

Optional Practical Training Information and Request Form

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is work authorization available to international students who have been in valid F-1 status for at least one full academic year and who plan to seek employment in the U.S. in their field of study. OPT is recommended by the Office of International Student Services, but final approval is granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).

To obtain OPT:

- Student must have been in a valid immigration status (such as F-1) for at least one academic year. One year of OPT is available at each level of education. During the period of OPT, a student continues in F-1 status, since OPT is considered to be part of the program of study.
- A job offer is not required to apply for OPT; however, once you find a job, you must notify the Office of International Student Services. The employment may occur anywhere in the U.S.
- It can take the USCIS three to five months to issue the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) that allows you to begin working on OPT. There is no way to expedite an application.
- If 12 months or more of full-time CPT is used, a student forfeits OPT eligibility. Accrual of part-time CPT does not affect eligibility for OPT.
- Once the OPT application is submitted to the USCIS, it is very difficult to change or cancel the application.

Types of OPT

1) Pre-completion OPT

Pre-completion OPT allows students who have not yet completed a degree program to be authorized for off-campus employment.

- Students on pre-completion OPT are still required to meet the full-time enrollment requirement each semester (fall and spring) and can only work part-time during school sessions. They can work full-time during official school vacations (winter break and summer break).
- Pre-completion OPT must end by the student's program completion date.
- Students do not have a limit on days of unemployment.
- The amount of time you use for pre-completion OPT will be deducted from your 12-month allowance.
- Curricular Practical Training is a better option in most cases for working prior to your degree completion.

2) Post-Completion OPT

Post-completion OPT provides for up to one year of practical training authorization after completion of studies. Students can apply up to 90 days before and up to 60 days after program end date.

- It is recommended that students apply before completing their last semester of enrollment to avoid additional processing time and the possible loss of days of employment availability.
- In addition, OPT applications must be submitted to USCIS within 30 days of receiving an OPT I-20 from the Office of International Student Services.

3) STEM OPT Extension

Students who have received a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree in certain STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields may be eligible to apply for a one-time 24-month extension of post-completion OPT.

- See www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm for a list of eligible STEM fields.
- This extension can only be used twice over student's lifetime; not after each degree level, like post-completion OPT.
- The new STEM extension EAD card begins the day after the expiration of the previous OPT EAD and ends 24 months later; no matter when approved. Student may continue to work while the application is pending IF the application is submitted before the EAD card expires for up to 180 days.
- Employers must be registered with the U.S. Government E-Verify employment verification system.
- *Please use STEM OPT Extension Request Form (not this form)*

Taxes

In general, F-1 students who have been in the U.S. for no more than five different calendar years are exempt from Social Security taxes. You should be sure to bring this to the attention of your employer because many employers are not familiar with this provision of the tax laws. Students in F-1 status are subject to all other taxes that may apply, including federal, state and local. For more information, please consult with a tax professional and/or Publication 519 of the Internal Revenue Service.

Comply with F-1 Status Regulations while on OPT

F-1 students are responsible for complying with all immigration regulations, including employment regulations. Working without the proper authorization is a serious violation of nonimmigrant status in the U.S. If a student fails to comply, he or she may not be eligible for benefits normally granted to F-1 students and may jeopardize his or her stay in the U.S. Prior to accepting any employment in the US, students should consult with the Office of International Student Services.

- **Employment Related to Major.** OPT is intended to enhance an F-1 student academic program by providing a means to gain experience in his or her field of study. The USCIS considers working in a job that is not related to his or her major a violation of F-1 status.
- **Periods of Employment.** Once an F-1 student completes his or her degree, he or she cannot work until he or she has the EAD and the start date has arrived.
- **Periods of Unemployment.** During post-completion OPT, students may not accrue an aggregate total of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial post-completion OPT authorization. No special permission is required to change employers or terminate employment.
- **Reporting Changes Employment.** An F-1 student authorized by USCIS to engage in Optional Practical Training is required to report within 10 days of any change in the following: employer name, employer address and/or, periods of employment/ unemployment.
- **Update Local Address.** An F-1 student authorized by USCIS to engage in Optional Practical Training is required to report within 10 days of any change in the following: legal name, residential including changes from one residence hall to another or mailing address, employer name, employer address and/or, periods of employment/unemployment.
- **Maintain the validity of your immigration documents.** F-1 students should keep his or her passport valid for at least six months in to the future. F-1 students should keep his or her visa valid if traveling outside the U.S.
- **Copies of Immigration Documents.** F-1 students should keep copies of all immigration documents including: passport photo page, visa in passport, I-94 Form, current I-20, all copies of any I-20 issued.
- **International travel before the completion of an F-1 student's academic program.** F-1 students must have the second page of your I-20 form signed by a DSO before traveling. The signature date on your I-20 is valid for only 6 months while on OPT; check to make sure the signature is and will be valid upon return. Before leaving you must check to make sure that your student visa will still be valid upon re-entry into the U.S. If not, a new visa will need to be applied for prior to your return to the U.S.

