

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Information Sheet F-1 Students

What is OPT?

Based on federal statute {8C.F.R. 214.2 (f)(10)(ii)}, OPT is permission the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) gives international students to gain temporary off-campus employment directly related to the students' major field of study. This employment is generally completed after graduation.

What are the requirements?

1. OPT is for F-1 visa students.
2. Students must have been enrolled as an F-1 full-time student for at least one academic year.
3. Students must have maintained their legal immigration status.
4. Students must complete an application form and send it and all required documents and fees to the correct USCIS Service Center from 90 days before completion of the student's academic program to 60 days after the completion of the student's academic program.
5. Students must maintain employment while on OPT. Excessive unemployment will cause a student's OPT to be cancelled. Students may not be unemployed for more than 90 days during their initial 12 months of OPT.
6. The OPT application must be sent to the correct USCIS Service Center within 30 days of IPSO's recommendation in SEVIS. This means within 30 days of the date on the OPT I-20.
7. Students must report any changes in name, address, or employer to IPSO within 10 days of the change. Failure to report changes can affect students' legal immigration status.

What is the role of the International Programs & Services Office (IPSO)?

1. IPSO assists students with their OPT applications.
2. IPSO counsels students and answers their questions about OPT.
3. IPSO communicates with USCIS when students encounter a problem.
4. IPSO, in accordance with federal policy, shortens the students' program end dates to coincide with their graduation dates.
5. IPSO answers advisors' questions about OPT.

What is the role of Degree Checking and Graduate & Continuing Studies?

These offices complete a recommendation form (attached on the final page of this packet) verifying the student's anticipated completion of all course and/or degree requirements. Based on this information, IPSO counsels the student regarding his/her OPT application. Therefore, it is important that the information be accurate.

What happens if a student applies for OPT and does not actually graduate?

Students may end up not graduating due to an incomplete class, failed class, etc. If this happens, students should contact IPSO as soon as possible. IPSO can extend students' program end dates before the program end dates have passed. After the program end dates have passed, it is not possible to extend students' program end dates. Thus, students will have difficulties with their immigration status as they seek to complete course requirements. If students do not apply for OPT within 60 days after the program end date, students will not be able to apply for OPT.

If you have any questions about OPT, please contact the International Programs & Services Office, or you may contact Jeff Hashman~Ext. 4383~Email jhashman@pittstate.edu

Student Information

ELIGIBILITY

Students may apply for **Optional Practical Training** in any or all of the following cases:

1. During students' annual vacation and at other time when the school is not in session if students' are currently enrolled and intend to register for the next term.
2. While school is in session, provided that **Optional Practical Training** does not exceed **twenty (20) hours a week**.
3. After students have been enrolled for a full academic year (9 months) and maintained their immigration status.
4. When students are in their **final semester** of study. **This is the most common and recommended time to apply for OPT.**
5. When students have a degree in certain STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics) fields. These students may apply for a 17-month extension of OPT for a total of 29 months.

EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION

1. Applications may be submitted from **90 days** before the completion of the academic program to **60 days** after the completion of the academic program. Applications should be done during the student's last semester of study.
2. The student may not accept employment until he/she has been issued an **Employment Authorization Document (EAD) by US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)**.
3. The application for employment authorization must include:
 1. Two color passport photos*
 2. \$380 required application fee (check or money order made payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security)
 3. Completed I-765 Application Form (must be downloaded and completed from USCIS):
<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>
 4. Completed G-1145 email notification Form (must be downloaded and completed from USCIS):
<http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf>
 5. Copy of new SEVIS I-20 issued by International Programs & Services
 6. Copy of valid passport
 7. Copy of valid visa
 8. Copy of I-94 (front & back)
 9. Recommendation Form (attached to last page) signed by Degree Checking for undergraduates or the Graduate Office for graduates (Placed in student's IPSO file. Not sent to USCIS)

* For passport photos, IPSO recommends:

Pittsburg Post Office, 702 North Locust, Pittsburg, KS, 66762, 620-231-6000, passport photos are done from 9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday and 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturday, cost \$15.00. MAKE SURE YOU ASK THE POST OFFICE TO CUT YOUR PICTURES IF THEY DON'T CUT THEM.

