F-1: Optional Practical Training Application Instructions
STEP ONE

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit of F-1 status that allows you to work off-campus in a field related to your field of study. You do not need to have a specific job offer to apply for OPT. You are eligible for a 12 month period of OPT at every level of education, for example, 12 months for a Bachelor's degree, an additional 12 months for a Master's degree, and an additional 12 months for a Doctorate degree.

Applying for OPT is a two step process which begins first with a recommendation for OPT from your Class Dean and International Student & Scholar Advisor (ISSA) and second, with approval of your application by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). In order to maintain F-1 status while you are on OPT, you must report employer name and address to USCIS and not be unemployed for a total of more than 90 days.

If you are applying for OPT, it is important for you to understand the application process and the rules that govern this type of employment authorization. Please read all OPT handouts carefully and speak with an ISSA if you have any questions.

Eligibility

To be eligible for OPT you must be in valid F-1 status and have maintained full-time student status for at least one academic year before applying.

OPT Limits

There is a limit of 12 months of full-time OPT. OPT may be used before completion of studies (Pre-Completion OPT), after completion of studies (Post-Completion OPT), or a combination of both time periods. OPT may be full-time or part-time, but any Pre-Completion OPT is limited to part-time during the school year. Any periods of OPT, whether part-time or full-time, will be deducted from the total twelve-month period available.

- Part-time OPT (20 hours per week or less) is deducted at half of the full-time rate (two months of part-time OPT = one month of full time OPT) before completion of studies. After completion of studies, part-time OPT is counted at the full-time rate.

- Full-time OPT is training that is more than 20 hours per week. Full-time OPT can only be granted during official college breaks or after the completion of degree requirements.

When to Apply

Post-Completion OPT applications may be filed up to 90 days *before* the completion of all degree requirements, and up to 60 days *after* the completion of all degree requirements. The completion of studies date may not necessarily be the same as the official graduation date. It takes approximately one week for the ISSA to process an OPT recommendation. Your application must be submitted to USCIS within 30 days of when OPT is recommended. USCIS processing time for this type of application is approximately 30 to 90 days. Please apply early to avoid delays in starting your employment.

How to Apply

- ☐ Complete OPT Date Verification Form
- ☐ Complete Class Dean's Recommendation Form
- ☐ Complete Form I-765

  The Form I-765 can be completed online, saved, and printed. This is helpful to eliminate the difficulty of reading handwriting and leads to more accuracy. Please go to www.uscis.gov, click on the "Forms" tab, and scroll down to Form I-765. Complete the Form, save it for your records, and print out a copy to sign in **blue ink**. If you wish to complete the form by hand, please write in **blue ink**.

  - ▪ Under section 16, write either (c) (3) (B) for post-completion OPT, or (c) (3) (A) for pre-completion OPT or (c) (3) (C) for STEM extensions.
  - ▪ Carefully consider the address you use to complete this form. You should use an address where you will be in 2-4 months, when your EAD will be mailed. You may use the Slater International Center address: **c/o Karen Pabon, Slater Int'l Center, Wellesley College, Wellesley MA 02481.**

- ☐ <u>Make Copies of **all** Form I-20s</u> (pages 1 & 3 stapled together); include forms from previous U.S. schools (if applicable)
- ☐ Make a copy of your Form I-94 (front and back)
- ☐ Make a copy of your F-1 visa (unless you are Canadian, or have had a change of status approval)
- ☐ Make a copy of your passport photo page and make a copy of your passport expiration date page (if different from your passport photo page)
- ☐ Have 2 photographs (see *Photo Specification Handout*). Lightly write your name and SEVIS ID# on the back
- ☐ Write a personal check or obtain a money order made out to <u>U.S. Department of Homeland Security</u> for $380. Write your SEVIS ID # on the front of your check in the memo section. **Do not write on the back of the check.**
- ☐ Make a copy of any previously issued EAD (if applicable)
- ☐ Special Registrants must show proof of registration and should provide a brief letter indicating their FIN # and the date and location of registration from their last entry.
- ☐ Complete Form G-1145 (if you wish to receive an e-mail and/or text message confirming that your application has been accepted at a USCIS Lockbox facility)

Once you have assembled all of the required documents for your application, <u>you must make an appointment to review your application with the International Student & Scholar Advisor</u>. If the ISSA determines that you are eligible for OPT, you will be issued a new Form I-20 with the appropriate recommendation. Your recommendation information will be entered in Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), and you will be contacted by the ISSA via e-mail to pick up your complete OPT application materials.

Pick Up and Mail your Application

You are responsible for mailing your application materials to USCIS in a timely manner. **We strongly suggest that you MAKE COPIES OF ALL YOUR DOCUMENTS before mailing, and that you send your application by Priority Mail (USPS) with delivery confirmation.** Send your application packet to:

By U.S. Postal Service	*By Express Mail or Courier Service*
(USPS): USCIS	*(FedEx, UPS, etc.):*
PO Box 660867	USCIS Attn: AOS
Dallas, TX 75266	2501 S. State Hwy. 121
	Business Suite 400
	Lewisville, TX 75067

Maintaining F-1 Status While on OPT

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an extension of F-1 status. While you are on OPT, you are still in F-1 status and must follow the regulations in order to maintain your F-1 status.

1. Maintain employment during OPT—you must be employed or actively seeking employment. If you are unemployed for more than a total of 90 days during the 12 month OPT period, you will no longer be maintaining your F-1 status.

2. Report any change of address, or name, to your ISSA within 10 days of the change.

3. Report the name and address of your employer and any changes to your employment (including termination of employment) directly to your ISSA.