

F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) Information & Request

NOTE: Certain science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degree holders may be eligible for additional 17 months of OPT time in addition to the regular 12-month OPT. Please refer to the *F-1 OPT Extension for STEM Degree Holders: Information and Request*.

General Information

Optional Practical Training for F-1 students is intended to provide hands-on practical work experience complementary to the academic program. An F-1 student is eligible for a **MAXIMUM OF 12 MONTHS**. However, if a student begins a new academic program at a higher level (e.g. master's after bachelor's degree, or PhD after master's), the student is eligible for another 12 months of OPT.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for Optional Practical Training, you must:

- have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year;
- currently be maintaining a full-time program of study and valid F-1 status; and
- work in a job directly related to your major field of study.

Please note that students in English language training programs are not eligible for practical training. If you are uncertain whether you meet the eligibility requirements, please meet with an International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) advisor.

Types of OPT

OPT is available in the following cases:

- part-time or full-time during the student's annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session, if the student intends to register for the following semester
- part-time while school is in session
- part-time or full-time after completion of graduate course work requirements excluding a thesis or dissertation
- full-time after completion of the course of study

Reporting Requirements While on OPT

Students on OPT are required to report to ISSS any change of name or address, or any interruption of such employment within 10 days. Such reporting should be done via e-mail to Oipadm@pobox.upenn.edu.

Limited Periods of Unemployment to Maintain Status

During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT carried out under the post-completion OPT authorization.

OPT Filing Window

A student will be able to file the OPT application up to 90 days before the degree completion date, and up to 60 days after the degree completion date. However, the OPT application must be submitted to the USCIS within 30 days of the date on which ISSS issues an OPT I-20. Processing times for OPT applications can be found on the [USCIS web site](#). In general, expect that the OPT application will take three months to be approved.

Selecting OPT Dates

Pre-Completion

List the dates you actually intend to work. Your start date should be the earliest date that you could possibly begin work. Your end date should be the latest day that you could possibly work.

Post-Completion

If you are applying for post-completion OPT, you are given a 60-day grace period following the completion date of your studies. Therefore, for post-completion OPT, the beginning date must be within the 60-day grace period. *For PhD Students:* You may request your post-completion OPT to begin as early as your thesis submission/defense date or as late as your graduating semester end date.

Duration of OPT Employment Authorization

Employment authorization will begin on the date requested or the date the employment authorization is adjudicated, whichever is later.

Application Process

Step One

Request an I-20 recommending OPT from ISSS. You may request an OPT I-20 by seeing an ISSS advisor or with the following items, or by dropping off the following at the ISSS reception desk:

- OPT Recommendation & Request (completed by you and your academic advisor)
- Copies of your current and previous I-20(s)
- Copies of passport pages (biographic data, photo, and expiration date)
- Copy of your current I-94 card (front and back)
- Copy of any previous EAD card(s)
- If you have been an F-1 student for less than one academic year, copies of documents indicating your previous status in the US

NOTE: ISSS is not responsible for making copies.

After reviewing the material listed above, an ISSS advisor will prepare an I-20 recommending OPT on Page 3.

Step Two

Pick up the OPT I-20 at the ISSS reception desk after three business days.

Step Three

Mail the following OPT application to the USCIS Service Center which has jurisdiction over the address listed on Form I-765:

- Completed Form I-765 (<http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf>) – *type or print legibly*
 - For pre-completion OPT, enter “c 3 A” under Item 16.
 - For post-completion OPT, enter “c 3 B” under Item 16.
- I-765 Application Fee (<http://www.uscis.gov/i-765>), payable to the US Department of Homeland Security
- Photocopy of all previous and current I-20s, including a copy of the new OPT I-20
- Photocopy of Form I-94 (front and back)
- Photocopy of passport (biographical data, photo, and expiration date)
- Two US passport-style photos (*lightly print your name on the back of each photo with a pencil*)
- Copy of any previously issued EAD card(s)

Check all documents for completeness and accuracy. Be sure sign Forms I-20 and I-765. Make a complete copy of your application for your records. ISSS does not maintain copies of OPT applications.

The Vermont Service Center has jurisdiction over the following states: *Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virgin Islands, Virginia, and West Virginia*. **If the state you put on form I-765 in item 3 is not in this list, [refer to the I-765 Instructions](#) under the mailing instructions for F-1 OPT applications.**

US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

Vermont Service Center

75 Lower Welden Street

Saint Albans, Vermont 05479-0001

Phone: 800-375-5283

We recommend that you mail your application by Federal Express Mail or by Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested, so you will have a record of its delivery.

