Optional Practical Training (OPT) Information

What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?
OPT provides F-1 students the opportunity to gain employment experience in their academic fields of study for a maximum period of twelve (12) months. It must be:
- Directly related to the student’s major(s) or minor field of study
- Appropriate for someone having the student’s level of education

Who is eligible?
F-1 students enrolled full-time in a degree program for at least one academic year are eligible to apply for OPT. If you have changed your visa status to F-1 within the last year, consult with an ISSO advisor regarding your previous status; you may be able to apply your time in a different status toward the academic year requirement.

What type of employment is available?
- **Pre-Completion** - During summer vacation (full-time or part-time) or during the academic year (part-time only; 20 hours/week maximum).
- **Post-Completion** - After completion of your degree program (must be full-time; 20+ hours and can be paid or unpaid) This is the most common form of OPT for students.
- **STEM Extension** - After completion of the first 12 months of OPT, students who have completed degrees in approved STEM fields may be eligible for up to two 24-month STEM extension.

Note: Periods of full time pre-completion OPT reduce your 12 month total at a one to one rate and periods of part-time, pre-completion OPT authorization reduce your 12 month total at one-half the rate.

When do students apply?
- Pre-completion OPT - You may apply for OPT up to 90 days before the requested employment start date. There is no deadline to apply for pre-completion, but you must be approved and have an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) for OPT before beginning to work.
- Post-Completion OPT - You may apply for OPT any time from 90 days before, and no later than 60 days after, your program completion date. Your start date must be within 60 days of your program completion date.
- Your OPT application must be filed within 30 days of the date your OPT I-20 was issued by ISSO (who enters your OPT recommendation into SEVIS).
- After you have completed all course requirements, you should not leave the United States until you have received your EAD for OPT.
When can students begin working?
You can begin to work once you have received your EAD and when the beginning date endorsed on the EAD becomes current. If, after receiving your EAD card, you discover that you have not completed all your program requirements, contact ISSO immediately. Do not risk working illegally. If you are on OPT and you plan to transfer to another school, please be aware that once Towson University releases your SEVIS record, your OPT will be CANCELLED.

What is my relationship with the ISSO while I am on post-completion OPT or the OPT STEM Extension?
Even though you may be working full-time away from Towson, you must still keep in contact with the University. Please be sure to provide us with an e-mail address that will stay active throughout your year of OPT.

- You must submit any name or address changes (within 10 days of your move) to ISSO by submitting the OPT Reporting form
- You must also inform ISSO if you decide to stop working, interrupt your employment, or leave the U.S. prior to completion of your OPT permission period.
- In addition to the requirements listed above, students on OPT must report new, additional or loss of employment and any changes in their employer’s name and/or address to the ISSO within 10 days.

Note: Reporting this information to ISSO is the student’s responsibility. You may submit updates through our OPT Reporting google form: [http://bit.ly/1PomelY](http://bit.ly/1PomelY)

Can students travel abroad while on optional practical training?
After you have completed all course requirements for your degree, it is not advisable to leave the United States until:

- You have received your OPT EAD card
- You have started employment and, therefore, will be returning to the U.S. to resume employment.

Additional Immigration Information

- During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students must not be unemployed for more than 90 days during any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial post-completion OPT authorization.
- Students who fall out of status because of unemployment beyond the period allowed are required to depart the U.S.
- Duration of status and work authorization will be extended for a student on OPT who is the beneficiary of a timely-filed H-1B application. For additional information, please contact the ISSO to schedule an in person or phone appointment with an advisor.
Completing the I-765

We strongly recommend that you type your answers into the writeable PDF form.

I am Applying for:
Check “Permission to accept employment.”

3. Address in the United States:
- The USCIS will send its approval or denial of your application to this address.
- USCIS documents WILL NOT be forwarded by the U.S. Postal Service. If no one is at this address to receive your EAD card on your behalf, it will be returned to the USCIS and discarded.
- If you plan to move, you should either put your future address or use a friend or relative’s address in this section. If you do write a friend or relative’s address, write “C/O [your friend or relative’s name]” and then write the street address.
- If your name does not fit in the boxes in section 1, you will need to include an additional page at the end of your I-765 form which says (typed) that your name does not fit in the boxes in Section 1, and your full name is: “Your full name here.”

9b. Social Security #
- Answer 9b only if you answered “Yes” to 9a.
- Make sure you have opened the fillable pdf in Adobe, rather than in your internet browser. If you open the form in your browser, you may not be able to fill in this field.

11-13 Social Security Information
Only fill in items 11, 12, and 13 if you answered “No” to 9a and “Yes” to 10.

14. Alien Registration Number or Form I-94 Number:
Enter the 11-digit identification number on your I-94 printout or I-94 card.

