

F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application

Eligibility

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is available to F-1 students who have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for an academic year and have maintained their F-1 student status. OPT provides authorization for F-1 students to be employed in a job related to their major field of study. OPT does not require a job offer before application. Students who have completed 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) are not eligible.

Time Frames for OPT

Post-completion OPT (authorized after completion of your academic program) is the most common type of OPT.

- Full-time after completion of all degree requirements;
- or
- Full-time for graduate students after completion of required coursework (except for thesis/dissertation).

Pre-completion OPT (used while still enrolled in your academic program). This is uncommon, as most students use alternate work authorization during their programs, such as CPT. Pre-completion OPT is available:

- Full-time during official school breaks (e.g., summer break) as long as the student was enrolled the previous semester and plans to continue the following semester;
- Part-time during the academic semester while maintaining full-time enrollment;
- Part-time or full-time for graduate students after completion of required coursework (except for thesis/dissertation).

Duration of OPT

A student may be authorized for 12 months of OPT at each academic level (i.e., bachelor's, master's, PhD). Although students may engage in both pre-completion and post-completion OPT, the maximum amount of time that can be granted for all OPT combined is 12 months per educational level. Thus, if a student used 6 months of pre-completion OPT during his summer breaks while doing his bachelor's program, he would be eligible for only 6 months of standard post-completion OPT after finishing the bachelor's degree.

A student with a STEM degree may be eligible for a 24-month STEM extension of their OPT. Students apply for the STEM extension within their last 90 days of post-completion OPT.

Authorized by USCIS

The International Center will recommend OPT if eligibility requirements are met. However, the student must also apply to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to receive authorization in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). It is your responsibility to

ensure that USCIS receives your completed OPT application according to the filing requirements.

EAD Dates

Once your EAD dates are entered into SEVIS, it is unlikely that you can successfully change the dates of your employment authorization. It is important to discuss the beginning and ending dates of your employment authorization with an immigration advisor.

Completion Date

It is critical that you do not apply for OPT until your completion date is certain. You can discuss this date with an immigration advisor. This will be the new ending date on your I-20.

How to Apply

1. Download our OPT application. Prepare the documents listed on the checklist. Complete the OPT module available on Brightspace.
2. Contact the International Center for an OPT appointment. Bring all of the documents listed on the checklist to your appointment. A new OPT I-20 will be issued at that time.
3. File your application online or mail your application packet to USCIS using express mail so you can track its delivery.

Important Links

OPT Application:

<https://www.uakron.edu/international/forms/docs/opt-application.pdf>

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International Center
The University of Akron, Akron, OH 44325-4724

APPLICATION FOR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

Your Name: Last

First

Your Student ID#

Date of Birth

E-mail Address

Phone#

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Where to Mail OPT Packet - Paper Filing:

Students should mail their OPT packets to the Chicago Lockbox:

USCIS Chicago Lockbox

U.S. Postal Service (USPS):
USCIS
PO Box 805373
Chicago, IL 60680

FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:
USCIS
Attn: I-765 C03
131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor
Chicago, IL 60603-5517

Please note: As USCIS can make unexpected changes, this link will have the most up-to-