

Optional Practical Training (Post Completion)

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Definition of Optional Practical Training

Upon the completion of their degree program, nonimmigrant F-1 students who have maintained their full-time student status and who have been in F-1 status for at least one academic year (2 terms) are eligible for post-completion optional practical training. Students may apply for another 12 months of OPT after completion of a higher degree level. Students in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) majors may also be eligible for a 17-month extension. You must apply for optional practical training to the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services through the International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) Office. OPT is based on employment and therefore students must be employed while on OPT. Upon approval of optional practical training, the USCIS will send you an employment authorization document (EAD) valid for one year. You may work full-time or part-time, and you may change employers if you like, but **you may not take classes while on OPT**. The work that you perform under work authorization for optional practical training must be related to your major field of study. Once the year of authorized optional practical training has expired, you have 60 days to depart the United States unless you have adjusted your immigration status to another status, for example, H1-B status, or permanent residency, or returned to school and gotten a new I-20.

Eligibility

- The student must be in valid F-1 status at the time of application and have been in full-time status for one academic year preceding the application.
- If the student is not full time, must have the under-enrollment form completed by academic advisor and approved by international student advisor.
- The student must be in the final semester of their academic program (unless applying for pre-completion OPT).
- The student must have no holds on their student record and no balance owed to the university.
- The student must have attended an employment workshop.
- The student must not have been approved for OPT for the same education level.

When to Apply

You should apply for optional practical training at the **beginning** of the semester in which you will complete your studies. The earliest you can apply is 120 days before graduation and the latest you can apply is 60 days after graduation. You do NOT have to have a job offer in order to apply for optional practical training.

How to apply for optional practical training

1. Fill out the I-765 form (attached to this packet and downloadable at www.uscis.gov)
2. Have 2 photographs taken in the ISSS office.
3. Bring the above to ISSS along with your passport, I-20, I-94, and a check or money order in the amount of **\$340** made payable to "Department of Homeland Security" (This is a filing fee required by USCIS.) If you have applied for CPT, please bring all CPT authorizations you received.
4. You will meet with an advisor to confirm that you are in status, to determine your start and end dates, and to clarify any questions you may have. You will receive a new I-20 the following day at which point you will sign your new I-20. (*Please note that your application for OPT will not be sent to USCIS until you have signed your I-20*).
5. While meeting with an ISSS advisor you will be asked to read and initial all topics covered on page two.

The International Services Office will mail the application to USCIS for you, and in about two to four months USCIS should send your work authorization card to the ISSS Office. We will immediately call and email you to pick it up, **so make sure your address and phone number are updated in GOSOLAR**.

Processing times and checking the status of an application

Form I-765 for OPT is currently taking an average 2 to 4 months to process. You can check your current processing once you get your notice of receipt for your application (approx. 2-3 weeks after mailing your application). You can use the SRC number located on the upper left hand side of the document to check your status on-line at the CIS website. <https://egov.immigration.gov/cris/>

If it has been more than 90 days past the **RECEIPT** Date on your Notice of Action form **AND** USCIS has still not adjudicated your application, you should make an InfoPass appointment through the USCIS website. If you are interested in doing this, you can get more information about this option from the ISSS Office.