

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>

Guide for Post-Completion OPT (Managing your F-1 status after applying for OPT):

<https://www.uakron.edu/international/forms/docs/OPT-guide.pdf>

STEM OPT Application:

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

Study in the States:

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/training-opportunities-in-the-united-states>

How to Apply for OPT

First, complete the OPT module available in Brightspace. Next, make an appointment with an International Student Advisor to review your application by going to our website: <https://www.uakron.edu/international/>. We have provided a checklist for all the items you need to submit for OPT. **Please bring these to your appointment.** Your OPT I-20 will be issued during your appointment.

OPT APPLICATION CHECKLIST

To be submitted to the International Center at UA:

- University of Akron “Application for Optional Practical Training” (included in this packet)
- University of Akron “Academic Advisor Recommendation” (included in this packet)

To be submitted to USCIS (either by filing online or mailing documents)

- USCIS [Form I-765](https://www.uscis.gov/i-765), Application for Employment Authorization. To file by mail, the I-765 must be completed in black ink. Be sure to use the latest edition. If a required field does not apply to you, then indicate “not applicable” or “N/A” in that field. Eligibility category C3B. If you had more than one SEVIS number while in the US, or if you were authorized for any CPT or OPT in the past, then you must complete page 7, **Part 6 Additional Information**. Indicate Page Number 3, Part Number 2, Item Number 27 when providing information in this section. To access the form (for mailing the I-765): <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>. **To file online:** www.uscis.gov/file-online
- Form I-765 Filing fee of \$410. When applying by mail, send check or money order made payable to the **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**. You have the option to pay with a credit card. If you wish to pay by credit card, complete [Form G-1450](https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450), Authorization for Credit Card Transactions. <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450>. **To file online**, pay by credit or debit card, or electronic withdrawal from savings or checking account. Form G-1450 is not needed.
- [Form G-1145](https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145), E-Notification for Application/Petition Acceptance. If you want to receive an email and/or text message that your I-765 has been accepted at a USCIS Lockbox facility, then you can complete this form. <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>. **If filing online**, this form is not needed.
- Copy of your OPT I-20. If you did CPT or OPT previously, then submit copies of these I-20’s in addition to your OPT I-20.
- Copy of your passport picture page and passport expiration date (your passport must be valid); copy of your most recent F-1 visa; and copy of your most recent I-94. You may print your I-94 record from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94>.
- Two passport-style photos. Lightly print your name and A-Number (if any) on the back of each photo if filing by mail. **Submit one photo if filing online.** Photographs must be recent. Photos must be 2x2 inches in size, with full frontal face position, identical, in color, with a white or off-white background; between 1 inch and 1 & 3/8 inches from the bottom of the chin to the top of the hair. Head must be bare unless wearing headwear for religious purposes. Glasses are not acceptable unless you need them for medical reasons. In the latter case, a medical certificate may be required. *Follow the passport photo requirements on the U.S. Department of State website:* <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/requirements/photos.html>.

When to Apply

The USCIS processing time for OPT applications is approximately three months, but this is subject to change at any time. You may file an OPT application no earlier than 90 days before your program completion date or within 60 days after your program completion date. You must also file your application within 30 days of issuance of your OPT I-20. Please plan accordingly.

APPLICATION FOR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

Your Name: Last _____ First _____

Your Student ID# _____ Date of Birth _____ E-mail Address _____ Phone# _____

Your Current Major _____ Level of Education (B.S., M.S., etc) _____

Please list all previous Curricular/Optional Practical Training (if applicable):

CPT start/end dates _____ Major/Level of Education: _____

CPT start/end dates _____ Major/ Level of Education: _____

OPT start/end dates _____ Major/ Level of Education _____

OPT start/end dates _____ Major/ Level of Education _____

Will you be enrolled in your current program for one academic year or longer by the requested OPT start date?

- No.** If **No**, you are **not** eligible for OPT. **Yes.** Please continue.

Pre-Completion OPT Options:

- During Summer Vacation. Part-time Full-time

No registration for Summer is required. You may choose this option if your program will continue the following semester.

Starting date _____ Ending date _____

- During Fall/Spring semester. Part-time only.

Your coursework is not completed. You must be registered full-time unless you have a reduced course load approved by a DSO for your final semester.

Starting date _____ Ending date _____

Post-Completion OPT:

- Full-time after completion of all degree requirements. The starting date should be within 60 days after your program is completed.

Starting date _____ Ending date _____

OPT for Thesis/Dissertation Students when all coursework is completed:

- Pre-completion. Part-time Full-time Starting date _____ Ending date _____

- Post-completion. Must be full-time. Starting date _____ Ending date _____

Student Certification: *I understand that I must be enrolled in school until all program requirements are met. If for some reason I cannot complete the program by the I-20 expiration date, I will contact the International Student Advisor. I understand that my Practical Training must be directly related to my current program. I have received and read the GUIDE FOR POST-COMPLETION OPT. It is my responsibility to maintain my F-1 status while on OPT.*

Signature _____ Date _____

**OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)
ACADEMIC ADVISOR RECOMMENDATION**

Student's Name: LAST, First

Student ID#

Student's Program: Major

Level

Student's starting semester in this program: _____

Date of coursework completion: _____

Thesis/Dissertation defense date (if applicable): _____

Expected Date of Program Completion
(the last day of the final semester
of enrollment, unless completed earlier)

Date of Graduation/Degree Conferral: _____

Note: The student must be enrolled until all program requirements have been met.

Comments: _____

I verify that the above-named student is in good academic standing. I recommend that the student be granted Optional Practical Training in the field indicated on this form and for the period requested by the student.

Academic Advisor's Name and Title

Signature

Date

Phone

E-mail

Department

Zip Code + 4

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-date and accurate information regarding the USCIS filing address:

<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses>

Filing for OPT online:

Tips:

- Be sure to obtain your OPT I-20 before submitting your application!
- Submit all the documents at the time of filing
- Once payment is accepted, your application is considered filed.
- File at least one or two days before the deadline to ensure timely filing.

Resources:

File online: www.uscis.gov/file-online

Create online account: www.myaccount.uscis.gov

Form I-765: www.uscis.gov/i-765

I-765 evidence checklist www.uscis.gov/forms/filing-guidance/checklist-of-required-initial-evidence-for-form-i-765-for-informational-purposes-only