically

- Choose Post-completion OPT (c)(3)(B) option
  - Include all previously used SEVIS receipt numbers and any previously authorized CPT or OPT and the academic level in which it was authorized in Part 6, Additional Information
  - Include a copy of the Form I-20 endorsed by the DSO within 30 days before filing Form I-765

How to Apply with USCIS

- Supporting documents:
  - A printout of your electronic Form **I-94** from www.cbp.gov/i94
  - A copy of your **last EAD** (front and back). If you were not previously issued an EAD, a copy of your **passport** showing your picture, name, and date of birth
  - **Photographs** - You must submit two identical color passport-style photographs of yourself taken recently. The photos must have a white to off-white background, be printed on thin paper with a glossy finish, and be unmounted and unretouched. The two identical passport-style photos must be 2 by 2 inches. The photos must be in color with a full face, frontal view, on a white to off-white background. Head height should measure 1 to 1 3/8 inches from the top of your hair to the bottom of your chin, and eye height is between 1 1/8 to 1 3/8 inches from the top of your eyes to the bottom of photo.

How to Apply with USCIS

Supporting documents continued:

- Form G-1145, Request for e-Notification (if applicable)

- **I-765**, signed

- All **previously used SEVIS receipt numbers** and any **previously authorized CPT or OPT** and the academic level in which it was authorized in Part 6, Additional Information

- A copy of the **Form I-20** endorsed for OPT by the DSO within 30 days before filing Form I-765

- **Filing fee ($410)**:

You may pay the fee with a money order, personal check or cashier's check. When filing at a USCIS Lockbox facility, you may also pay by credit card using Form G-1450, Authorization for Credit Card Transactions. If you pay by check, you must make your check payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

How to Apply with USCIS

- Where to file (if mailing application):

The filing address depends on your reason for applying and the eligibility category. Please check the [filing locations for Form I-765](#) (Foreign students - (c)(3)(B) (c)(3)(C) for a list of addresses. If you file at a lockbox, read the [filing tips](#). **Don't forget to sign your form.**

- Once sent it could take up to 3 to 5 months for USCIS to process your application.

How to Apply with USCIS

- **Notice – The OPT application and I-20 must be submitted to USCIS within 30 days of the OPT recommendation made in SEVIS.**
  - For example: The DSO logs into SEVIS and makes a recommendation for OPT in SEVIS for you on November 25th, 2022. The application must arrive at USCIS no later than December 24th, 2022.
  - *Typically*, but not always, the recommended date in SEVIS is the same date the I-20 was printed out.
  - Contact ISSS@ucmo.edu if you do not mail your application in time. Be specific that you need a new OPT I-20, rather than a reprint to send for your USCIS OPT application.

- *WARNING: Do not send your application to USCIS more than 90 days before your graduation date. Packets sent to USCIS even 91 days before will be rejected. Often with your check already deposited.

Part 3

What Happens Next?

Travel Outside the US

I-797 Receipt Notice

EAD Cards

What Happens Next

- Once USCIS has received your application you will receive an I-797, Notice of Receipt.

  - This typically happens about two weeks after they have received your application.

- The 'Receipt Number' listed on the I-797 can be used as a reference to check the 'status' of your application at USCIS

You can call USCIS or you can use the online "Check my USCIS case status" feature for updates regarding your application

We are unable to update you on the status of your application. USCIS will not speak with us about your application. Please communicate directly with them should you have questions.
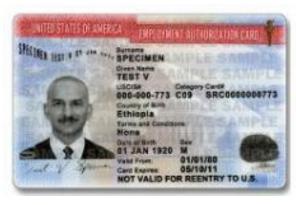
What Happens Next-Travel Outside the US

- If your OPT is pending, travel outside of the US is *not* recommended. USCIS could see your exit from the county as abandonment of your application and cancel your OPT application.

- If your OPT is approved but you have not secured a job, travel outside of the US is risky. You could be denied re-entry.

- Once OPT is approved and you have a job travel outside the US is less risky.

