

Optional Practical Training F-1 Students

Optional Practical Training is defined in the regulations as “temporary employment for practical training” directly related to the student’s major area of study.” Students can use it during or after their studies. There are 12 months of OPT given for each *higher* degree. (i.e. bachelors to masters; master’s to doctorate).

ELIGIBILITY:

To be eligible a student must have been enrolled for classes for at least one academic year (fall and spring semesters).

A student may be granted authorization to engage in OPT:

- During the student’s annual vacation, if the student is enrolled for the next semester.
- While school is in session, provided that OPT does not exceed 20 hours a week.
- After completion of course of study or after completion of all course requirements for the degree, excluding thesis or dissertation research credits.
- Students must complete OPT within a 14-month period following the completion of study.

Part-time: Part-time OPT (maximum of 20 hours per week) is permitted while school is in session, but students must be registered for a full course load. A part-time OPT period is computed at half the regular full-time period. For example, students who choose to engage in OPT while school is in session during the fall semester (4-1/2 months) would have two months and one week deducted from the total of one year.

Full-time: Full-time OPT is permitted during the school recess, after completion of all course work, or after the completion of all requirements for the degree.

APPLYING FOR OPT

Application for Optional Practical Training should be submitted a **minimum** of 3 months prior to the beginning of employment so that the EAD is received in time. The USCIS processing time for Optional Practical Training is up to 90 days.

The OPT application must be received by the Department of Homeland Security prior to the completion of the degree. It cannot be submitted during the 60-day grace period after completion.

You **may not start working** until you receive the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from the Department of Homeland Security. While OPT is pending, you are in legal F1 status.

For the duration of their OPT, you are required by law to report name, address and status changes, or disruption of employment to our office within 10 days of the change. Send an e-mail to makend1@uky.edu to report your address change.

TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE U.S. WHILE ON OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING:

- If you have an approved EAD (Employment Authorization Document) and depart the U.S. before getting a job, you cannot re-enter the U.S. on F-1 status.
- You can travel abroad to re-enter U.S. if you depart the U.S. after beginning employment and carry with you proof of employment **or** you have a job offer letter of employment that will begin soon after you return to the U.S.
- You cannot re-enter during the 60-day grace period after finishing your OPT.

Travel endorsements are valid for 6 months. If you need to apply for an American visa, our office will provide a letter for the Consul verifying your good status. However, applying for a new visa during OPT carries with it a measurable risk, since it is more difficult to prove an intent to return to your home country when you are presently employed in the US.

To re-enter the US, present to the Immigration Officer at the Port of Entry the following documents:

- A SEVIS I-20 that has been endorsed within last six months.
- A valid American visa stamped in your passport (Exception: Canadian or Mexican citizens)
- EAD and your employer’s letter indicating that you are presently employed.

Optional Practical Training Filing Procedures

STEP 1

Schedule an appointment with William Arnold, F-1 Advisor, at 257-4067 ext. 241 or william.arnold@uky.edu. OPT appointments are scheduled on Monday through Friday (3pm – 5pm).

STEP 2

Bring your completed “OPT Application” form (pg 3) and the following documents to your scheduled appointment. Be sure all copies are clear and legible.

- Unofficial transcript from myUK
- Adviser/DGS OPT Form completed and signed by your DGS or Academic Adviser (pg 4)
- Filing fee as noted on the I-765 instructions
- Copy of current SEVIS I-20
- Copy of I-94 Departure Record (front and back on the same sheet of paper)
- Copy of following passport pages:
 - photo/bio
 - If renewed, passport renewal information
 - F-1 visa
 - Page with last entry stamp
- Completed Form I-765 (form only, not instructions) www.uscis.gov Click on “Immigration Forms.”
 - # 16 eligibility is (C) (3) (i)
 - If your mailing address may change during the application period, use the OIA address:
OIA, 215 Bradley Hall, Univ. of KY, Lexington, KY 40506-0058
- If applicable, a copy of previous Employment Authorization (EAD)
- Two photographs placed in small envelope
 - On back of photo** lightly print in **pencil**
 - your name
 - your I-94 Departure number

