



UNIVERSITY OF  
ST. THOMAS

Office of International Student and Scholar Services

## OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

### What is OPT?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) grants an eligible F-1 student an opportunity to work full-time for up to twelve months in the U.S. in a field that is related to their degree program at each degree level (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctor's ).

### How do I know if I am eligible?

In order to be eligible for OPT, a student must:

- Have maintained good F-1 status for **one academic year** (including one spring semester and one fall semester) in the degree program at UST.
- Have graduated or be eligible for graduation in current semester.
- Have not already participated in post-completion OPT or exceeded 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) at your current degree level.

### When should I apply for OPT?

Your OPT application must be received by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) no earlier than 90 days before the semester end date and no later than 60 days after the semester end date.

### Application Process:

1. Gather the following documents:
  - A completed I-765 form. Please find the form and instructions at [www.uscis.gov/i-765](http://www.uscis.gov/i-765). USCIS wants students to **type** out their applications.
  - Valid passport
  - Most recent I-94
  - Two (2) 2x2 passport style pictures on a white background taken within the last 6 months. Print your name and SEVIS ID 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 with CPT and/or OPT authorization
  - Photocopies of any previous employment authorization documents (EAD cards)
  - OPT Agreement completed and signed
2. Make an appointment with an International Student Advisor in advance to apply.
3. Bring all of the above to your appointment with your International Student Advisor.
4. Mail application documents to:

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

For FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:
USCIS Attn: NFB AOS 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067



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### IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR YOU TO KNOW!

#### **USCIS PROCESSING TIME**

Please allow a minimum of 90 days to receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) after USCIS receives your application. You are not permitted to begin work until you have received this card. Otherwise, you will be violating your status. You can check your case status with your receipt number at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).

#### **EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS**

Once you have been approved for post-completion OPT, you may only accrue up to 90 days of unemployment during approved OPT period. OPT employment must be full-time (more than 20 hours a week) and related to your major field of study. If you accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment, you will be considered out of status.

#### **TRAVEL**

Once you've received your card and you decide to travel internationally, you must carry with you the following when you re-enter the U.S.: valid passport, valid F-1 visa, endorsed I-20 (with a travel signature no more than six months old), OPT card and an employment verification letter from your employer. Although you may have these items, you are not guaranteed re-entry.

#### **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

##### ***SEVP Portal***

When your OPT is approved, you should receive an email inviting you to create an SEVP portal account. If you don't receive the email, please contact our office.

On that portal, you must update your **physical address** within 10 days and input your **employment information** as soon as you start an employment. *Failure to report employment may lead to termination of your F-1 status.*

**Warning: Please keep a complete history of your employment on the portal. Only add a new employer when you have new employment and DO NOT delete any previous employment information.**

*Additionally, you should contact our office if you:*

- Depart the U.S. and do not plan to return as F-1
- Change name and/or immigration status i.e. H1B, Permanent Residency



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### OPT Agreement

Requested OPT Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Requested OPT End Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree and will comply with the following:

1. To report if I fail to graduate as soon as possible.
2. To update my physical address and employment information on the SEVP portal.
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 as F-1.
5. To work only at a job(s) that relate directly to my field of study.
6. To obtain a signature from my International Student Advisor on my I-20 before traveling outside the country.
7. To not pursue another program or degree full-time while on OPT.
8. To track the days of unemployment I accumulate. I should not accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment. Accumulation of more than 90 days of unemployment will make me out of status.
9. That within 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.
10. That "time worked" only counts as working/volunteering in my field of study for 20 hours/week or more during Post-Completion OPT.

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Print Name

Signature

Date