What Happens Next-USCIS Decision

- You will receive either:
  - An approval of your OPT
    - With accompanying EAD card
  - A Request for Evidence (RFE)
  - A denial or rejection of your OPT application

Approval Notice

- You will receive an approval notice in the mail from USCIS
- You will receive your EAD card (Employment Authorization Document)
- You are approved to work only between the days listed on your EAD card.
  - You must have your EAD card in hand in order to work

Request for Evidence (RFE)

- Some applicants will receive a notice from USCIS asking for more information. This is called an RFE.

- Should you receive an RFE read it carefully and read it from top to bottom. You must comply with everything listed on the RFE and by the deadline provided.

- Should any of the documents listed need to be produced by a DSO (that's us!) please scan and email a copy of the RFE to us as soon as possible.

- Once all documents listed on the RFE are received/collected, send it back to USCIS using the envelope provided and before the deadline.

Denial/Rejection

- While not common these do happen. Should you receive one please read the entire document.

- Typically there is a reason for a denial or rejection.

- If you feel there is substantial information you can provide to show the denial or rejection was made in error or that your case should be reconsidered you may appeal. However; please know that appeals are expensive, time consuming and often not approved.

Part 4

Program End Date

Unemployment Limits

Job Reporting

End of 12 month OPT

Program End Date

- In order to recommend OPT, your program end date will be shortened.
  - Example: Your program end date says May 31, 2023 but you will graduate in December of 2022 and you want to apply for OPT starting January 15, 2023. In this example:
    - Your program end date will be shortened to December 17, 2022(the Thursday after graduation for the summer semester)
    - Your OPT recommended dates will be January 15, 2023-January 14, 2024.
  - Because OPT happens after your degree, your program end date will always be before your OPT start date.

Program End Date

- If you are not going to graduate as anticipated and need to extend your program end date, you must let us know as soon as possible.
  - If your OPT has already been approved we will be required to cancel your OPT request and you lose the ability to have OPT entirely. Including the 24 month extension.
  - If your OPT is still pending we can assist you in cancelling the request in SEVIS

- If you are unsure that you will pass your classes or unsure that you will graduate on time, **do not apply for OPT**. Wait until the end of the semester or until you are certain you will graduate on time.
  - Remember you have until 60 days after your program ends to apply for OPT, so there is no penalty for waiting. However, the penalty for applying too early is severe.

Unemployment Limits

- 90 total days of unemployment are allowed while on 12 month OPT

- The 90 day limit does not restart after each new job. It is cumulative.

- The 90 day unemployment limit is not monitored by us. We do not report unemployment in SEVIS. We only report employment start and end dates.

- It is possible for your record to be terminated for surpassing the 90 day unemployment limit. SEVP will be sending out letters to students that have not reported an employer in their SEVP Portal and are near the 90 day unemployment limit.

Unemployment Limits

- What counts as 'employment'
  - Working full-time
    - USCIS considers full-time employment anything more than 20 hours a week
  - On 12 month OPT you do not need to be paid to be considered employed.
  - Must be working in a position that is related to your degree of study.

SEVP Portal

- Students will receive an email to activate their OPT SEVP/SEVIS Portal after they receive the EAD card from USCIS with OPT Approval

- Students are required to keep their local address and employer details updated within the portal within 10 days of any change

- Students are also required to submit our forms with any changes for documentation purposes, and to ensure that a new I-20 is issued with updated employer details

- If you do not update your employment to the SEVP Portal within 10 days of beginning your employment, the portal will block you from updating your employment information.