International travel after completion of an F-1 student's academic program. The guidance for travel of students who have a valid visa is related to whether OPT has been approved or not yet.

- If post-completion OPT has not been approved yet -Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card still not yet issued by USCIS, and there is not a job or a job offer, an F-1 student may leave and then re-enter the U.S. to continue to look for employment with a valid travel signature on page 2 of the OPT I-20 (signature valid for 6 months only).
- If post-completion OPT has been approved -EAD card has been issued by USCIS and there is a job or a job offer, an F-1 student may leave and re-enter the U.S. in order to begin or resume employment with a valid travel signature on page 2 of the OPT I-20 (signature valid for 6 months only).
- If your post-completion OPT has been approved and an F-1 student leaves the U.S. before getting a job or a job offer, OPT ends and the student may not re-enter the U.S. as an F-1 student.

OPT Application Process:

- 1: **Read the information about OPT.**
- 2: **Complete and submit the APSU request form** (pages 5 and 6). Forms should be turned in to Office of International Student Services two weeks prior to desired appointment date (step 4).
USCIS Application deadlines:
 - **Pre-completion OPT** - USCIS application deadline is 90 days before your desired start date.
 - **Post-Completion OPT** – USCIS application can be accepted up to 90 days before and up to 60 days after program completion.
 - **STEM Extension** – USCIS recommends you apply up to 120 days before your OPT end date. Applications cannot be submitted after the end date.
- 3: **Prepare the USCIS Application materials** (see list on next page)
- 4: **Schedule an appointment** with the Office of International Student Services to obtain new OPT I-20. All USCIS application materials should be brought to the appointment.
- 5: **Mail application packet** within 30 days of issuance of OPT I-20 (DSO signature printed date on page 1).
 - See next page for correct mailing address.
 - Write “I-765” on lower left corner of envelope.
 - When you have properly filed your application, you will receive a Notice of Action from the USCIS with a case number. You can use this case number to track your case online at www.uscis.gov.
- 6: **Receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD).** It may take up to three months. You cannot begin work of any type until you receive your EAD.
- 7: **Begin OPT** once start date has arrived. (STEM extension students may continue to work while application is pending for up to 180 days.)
- 8: **Apply for Social Security Number** (cannot apply before start date on EAD).
- 9: **Report employment and any changes in employment or address** to Office of International Student Services.

Tips for completing Form I-765

- Applying for: Pre/Post complete OPT—use “permission to accept employment”
STEM OPT Extension—use “renewal of my permission to accept employment”
- #1: Be sure to write name in correct order (Family, First, Middle)—this is what will be written on your EAD. Write family name in ALL CAPS. First (and middle, if have) name should not be all caps; only first letter should be capitalized. This name should match your OPT I-20 and passport.
- #3: Use an address that will be valid for the entire next 3 months. If address is not known or there is possibility of change, use the Office of International Student Services (see below). Any requests for evidence, communication, or EAD card, if approved, will be sent to this address so it needs to be an address that will be regularly checked.
APSU ISS Box 6400
Clarksville TN 37044
- #4, 5, 6: Should match the information on your passport
- #9: If do not have, write “none”
- #10, 12, 13, and 14: This is information from most recent entry on I-94/passport stamp.
- #11: If have never applied: check “No”
If have applied: check “Yes”
 - USCIS office: see EAD card number for office code: YSC-Potomac, LIN-Nebraska, WAC-California, EAC-Vermont, SRC-Texas, MSC-Missouri
 - Dates: start date on EAD card
 - Results: if approved—Granted (include copy of front/back of EAD card with application)
if not approved—Denied
- #15: Current status: F-1 Student
- #16: If pre-completion OPT, use: (c)(3)(A).
 - If post-completion OPT, use: (c)(3)(B).
 - If STEM extension, use: (c)(3)(C).
- #17: only needed if STEM extension
 - Degree: write level of degree (i.e. Bachelor’s, Master’s, PhD, etc.)
 - Employer’s name: as listed in E-Verify
 - Employer’s E-Verify number—should be able to get from company’s HR department.
- Don’t forget to sign, date and include phone number

USCIS Application Materials - please check USCIS Web site for updated listing (www.uscis.gov/i-765)

- Application Fee: \$410 (Use a money order or personal check made payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”)
- Form I-765 (www.uscis.gov/i-765)
See Tips for completing form I-765 on page 3.
- Photocopy of your new OPT I-20 from APSU (keep the original I-20)
- Photocopies of all previous I-20s (Make sure all your I-20s are signed before copying them. Keep the originals for your records.)
- Photocopy of current I-94 (www.cbp.gov/i94)
- Photocopy of Passport (passport biographical information page and any renewal pages)
- Photocopy of Visa
- Photocopy of past EAD cards if applicable (front and back)
- Two color, U.S. passport-style, photographs (Photos need to be a certain size. See Instructions for Form I-765, page 13 for guidelines: www.uscis.gov/i-765) Write your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo in pencil in case they get separated from your application. Place photos in plastic bag or envelope and staple to top of Form I-765. Do not staple the photos.
- Form G-1145 (www.uscis.gov/g-1145) Attach completed form to first page of I-756 application.