15. Previous employment authorization from the USCIS:
- Check “Yes” only if you submitted an application directly to USCIS (for example: previous OPT authorization). On-campus employment and CPT were not authorized by the USCIS and do not need to be included here.
- If the answer is “Yes,” you will need to carefully hand-write the dates in the Dates field, as they will not fit if you type them.

16-19 Last entry into the U.S. and current immigration status:
Obtain this information from your I-94 print off or current I-94 card and passport.

20 Employment eligibility:
If you are applying for Post-Completion OPT, enter (c) (3) (B). If you are applying for Pre-Completion OPT, enter (c) (3) (A). If you are applying for STEM OPT, enter (c) (3) (C).

21 STEM Eligibility
Only complete this section if you are applying for STEM OPT.

22-23 Do not enter any information in these sections.
Certification: be sure to sign and date the form
# OPT Photo & Check Guidelines

## Photo requirements

You should confirm that your photo meets all the below requirements before you leave the store.

- Neutral expression (no smile)
- Head centered within frame
- 2 inches by 2 inches
- Height of head (top of hair to bottom of chin) should measure 1 inch to 1 3/8 inch (25-35 mm)
- Make sure eye height is between 1 1/8 inches to 1 3/8 inches (28-35 mm)
- Write your name and I-94 number on the back of the photos and place them in an envelope

![Actual size sample photo](image)

## I-765 Fee Payment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account Holder’s Name</th>
<th>Your name (if not account holder)</th>
<th>I-94: 1234567890</th>
<th>Date: Jan 1, 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Account Holder’s Address</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay to the order of: Department of Homeland Security</td>
<td>$ 410.00</td>
<td>Four hundred and ten dollars and 00/100 cents</td>
<td>Dollars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memo For OPT application</td>
<td>Account-holder signature</td>
<td>1234</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This sample is a check. It may look different if it is a Money Order or Cashier’s Check. Ask us if you have questions about how to complete it.

- If using a personal check, a name and address must be printed on the upper left of the check.
- Check or money order should be made out to Department of Homeland Security: do not abbreviate this.
- Make sure you write the following on the check or money order:
  - Name
  - I-94 number
  - “for OPT application”
## OPT Application Document Checklist

**Documents required for OPT Application**

1. Form G-1145, available at: [https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145](https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145). This form is not required, but if you include this form, you will receive an e-mail or text message when your application has been received by USCIS.


3. Personal check, money order, cashier’s check, or completed G-1450 Authorization for Credit Card Transaction form for $410.00
   - include your name, I-94 number, and “OPT application” on check, money order or cashier’s check
   - G-1450 Authorization for Credit Card Transaction form available at [https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450](https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450) if you choose to pay by credit card

4. Two (2) U.S. Passport-size photos, with your name and I-94 number on the back of the photos

5. Photocopy of your new Form I-20 with OPT recommendation (please sign your new I-20 before you make a copy). **Remember that USCIS must receive this I-20 within 30 days of its creation.**

6. Photocopy of your passport

7. Photocopy of your visa

8. Photocopy of your most recent I-94 (previous I-94s are not required)

9. (Optional, but recommended) Photocopies of all of your previous I-20s, including, if applicable, those from other schools

10. Photocopies of any previously-issued EAD cards (if applicable)

**Make a copy of your application before you send it!!!**

### Sending your application

We recommend that you send your application with some sort of delivery confirmation or tracking – either by registered mail or by express mail – so that you may confirm that your application was received by USCIS.

Before mailing, make a copy of your entire application to keep for your records.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If using <strong>USPS (Post Office)</strong>, then mail to:</th>
<th>If using <strong>FedEx or UPS</strong>, then mail to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USCIS PO Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266</td>
<td>USCIS, Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy 121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OPT (Post-Completion) I-20 Request Form

Before submitting the request form, you must attend the in-person OPT Workshop or complete the online version of the OPT Workshop. With this form, the ISSO will provide you with a new Form I-20 recommending post-completion OPT. You must submit a copy of this I-20 to USCIS along with the other required application materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To be completed by the student (please write legibly)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Last Name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please indicate your desired employment start and end date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please select one:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ I attended the in-person OPT workshop on this date: Month Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ I completed the online version of the OPT workshop on Blackboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By signing below, I understand that while on OPT:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I must inform the ISSO of my employment information and submit any updates to my employment, address, etc, within 10 days of the change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I am only allowed 90 days of unemployment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I may not begin my OPT employment until I receive the EAD card and the dates are current.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Signature:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To be completed by Faculty/Academic Advisor/Program Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In order to process the request for employment authorization, the ISSO needs to confirm when the student is anticipated to complete their degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s anticipated completion date: (circle one)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor Signature:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor Name (Printed):</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>