Job Reporting

- You must report all new employment to SEVP and UCM within 10 days.
  - Update employer details within the SEVP Portal. If you do not update your employment to the SEVP Portal within 10 days of beginning your employment, the portal will block you from updating your employment information.
  - Fill out the appropriate form on the ISSS webpage.
  - Submit a job offer letter to ISSS@ucmo.edu
    - The job description in the job offer letter must be related to your field of study listed on your I-20
  - Please also be prepared to describe, in one to two sentences, how your job relates to your program of study.
  - It is highly recommended that you keep a copy of all of your offer letters for your records as you may be asked to provide documentation to show that your employment during OPT aligned with your field of study, if you apply for future benefits through USCIS

Job Reporting

- You must also report any changes in your current employment within 10 days. This includes:
  - Change in title or position at your current employer
  - Change in supervisor or supervisor contact information at your current employer
  - Change in employer address
  - Change in employer name
- Report these changes by updating the SEVP Portal, filling out the appropriate form on the ISSS website as well as providing a new job offer letter. If you do not update your employment to the SEVP Portal within 10 days of beginning your employment, the portal will block you from updating your employment information.

Job Reporting

- If you are on OPT and are working at the same employer you had while on CPT you still need to report your employer.

- CPT and OPT are not the same type of employment. We will not assume you are still working at your CPT employer. You must tell us where you are working and it needs to be done within the 10 day time frame.

- If you do not update your employment to the SEVP Portal within 10 days of beginning your employment, the portal will block you from updating your employment information.

- Employers are required to notify us within 48 hours if you are fired, quit or otherwise lose your current job.
  - We are required to report this to SEVIS.

End of 12 Month OPT

- Your 12 Month OPT end date is drawing near. What can you do next?
  - If you are in a STEM field you can begin the process of applying for the 24 month STEM OPT extension
    - We will have a separate workshop about that process later this semester
  - If you are not in a STEM field, or do not wish to apply for the extension you may:
    - Transfer to another school
    - Start a new degree program at UCM
    - Return home

End of 12 Month OPT

- After the end of your 12 month OPT you have a 60 day grace period.
  - Example: Your 12 month OPT ends on May 1. Your 60 day grace period begins on May 2, and ends on July 1.
  - In that grace period you must take one of three steps:
    - Transfer to another school
    - Start a new degree program at UCM
    - Return home
- If you choose to transfer to a different school or start a new degree program at UCM *before* the end of your 12 month OPT, the rest of your OPT will be cancelled, you must stop working immediately.
  - Because of this regulation many students will choose to take this action after the end of their 12 month OPT, during their 60 day grace period.

End of 12 Month OPT

- The OPT visa benefit is available only once after each degree level. This means you have only one OPT opportunity after completing your master's degree. Once it's used at this level it's gone.
  - Example: You used your OPT visa benefit after receiving your Master's in Computer Science. You go back to school for an MBA. You *do not* qualify for OPT after completing your MBA.
  - Example: You used your OPT visa benefit after receiving your Master's in Computer Science. You go back to school for your PhD in Mathematics. You *do* qualify to apply for another 12 months of OPT as you have changed degree levels.

Part 5

Commonly Asked Questions

Am I still an F1 student if I'm on OPT?

- Yes. You are still considered to be an F1 student at UCM. However, your degree is completed and your program end date has passed

What are the reporting requirements while I'm on OPT?

- In addition to reporting changes or updates to your employer you are also still required to provide updates to your change of address, email or phone number.

- Fill out the Personal Information form on the ISS website to notify us of these types of updates. Also, submit any address updates directly within the SEVP Portal.

My EAD card says it is valid on May 15th, but I received it already. Can I begin working now?

- NO. You cannot begin working before the valid from date on your EAD card.
  - Please notice that even participation in an orientation for the employer is considered work.
  - If an employer requests you to come in early for any reason after you have accepted a position, be sure to check with an International Student Advisor in our office before going in.

Can I work for more than 1 employer on OPT?

- Yes. You can work for more than 1 employer at a time. However, remember there is a 20 hour a week requirement while on 12 month OPT. So you must work for each employer for a minimum of 20 hours a week.

- You must also report both employers to UCM and the SEVP Portal

Does my I-20 need to be updated with my new employer before I begin working there?

- No. You can move between employers without seeking approval or permission from UCM.

- Reminder: report your changes within **10 days**

- If you do not update your employment to the SEVP Portal within 10 days of beginning your employment, the portal will block you from updating your employment information.