Use the table below to determine which lockbox you should send your application to:

If U.S. mailing address listed in #3 on application is in...		Mail your application to:
Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri,	Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Guam, or the Northern Mariana Islands.	<p>USCIS Phoenix Lockbox</p> <p>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) First-Class and Priority Mail Express deliveries: USCIS P.O. Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036</p> <p>For overnight/courier deliveries (non-USPS): USCIS Attn: AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034</p>
Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey,	New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, or West Virginia	<p>USCIS Dallas Lockbox</p> <p>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) First-Class and Priority Mail Express deliveries: USCIS P.O. Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266</p> <p>For overnight/courier deliveries (non-USPS): USCIS Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067</p>

Optional Practical Training Request Form

I. PERSONAL DATA: APSU Banner I.D. No. _____

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

SEVIS ID Number: _____ Date of current I-20 expiration: _____

Level of Study: Bachelor's Master's

Major: _____ Second Major: _____

Minor: _____ Classification: _____

APSU Email: _____@my.apsu.edu Other Email: _____

Current U.S. Address: _____
(Street name & number) (Apt/Dorm) (City) (State) (Zip Code)

Current U.S. Phone Number: _____
(Area code & current number)

II. OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING INFORMATION:

The authorization dates you choose will be noted on your new OPT I-20 and noted on your EAD.

- The latest date you can request OPT is 60 days after the program end date on your I-20. This is also the latest start date you can request.
- The start date is the day on which the EAD becomes valid and you can begin working. The “clock starts ticking” on the start date whether you have a job or not.
- The end date is usually 12 months later, unless you request a shorter period of time or your application is approved 61 days or more after your program completion date.

Type of OPT:

Pre-Completion OPT – Summer or Winter Break – Fall or Spring Semester

Full time (more than 20 hours/week)

Part-time (20 hours/week or fewer)

Students may only work 20 hours per week or fewer while school is in session. During summer break or winter break (if enrolled full-time for next session), student may work full time. Part-time pre-completion OPT is counted as half of full-time OPT.

Requested Start Date: _____ Requested End Date: _____

Applications deadline is 90 days before your desired start date. The amount of time you use for pre-completion OPT will be deducted from your 12 month allowance. Curricular Practical Training is a better option in most cases for working prior to your degree completion

Post-Completion OPT – After degree completion

Full time (more than 20 hours/week)

Part-time (20 hours/week or fewer)

Requested Start Date: _____ Requested End Date: _____

You can submit your application to the USCIS up to 90 days before and up to 60 after your I-20 program end date as long as you have not left the U.S.

Have you ever been authorized for OPT in the past? NO YES – From: _____ To: _____

If you have been authorized for OPT in the past, on which degree level was it based? Bachelor's Master's Ph. D.

III. EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION:

Do you already have a job offer in place? **YES** – please fill out information in **section A**.

NO – please fill out information in **section B**. A job offer is not required to apply for OPT; however, once you find a job, you must notify the Office of International Student Services.

A: Job Title: _____

Job/Position Description: _____

Name of Company: _____

Company Contact (Supervisor/Manager): _____

Work Address: _____
(Street name & number) (City) (State) (Zip Code)

Work Phone Number: _____
(Area code & number)

B. Please indicate what type(s) of position(s) you are looking for and describe how it (they) relate to your major: _____

IV. OPT REGULATIONS FOR MAINTAINING F-1 STATUS

You are responsible for complying with all immigration regulations, including employment regulations. Working without the proper authorization is a serious violation of nonimmigrant status in the U.S. If you fail to comply, you may not be eligible for benefits normally granted to F-1 students and may jeopardize your stay in the U.S.

If you are authorized by USCIS to engage in Optional Practical Training, you are required to report within 10 days of any change in the following: legal name, residential or mailing address, employer name, employer address and/or, periods of employment/ unemployment.

OPT is intended to enhance your academic program by providing a means to gain experience in your field of study. The USCIS considers working in a job that is not related to your major a violation of F-1 status. Once you complete your degree, you cannot work on-campus or off-campus until you have the EAD in your possession and the start date has arrived.

During post completion OPT, you may not accrue an aggregate total of more than 90 days of unemployment. No special permission is required to change employers or terminate your employment. However, you must notify the Office of International Student Services of your unemployment and/ or new employer's information.

Before any international travel, contact the Office of International Student Services to ensure your I-20 form is signed by a university DSO and to ensure you have a valid visa and student status.

I have read and understand the responsibilities for maintaining F-1 status during my period of OPT authorization as stated above and on document “Comply with F-1 Status Regulations while on OPT”.

Signature

Date

AP
Austin Peay
International
Student Services

Office of International Student Services

P.O. Box 4664
McReynolds 103, 113
Austin Peay State University
Clarksville, TN 37044 USA

Email: iss@apsu.edu
Telephone: 931-221-6400
Fax: 931-221-7641
www.apsu.edu/international