Travel Information

It is prudent to consult an ISSS advisor prior to leaving the US as immigration regulations can change at any time. Currently the following are required to return to the US:

Post-Completion OPT

- A valid passport
- A valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport (except Canadian and Bermudian citizens)
- Your OPT I-20 endorsed for reentry by an ISSS advisor within the last six months
- Your valid EAD for OPT
- Evidence of employment such as a job offer or employment verification letter

If you do **not** have all of these documents listed above or plan to leave the US while your OPT application is pending with USCIS, you should consult an ISSS advisor before traveling abroad. For more information, see: http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq_f2.htm.

Please note: Your EAD will have a notation "not valid for reentry to US." This is printed on all EAD cards issued for OPT and simply means that the card alone is not sufficient for reentry to the US.

Pre-Completion OPT

You can travel and return to the US with a valid passport, valid F-1 visa stamp, and your OPT I-20 endorsed by an ISSS advisor within the last twelve months. You do not need evidence of a job or a valid EAD issued by USCIS to return to the US.

H-1B Cap-Gap Extension

Duration of F-1 status and work authorization will be extended for a student on OPT who is the beneficiary of a timely-filed, non-frivolous H-1B petition requesting an employment start date of October 1 of the following federal fiscal year (October thru September). The extension of duration of status and work authorization would automatically terminate upon the rejection, denial, or revocation of the H-1B petition filed on the student's behalf.

Special Notes

- We may shorten your program end date on your I-20 if deemed appropriate.
- If you later decide **not** to mail your OPT application (Form I-765 plus supporting documentation) to USCIS for any reason, you must notify an ISSS advisor immediately so that we may timely cancel your OPT recommendation in SEVIS. Failure to inform an ISSS advisor that you are not applying for OPT can cause problems in the future.
- Please email (Oipadm@pobox.upenn.edu) or fax (215-898-2622) a copy of your OPT card to ISSS immediately upon receipt.
- Please keep in mind that ISSS will **not authorize CPT** after post-completion OPT has been recommended. Thus, if there is any possibility for CPT in your last semester, please plan accordingly.
- While OPT is pending, we strongly advise you against changing the address listed on Form I-765 as USCIS has not been able to process change of address notifications properly. Changing your address while OPT is still pending may result in filing a new OPT application with a new fee. We suggest to use the address of someone who can receive mail on your behalf – remember to put "c/o", followed by the person's name and address, on Line 3 of Form I-765. The US Postal Service will not forward USCIS mail.
- If you receive a Request for Evidence (RFE), please inform ISSS immediately.
- Your OPT will be automatically terminated when you begin study at another educational level or transfer to another school.
- If you find any errors by USCIS on your OPT/EAD card, please inform ISSS immediately.
- Immediately inform ISSS of any immigration status change.



Optional Practical Training (OPT) Recommendation & Request

F-1

International Student and Scholar Services

NOTE: STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) degree holders requesting a 17-month OPT extension should not use this form but use the *F-1 OPT Extension Request for STEM Degree Holders*.

Recommendation: To Be Completed by Academic Advisor (not by student)

Student's Name: _____ / _____ / _____
(Famil y/Last) (Given/First) (Middle)

Current Majors: _____ Degree Level: _____

Expected Date of Completion: Month: _____ Day: _____ Year: _____

The above-named student is in good academic standing: [] Yes [] No

The student has been making a normal progress towards the completion: [] Yes [] No

Name of Penn Advisor/Chair: _____

Campus Phone: _____ Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Request: To Be Completed by Student

I have thoroughly read the OPT information provided and am applying for:

[] **Pre-Completion OPT**

Proposed OPT Start Date: Month: _____ Day: _____ Year: _____

OPT End Date: Month: _____ Day: _____ Year: _____

[] Part-time OPT (no more than 20 hours/week) [] Full-time OPT

[] **Post-Completion OPT**

Proposed OPT Start Date: Month: _____ Day: _____ Year: _____

OPT End Date: Month: _____ Day: _____ Year: _____

All periods of previously authorized practical training (attach a separate sheet if needed):

Curricular Practical Training	Optional Practical Training (include degree level)
<i>Example: full-time CPT 1/23/2002 – 5/31/2002</i>	<i>Example: part-time OPT 6/1/2002 – 12/31/2002, Bachelor's</i>

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Statement of Understanding

- I have maintained valid F-1 status since I began my study at the University of Pennsylvania.
- I understand that I must report to ISSS (via Oipadm@pobox.upenn.edu) any change to my name or address, or any interruption of OPT employment within 10 days.
- I understand that accruing an aggregate of more than 90 days of an employment during my post-completion OPT will result in a violation of the requirements for remaining in valid F-1 status.

Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____