If I'm employed but work less than 20 hours a week how does that affect my OPT?

- On 12 month OPT you must work a minimum of 20 hours a week. If you do not, it will be considered unemployment and will count towards your 90 day unemployment limit.

Do I qualify for health insurance through UCM while I am on OPT?

- Yes. You will not be automatically enrolled in the UCM health insurance while you are on OPT. However, should you want to continue your coverage please login to your MyCentral for information.

Do I need to file taxes?

- Generally speaking yes. If you are volunteering and are not receiving an income you are required to submit form 8843 to the IRS, but you may not have to file additional taxes in the US. However, if you are receiving a paycheck you are required to file taxes in the US.

- UCM does not offer tax preparation services and we are not qualified to answer your tax questions.

- Please consult a tax professional to ensure accurate and timely filing.

I lost my EAD card. How can I get a replacement?

- You must submit a new I-765 application. This includes providing a new $410.00 fee!!
  - Letter explaining how it was lost/stolen
  - New I-765
    - With 'replacement' option checked
  - Copy of your OPT I-20
  - Copy of your passport photo page
  - Copy of your I-94
  - 2 new passport photos
  - Check for $410.00 made out the "US Department of Homeland Security"
  - Copy of the original I-797 receipt
  - Copy of your EAD card

I am in my 60 day grace period. Can I apply for the STEM OPT extension?

- No. In order to qualify for the STEM OPT extension you must apply for the extension before your OPT end date, while you are currently in the last 90 days of your 12 month OPT approval period.

I just changed to F1 visa status this semester and will graduate this semester as well. Can I apply for OPT?

- Maybe. If you were in a valid visa status before you changed to F1 and were studying *full time* before your change of status to F1, you will likely qualify for OPT. However, if you were in a visa status that prohibited full time enrollment (such as F2) or you were not in a valid visa status while enrolled, then you likely do not qualify for the OPT visa benefit.

I am working for the same employer I had on CPT. Do I need to report my employer information?

- YES! CPT is not the same as OPT. Do not assume that your employer information will transfer from CPT to OPT. You must tell us who your employer is on OPT even if it's the same employer you had during CPT.

Part 6

Sample OPT Quiz

How many days do you have to report changes in your personal information to UCM?

10

How many days do you have to report changes in your employment information to UCM?

10

How many days of unemployment are allowed on 12 month OPT?

A. 10

B. 110

C. **90**

D. 91

I am working 10 hours a week.
I am....

A. Not considered employed.

B. Potentially out of status

C. Working part-time

D. Need to find a new job

E. **All of the above**

I am working as a volunteer for 21 hours a week. I am...

A. Employed

B. In valid status

C. Working full-time

D. **All of the above**

My OPT is approved for Computer Science. I can work at McDonald's as a cashier.

True or False?

FALSE

I should use UCM's address on my I-765?

True or False?

FALSE

Please use *your* personal mailing address on your I-765 form

I cannot begin working until I have received the physical EAD card in the mail.

True or False?

TRUE

I don't need a job to apply for 12 month OPT

True or False?

TRUE

I can submit my I-765 and supporting documents in *paper form* to UCM to review?

- No. We do not receive OPT packets, I-765 forms, etc. in our office.

- We do not require or need to see your packet. We only require two steps:
    1. Fill out the electronic request form for 12 month OPT
    2. Pay the UCM OPT fee ($100)

When can I expect my OPT I-20

- We will begin processing applications for OPT up to 90 days before the end of the semester.
  - Students must complete the electronic form and pay the $100 UCM OPT fee
  - If you have completed both steps, you should receive your OPT I-20 about 7 - 10 business days after your application was submitted or within the 90 day period before the end of the semester.

Where can I find the electronic OPT application?

- The link for the 12 month OPT application is located on our forms webpage

This presentation was amazing. Can I view it again so I review the helpful information it contains?

Yes! The power point is posted on our webpage located here:

forms webpage

Thank you for coming!

What questions can we answer for you today?