



# Optional Practical Training

**Optional Practical Training (OPT)** is work authorization available to international students with 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. The Office of International Student Services (OISS) recommends OPT, but final approval is granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).

### To obtain OPT, students:

- ...must have maintained valid F-1 status for at least one academic year. One year of OPT is available at each level of education. During OPT, a student retains F-1 status since OPT is part of their program of study.
- ...do not need a job offer to apply. However, once you find a job, you must notify the OISS. Employment may occur anywhere in the U.S.
- ...may not have engaged in more than 12 months of full-time CPT. Exceeding 12 months of CPT forfeits OPT eligibility.
  - Part-time CPT does not affect OPT eligibility.
- ...must submit a request form to the OISS.
- ...must file form I-765 with USCIS and submit all required documentation within the appropriate timeframe.

### Types of OPT

#### 1) Pre-completion OPT

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

- Students on pre-completion OPT must 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 and summer break).
- Pre-completion OPT must end by the student's program completion date.
- There is no limit on days of unemployment for pre-completion OPT.
- The time used for pre-completion OPT will be deducted from the 12-month allowance of post-completion OPT.
- Curricular Practical Training is a better option in most cases for working before your degree completion.

#### 2) Post-Completion OPT

Post-completion OPT provides up to one year of practical training authorization after completing studies.

- It is recommended that students apply before finishing their last semester of enrollment to avoid additional processing time and the potential loss of days of employment availability.
- Students can apply up to 90 days before and up to 60 days after their program ends.
- OPT applications must be submitted to USCIS within 30 days of receiving an OPT I-20 from the OISS.

## Taxes

F-1 students who have been in the U.S. for no more than 5 calendar years are generally exempt from Social Security taxes. Bring this to your employer's attention because many employers are unfamiliar with this tax law provision. Students with F-1 status are subject to all other applicable taxes, including federal, state, and local. For more information, please consult 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 and employment regulations. Failure to comply may impact other benefits and jeopardize your stay in the U.S.

Remember these key regulations:

- **Employment Related to Major.** OPT enhances an F-1 student's academic program by providing experience in their field. The USCIS considers working in an unrelated job a violation of F-1 status.
- **Periods of Employment.** An F-1 student cannot work until they have the EAD and the start date listed on the EAD has arrived.
- **Periods of Unemployment.** During post-completion OPT, students may not accrue more than 90 days of unemployment.
- **Reporting Changes Employment.** F-1 students must report any change in the employer name, employer address, or change in employment status within 10 days of the change.
- **Update Local Address.** F-1 students must report any change in legal name, residential or mailing address, phone number, or email within 10 days of the change.
- **Maintain valid immigration documents.** F-1 students should keep their passports valid for at least six months. F-1 students should keep their visas valid if planning to travel outside the U.S.
- **Copies of Immigration Documents.** F-1 students should keep copies of all immigration documents, including passport photo page, visa, I-94, current I-20, and all copies of any I-20 issued.
- **International travel.** F-1 students must have the second page of their I-20 form signed by a DSO before traveling. Before leaving, ensure that the student visa will still be valid upon re-entry into the U.S. Students may not re-enter the U.S. if their visa has expired.
  - If USCIS has not yet issued the EAD and there is not a job or a job offer, travel is not recommended.
  - If USCIS has issued the EAD and there is a job or a job offer, an F-1 student may leave and re-enter the U.S. to begin or resume employment with a valid travel signature.

## OPT Application Process:

- 1: **Read the information about OPT.**
- 2: **Complete and submit the APSU request form.** Forms should be turned in to OISS two weeks before the desired application date.  
USCIS Application deadlines:
  - **Pre-completion OPT** - 90 days before your desired start date
  - **Post-Completion OPT** - 90 days before and up to 60 days after program completion
- 3: **Prepare the USCIS Application materials.**
- 4: **Schedule an appointment** with the OISS to obtain an OPT I-20. Bring application materials to the appointment.
- 5: **Submit application packet** within 30 days of issuance of OPT I-20  
When submitted, you will receive a receipt number to track your case online.
- 6: **Receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD).**
- 7: **Begin OPT only** once the start date has arrived and your EAD is in-hand.
- 8: **Report employment and any changes in employment or address** to the OISS.

**Tips for completing Form I-765**

- Applying for: Pre/Post complete OPT—use “permission to accept employment”
- The application name should match the OPT I-20 and passport names.
- Use an address that will be valid for the next 3 months. If the address is not known or there is the possibility of change, use the OISS address.
  - APSU ISS  
P. O. Box 4664  
Clarksville, TN 37044
- Current status: F-1 Student
  - Pre-completion OPT, use: (c)(3)(A).
  - Post-completion OPT, use: (c)(3)(B).

**USCIS Application Materials – Updated September 2024**

- ☐ Application Fee: \$470 (can be paid by debit or credit card)
- ☐ Form I-765
- ☐ Soft copy of OPT I-20 (keep the original I-20)
- ☐ Soft copy of all any CPT I-20s (Keep originals for your records.)
- ☐ Soft copy of most recent I-94 ([www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94))
- ☐ Soft copy of Passport and Visa – most recent
- ☐ Soft copies of past EAD cards (if applicable; front and back)
- ☐ 2x2 (200x200 px) color, passport-style photo



International Student  
Services

## Optional Practical Training Request Form

### I. PERSONAL DATA:

APSU A# \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last Name) (First Name) (Middle Name)

SEVIS ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of current I-20 expiration: \_\_\_\_\_

Level of Study: \_\_\_\_\_ Major: \_\_\_\_\_

APSU Email: \_\_\_\_\_@students.apsu.edu Other Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Current U.S. Address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Street name & number) (Apt/Dorm)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(City) (State) (Zip)

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

### II. OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING INFORMATION:

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

- The latest start date you can request OPT is 60 days after the program end date on your I-20.
- The start date is when the EAD becomes valid, and you can begin working. The “clock starts ticking” on the start date whether you have a job or not.
- Part-time pre-completion OPT is counted as half of full-time OPT.

#### Type of OPT:

**Pre-Completion OPT; Semester:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Post Completion**

**Full-time** **Part-time**

Requested Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Requested End Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been authorized for OPT? NO YES – From: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what degree level? Bachelor’s Master’s Doctoral

### III. EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION:

Do you already have a job offer in place? **YES** – please fill out **section A**. **NO** – **SKIP**.

**A:** Company: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Position Description:

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Work Address:

(Street name & number)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(City)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(State)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Zip)

Work Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

(Area code & number)

### IV. OPT REGULATIONS FOR MAINTAINING F-1 STATUS

You are responsible for complying with all immigration regulations, including employment regulations.

**I have read and understand the responsibilities for maintaining F-1 status during my period of OPT and in the “Comply with F-1 Status Regulations while on OPT” section of the OPT Information packet.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**