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

1. Make an appointment with Jeff Hashman, jhashman@pittstate.edu, 235-4383, or make an appointment with Vickie Mense, vmense@pittstate.edu, 235-4680.

2. Before appointment:

- a. Get a money order for \$380 **or** be prepared to write a check for that amount.
- b. Get 2 color passport photos at the post office or Treasured Images - refer to previous page for more information.
- c. Get the Recommendation Form attached filled out by the student (Section A) and by Degree Checking for undergraduate students or by Graduate & Continuing Studies for graduate students (Section B).
- d. Complete the I-765 form:
 1. Complete the form using the fillable PDF (Acrobat Reader) form.
 2. You must print on a laser printer. If you do not have a laser printer, print out the form and write in the information. Then Jeff Hashman can print them out at your appointment on a laser printer.
 3. **While completing the form, please refer to the sample form attached:**

I-765 Form:

3. Address in the United States:

Make sure you will be at this address up to 120 days after sending in your OPT application. Mail from USCIS can NOT be forwarded to another address. It will be sent back to USCIS. You can use the university's address: C/O International Office 1701 S. Broadway, Pittsburg, KS 66762

12. / 13. Date/Place of Last Entry into the US:

The date and entry will be in your most current I-94 stamp, which will be in your passport and/or on your current I-94 Card.

16. Go to....:

The code used is (c) (3) (B) – Post-completion OPT, or (c) (3) (C) – 17-month extension for STEM students.

3. Bring to the meeting with Jeff Hashman at 120H Whitesitt Hall:

- Recommendation Form (The last page of this application packet.)
- 2 Color Passport Photos (Should be within last six (6) months.)
- Check/Money Order for \$380 (Made out to US Department of Homeland Security.)
- I-765 Form (This is the application form for OPT.)
- G-1145 Form (You will get an email notifying you that your application has been accepted.)
- Passport
- Visa
- I-94 Card (front & back)
- Previous EADs (if any)

4. After meeting with Jeff Hashman, students are responsible for mailing the documents by **CERTIFIED** mail (cost less than \$5) to the correct address below, corresponding with the address used on your I-765 form.

- a. **Phoenix Lockbox:** Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, **Kansas**, Michigan, Minnesota, **Missouri**, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, or Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

USCIS Phoenix Lockbox

For US Post Office (USPS) deliveries:
 USCIS
 PO Box 21281
 Phoenix, AZ 85036

For Express Mail and courier service deliveries:
 USCIS
 Attn: AOS
 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
 Suite 100
 Phoenix, AZ 85034

b. **Dallas Lockbox:** 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

USCIS Dallas Lockbox

For US Post Office (USPS) deliveries:

USCIS
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

For Express Mail and courier service deliveries:

USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121, Business
Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

After Application Guidelines

1. Applicants will receive an I-797C Notice of Action from USCIS. This is a receipt from USCIS. It tells students that USCIS has received their application and is processing it. This receipt is not permission to work. There will be a receipt number in the upper-left corner. This number is required for all communication with USCIS about your OPT application. The receipt number can also be used to check your application status at <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>.
2. If students receive a job offer and have not received their EAD (work permission) from USCIS, they should contact Mr. Hashman or IPSO. It is possible to request USCIS to expedite (speed up) your OPT application. An electronic job offer letter from the employer will be needed to do this.
3. Travel outside of the US while waiting for OPT is not advised. However, if students do plan to travel, they should contact Mr. Hashman or IPSO for advice about traveling and reentry.

