

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) FOR F-1 STUDENTS

Eligibility:

Nonimmigrant F-1 students who have been in lawful full-time student status for at least one full academic year are eligible to apply for up to 12 months of Optional Practical Training (OPT) employment in an area related to their field of study. With few exceptions, students use OPT authorization just after completing the degree program. (Post-completion OPT must be completed within 14 months of completion of studies.) Students may apply for OPT no earlier than 90 days before graduation, though it is highly recommended that OPT applications are sent for processing at least three months prior to graduation.

Students applying for OPT will prepare an application for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) with the help of the Office of International Student Services. Students who wish to participate in pre-completion and/or post-completion OPT **must** attend the **Working on an F-1 Student Visa Workshop** (workshop schedules can be found on the OISS website). Once you have completed the workshop, you may make an OPT processing appointment, visit Atherton 004 or call (317) 940-9888.

You are not required to have a job at the time you apply for OPT, but *any* employment you undertake as a part of Optional Practical Training must be related to your field of study. Students may change jobs within the authorized period of OPT as long as it is related to the field of study and “commensurate with his or her educational level”. You are allowed only 90 days of unemployment starting from the start date on your Employment Authorization Document (EAD card).

Note for the future: Students who later earn a higher level degree from a U.S. institution may be eligible for an additional 12 months of OPT upon completion of that degree.

Documents Needed for OPT Processing Appointment:

1. An **Optional Practical Training Recommendation Form** from your Department Chair or Academic Advisor verifying your degree program, the expected date of completion, and recommending Practical Training is appropriate to your field of study (the second page of this document is your recommendation)
2. Completed **Form I-765**. (Please fill out as much as you can. What you are unable to complete can be done during the OPT processing appointment)
 - ◆ *Item #10*, enter the 11-digit Admission Number on current I-94;
 - ◆ *Item #16*, enter code:
 - Pre-completion (c) (3) (A)
 - Post-completion (c) (3) (B)
 - STEM Extension (c) (3) (C)
 - ◆ **Complete #17 only if you are applying for 17 month STEM extension**
 - ◆ **Filing fee** made payable to the “U.S. Department of Homeland Security” (refer to OISS website for current fee amount)
3. **Passport & F-1 student visa**
4. **I-94 card** (if you bring copies, make sure you copy front and back)
5. **All I-20s ever issued**
 - ◆ **I-20 with OPT Request** (will be generated at time of OPT processing appointment)
6. **Two passport-sized photos** (2” by 2”)
7. **Social security card** (if applicable)
8. **EAD card from previous periods of OPT** (if applicable)

Note: You must have all the above documents to make an appointment with OISS. If you are missing any documents, you will be asked to make a new appointment. OPT processing appointments last approximately 30-45 minutes.

SOCIAL SECURITY (FICA) TAXES: Employers are not required to withhold Social Security Tax from the wages of nonimmigrant F-1 students who have authorization from the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Service to be employed. The Office of International Student Services can provide you with a copy of the publication from the Social Security Administration which should be presented to your employer.

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING RECOMMENDATION FORM

To Be Completed By Academic Advisor or Department Chair

Please review handout, "Optional Practical Training for F-1 Students", located on reverse.

TO: Office of International Student Services, Atherton Union Room 004

FROM: _____
Print Name of Faculty Title

DATE: ____/____/____

RE: _____
Student's Family Name Student's First Name

This memo serves to confirm that the above named student is currently a student in the department of _____.

The practical training sought by this student is directly related to his or her field of study, commensurate with his or her educational level, and recommended by this academic department.

This student *(please check one)*:

_____ **Has completed all course requirements excluding thesis or dissertation.**

_____ **Is expected to complete the course of study** ____/____/____

Faculty Signature: _____ **Date:** ____/____/____

Department: _____

International Student Services use ONLY:

Full time OPT recommended from ____/____/____ to ____/____/____

by _____ on ____/____/____.