



CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS,  
IMMIGRATION, AND STUDY ABROAD

**WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING  
EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION**

**WHAT IS IT?**

**Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) is off-campus employment authorization that lets F-1 students get work experience in their major field of study.** The amount of work you are permitted is a maximum of 12 months of *full-time* employment for each *higher* educational level you pursue in the United States. You can use it during or after your studies and you can work for any employer anywhere in the country.

**HOW CAN IT BE USED?**

- **After completion of ALL course requirements for an associate's degree or certificate program – *full-time employment only***

**HOW CAN YOU QUALIFY FOR IT?**

1. You must have been enrolled full-time for a least one academic year
2. You must be able to describe how the type of work you are seeking directly relates to your major. You do not have to have a job offer to apply for OPT. If you are applying for before completion of studies OPT, however, it is wise that you be sure as possible of a job so that you don't waste any of your OPT "account"
3. If you are seeking Post-Completion of Studies OPT, your department must certify the date that you are expected to complete the program of study. You may apply for Post-Completion of Studies OPT up to three months before completing your program of study, but not later than 60 days after. If you apply within the 60-day period, after completion, you are likely not to receive your full 12-month OPT benefit due to USCIS processing times.

**HOW DO YOU APPLY?**

Download an application for F-1 Optional Practical Training Employment Recommendation, fill it out, and submit it to our office. When you submit it, we will review your application to ensure it is complete and that you qualify. If everything is in order, we will issue a new Form I-20 recommending your OPT and contact you to come pick up your application. When you pick up your application, we will provide you with instructions on how to submit your application to USCIS and track its progress.

**HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?**

After your application is filed at USCIS, plan that it will take **about three months** for your EAD (Employment Authorization Document) to be returned to us from USCIS. It could take less or more depending on their workload and any security clearances.

**It's important to take USCIS processing time into consideration when planning the date you want to start working! YOU CANNOT BEGIN TO WORK UNTIL YOU HAVE YOUR EAD CARD!**

### **WHAT IF YOU WANT TO TRAVEL BEFORE STARTING POST-COMPLETION OF STUDIES OPT?**

Contact your international student adviser before making any travel plans if your OPT is still pending USCIS authorization. DHS regulations require that you have your EAD card and a job or job offer to return to the U.S.

### **STUDY AND POST-COMPLETION OPT**

DHS regulations state that, "Authorization to engage in optional practical training employment is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level." Therefore, you should not continue your U.S. studies until after your OPT has ended.

### **APPLYING FOR DSO RECOMMENDATION FOR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING**

COMPLETE THE ATTACHED FORMS

#### **1. Post-OPT DSO Recommendation Request Form:**

- Expected date of Completion of Studies: the earliest date your application may be submitted to the government for Post-Completion of Studies is 90 days before this date
- Indicate what type of OPT you are applying for and the dates you want to work
- If you have completed 12 months of OPT for the same or higher education level, you are ineligible for OPT
- Describe how your proposed employment for practical training is directly related to your major and appropriate for your level of education. Take time to do this carefully. Do NOT say that you are seeking an entry-level job in your major. Your description must clearly explain to an Immigration Officer what you expect to DO on the job you are seeking. Do not use any abbreviations or acronyms in your description.
- Read and sign the Acknowledgement of Understanding (see item 6, page 6)

#### **2. F-1 STUDENT STATUS RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE ON POST-COMPLETION OPT**

3. **Form I-765: APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION.** Go to [uscis.gov](http://uscis.gov), complete items 1-16m print out, and sign in black ink

- Item 5: Address. If you would like us to help track the adjudication of your application, enter our office address
- Item 27: Enter the code that applies to the type of OPT you are requesting: Pre-completion OPT – (c)(3)(A); post-completion (c)(3)(B)
- Your Certification: sign in BLACK INK, put your telephone number and the date

4. **Form G-1145** E-NOTIFICATION OF APPLICATION/PETITION ACCEPTANCE. Go to [uscis.gov](http://uscis.gov), complete, print out and sign in BLACK INK the MOST RECENT Form G-1145 available.

#### **ATTACH THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS TO YOUR APPLICATION**

- **Two passport-type photographs.** Print your name and I-94 number on the back in pencil
- **Forms I-20.** Photocopies of all previous forms I-20 issued by us and other schools you have attended
- **Photocopies of any previous EAD Card(s)**
- **[Form I-94](#)**
- **Photocopies of your passport identification page(s) and visa**
- **\$410 fee** in the form of a check or money order made payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. If you are using a personal check, it must have your name and address on it.

#### **INFORMATION ABOUT APPLICATION PROCESSING**

1. **If everything is in order, we will issue you a new form I-20 with our recommendation on it.** We will contact you to come in and pick up your application
2. **We will provide you with information about how and when to send your application to USCIS**
3. **If you put our office address on your form I-765, USICS will communicate with us about your application.** If they request additional information, we will contact you. If your application is approved the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will be sent here and we will contact you to come in and pick it up.
4. **You cannot begin working until you have received your EAD card**