



F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING APPLICATION

What is OPT?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) grants an eligible F-1 student an opportunity to work full-time for twelve consecutive months (anywhere in the U.S.) in a field that is related to their degree program at each degree level (Bachelors, Masters and Ph.D). Students remain in F-1 status at the University of St. Thomas even though they may be working elsewhere in the U.S. *Students with only their thesis option left should consult with an International Student Advisor.*

How do I know if I am eligible?

Eligibility depends on if you have maintained your F-1 status throughout your studies in the U.S. However, if you have engaged in 12 months of full-time *Curricular Practical Training (CPT)*, then you are not eligible for OPT.

When should I apply for OPT?

An F-1 student may apply for OPT no more than 90 days before the semester end date. This allows enough time for Immigration to review and give a ruling on each application.

Application Procedure

1. Collect OPT packet.
2. Gather the following documents:
 - A completed I-765 form (see sample for guidance).¹ *USCIS wants students to **type** out their applications.*
 - Valid passport
 - Current I-94 card
 - Two (2) 2x2 passport style pictures on a white background with your name and SEVIS ID printed on the back with a pencil
 - A **\$410.00** check or money order made payable to the *U.S. Department of Homeland Security.*
 - All previous I-20's from UST
 - Photocopies of any previous employment authorization documents (EAD cards)
 - OPT Agreement
3. Make an appointment with an International Student Advisor in advance to apply.
4. Bring all of the above to an International Student Advisor to your appointment.
5. Mail all documents to:

If using U.S. Postal Service (USPS)
USCIS P.O. Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266

If using Express Service or Courier Mail
USCIS Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy 121, Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067

¹ Section 16 code is (c) (3) (B)

USCIS PROCESSING TIME

Please allow a minimum of 90 days to receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD). The process starts from the date Immigration receives your OPT application. You are not permitted to begin work until you have received this card. Otherwise, you will be violating your status. If you have not received your card in a timely manner, please contact an International Student Advisor.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR YOU TO KNOW!

TRAVEL

Once you've received your card and you decide to travel, you must carry: valid passport and visa, endorsed I-20 (with a travel signature no more than six months old), OPT card and an employment verification letter from your employer. Though you may have these items, please note that you are not guaranteed re-entry with these items.

EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS

Once you have been approved for post-completion OPT, you may only accrue 90 days of unemployment from your start date. If you accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment you will not be in compliance of your F-1 status: USCIS will terminate your SEVIS record for this violation. It has become more important than ever to contact our office once you've secured a job.

POSSIBILITY OF EXTENSION

In some instances, students are able to extend their Post-completion OPT. An OPT Extension requires that a student received a degree in a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics) field in the U.S. and that the student's employer participates in E-Verify.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

If in doubt, report.

You **must** report when there is a change in...

1. Employment including employer's name, address and employment dates. Submitting your formal offer letter to your International Student Advisor. A job may be paid/unpaid, part-time or full-time.
2. Name and/or visa status i.e. H1B, Permanent Residency, etc.
3. A departure from U.S. if you do not plan to return to the U.S.
4. Any change in personal address within 10 days.



OPT AGREEMENT

Requested OPT Start Date: _____ Requested OPT End Date: _____

I agree and will comply to the following:

1. To send a copy of my OPT receipt and card (EAD) to my International Student Advisor once it is approved.
2. To report my employer's name, address and employment dates by submitting my formal offer letter to my International Student Advisor.
3. To report any changes in name and/or visa status i.e. H1B, Permanent Residency, etc.
4. To report if I depart from the U.S. and do not plan to return to the U.S.
5. To report any change in personal address within 10 days.
6. To work only at a job(s) that relate directly to my field of study; I will not work at jobs outside of my field of study.
7. To obtain a signature from my International Student Advisor on my I-20 before traveling outside the country.
8. To not pursue another program or degree while on OPT.
9. To keep count of the days of unemployment I accumulate; I understand that I should not obtain more than 90 days of unemployment. If I do, I acknowledge that USCIS will terminate my SEVIS record.
10. That 60 days after my OPT ends I must leave the country, complete the transfer process to another school, start a new program or change to a different immigration status.
11. That "time worked" only counts as working/volunteering in my field of study for 20 hours or more during Post-Completion OPT.
12. Report if I fail to graduate as soon as possible.

Print Name

Signature

Date