Guidelines for photos (passport style): taken within past 6 months

- plain white or off-white background – 2x2 inches in size
- unmounted color print on glossy, un-retouched paper
- head positioned directly facing the camera; eyes open, looking at camera; eyeglasses worn if normally used
- photo from slightly above top of hair to middle of chest – height of head should measure 1 to 1 3/8 inches
- head should be bare unless wearing a headdress required by a religious order to which you belong.

Suggested photographer: Johnny Print - 547 S. Limestone - Ph: 254-6139

STEP 3

Within a week of receiving the above-mentioned documentation, the DSO in 215 Bradley Hall will have the new OPT SEVIS I-20 ready for pick up. The beginning and ending dates of employment will be noted on page 3. You must sign this I-20, and a copy will accompany the application. An addressed envelope will be provided for you to mail the entire OPT packet.

Case Status: Once you have received your “Notice of Action” receipt, you can check the status of your case on the USCIS web page by giving your receipt number: <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsps/ptimes.jsp> (Texas Service Center).

Address changes: Immigration documents are not forwarded by the postal service if you should move while your application is pending, so it is your responsibility to notify USCIS your new mailing address. The Customer Service contact is noted on your I-767 “Notice of Action” receipt. Changing address while an OPT application is pending can cause significant delays. If it is mailed to an “old” address, it will be returned to USCIS as “undeliverable” and ultimately destroyed.

Optional Practical Training Student Application

Name: _____
(Last) (First) (Middle)

SEVIS Number: _____

Telephone Number: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Local Address: _____

Level of Education: Bachelors Masters
 Ph.D. Other: _____

Major Field of Study: _____

Degree/Program Information

Estimated date you will complete all the requirements of your degree: _____(mm/dd/yyyy)
(Undergraduates – last day of final semester; Graduates - final submission of Thesis or Dissertation)

Expiration of Current I-20: _____(mm/dd/yyyy)

Graduate students only:

If you have completed **all coursework**, but have not graduated, you must be registered for residency/research each spring and fall semesters until completion. Please indicate the final semester of all course work:

Completed course work on: _____ (mm/dd/yyyy)

Degree Requirement: Project Option Thesis Dissertation Other _____

Optional Practical Training Information:

Proposed dates of OPT: From _____ until _____
(mm/dd/yyyy) (mm/dd/yyyy)

List the periods of all previously authorized Curricular Practical Training employment, if applicable:

CPT Authorization: From _____ until _____
 (mm/dd/yyyy) (mm/dd/yyyy)

CPT Authorization: From _____ until _____
 (mm/dd/yyyy) (mm/dd/yyyy)

*I certify that all information on this application is complete and accurate. I understand that I am responsible for mailing my OPT application, and USCIS must **receive** it prior to the date of my degree completion as noted on my new OPT I-20.*

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

**Optional Practical Training
DGS/Undergraduate Advisor Recommendation Form**

The following student is applying to Immigration for Optional Practical Training. This is employment directly related to the student's major area of study. In order for us to complete the application process, the following information is needed. Please complete and sign.

For graduate students: The estimated date of completion does not necessarily coincide with the date of graduation (May/Aug/Dec). It is the date when they will have met all the requirements for graduating. For example, the date for doctoral students would be the submission of their dissertation to Graduate School.

Student Information

Name: _____
(Last) (First) (Middle)

E-mail Address: _____

Level of Education: Bachelors Masters
 Ph.D. Other: _____

Major Field of Study: _____

Estimated degree completion on: _____ (mm/dd/yyyy)

DGS/Advisor Authorization

DGS/Advisor: _____ Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Approved Denied

DSO Signature: _____ Date _____