During OPT

1. Students must report any change in their name or address to IPSO. During OPT, you are still on a PSU I-20, so changes in name or address must be reported to PSU. This is required by law. Failure to do so may affect your legal F-1 immigration status.
2. Students must report the name and address of their employers to IPSO. If students change employers or become unemployed while on OPT, the students must report this change to the IPSO. This is required by law. Failure to do so may affect your immigration status. Students should keep good records of all employment. It is students' responsibility to be able to prove that they have been employed legally.
3. Transferring to another school or beginning study at another educational level automatically ends OPT. Students should contact IPSO if they plan to transfer to another school or begin study at a new educational level.
4. The Social Security Administration will not process an application until the start date on the EAD.
5. After your OPT ends, students will receive a 60-day grace period. This is different from the 60-day period following your graduation. The first 60-day period is time when students can apply for OPT and USCIS processes OPT applications. The second 60-day period is for students to prepare to leave the US, enroll in a new course of study, travel, etc.

Extension of OPT

OPT may be extended in two situations:

1. OPT extension to 29 months for STEM students:

- a. Students with certain STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) degrees may apply for an OPT extension of 17 months. This will give a total of 29 months of OPT. Check the following Internet site for a list of approved STEM degrees:
<http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm>
- b. Students must apply for this extension before their current OPT EAD expires. Student may apply for the extension starting 120 days (4 months) before the initial OPT period ends. In number 16 on the I-765 form, enter (c) (3) (C). The OPT form I-765 now includes number 17: degree, name of employer as listed in E-Verify, and the company's E-Verify identification number or E-Verify Client Company identification number. (Students' employers **must** have an E-Verify number in order for the student to apply for the OPT extension.)
- c. The student will send the following to USCIS to apply for the extension:
 - i. I-765 Form
 - ii. Copy of I-20 issued by IPSO with OPT Extension Recommendation
 - iii. Copy of Last EAD (front & back)
 - iv. Copy of Passport
 - v. Copy of Visa
 - vi. 2 Color Passport Photos
 - vii. Copy of PSU Degree
 - viii. Check or Money Order for \$380 (Made out to U.S. Department of Homeland Security)
- d. During the STEM Extension
 - i. Send a report to IPSO two times (months 6 and 12 of the extension) that includes the student's name and address, and the employer's name and address. Any unemployment must also be reported. This report confirms that our information is correct and accurate. This report must be sent whether there are changes or not.
 - ii. Report any changes of the following within ten (10) days of the change:
 - a. the student's legal name and address
 - b. the employer name and address
 - c. unemployment

2. **H-1B gap-cap extension:** Students on OPT who are beneficiaries of a **timely** H-1B applications may have their F-1 status and work authorization extended. Student with approved current or future OPT may receive extended F-1 status and work authorization. Students without approved current or future OPT may have their F-1 status but not their work authorization extended. The H-1B application must have an employment start date of October 1. The length of the extension depends on which of the categories below students are in:

- a. Properly filed H-1B application: OPT extended to June 1 and F-1 status extended to July 31 of the current year. Students must ask IPSO for the extension with proof of proper filing.
- b. Received H-1B application: OPT authorization extended to September 30 of that year. SEVIS record automatically updated. Students may ask IPSO for a copy of the I-20 showing the extension.

**OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING
RECOMMENDATION FORM
F-1 Students**

Section A: To be completed by the student:

Family Name: _____ First Name: _____

PSU ID#: _____ Phone: _____

Current Address: _____
(Street Address) (Apt. Number)_____
(City) (State) (Zip Code)

Email: _____

Previous Periods of Practical Training:

 CPT OPT ~ Full Time Part Time ~ Dates Authorized: _____ TO _____ CPT OPT ~ Full Time Part Time ~ Dates Authorized: _____ TO _____

Requested period of OPT: Start (mm/dd/yy) ____/____/____ End (mm/dd/yy) ____/____/____

Section B: To be completed by Degree Checking or Graduate & Continuing Studies:Educational Level: (check one) Bachelor Master Ed.S

Major area of study: _____

Expected date of completion of degree requirements (mm/dd/year): ____/____/____

*Note: This should be the specific date the student will actually complete ALL course or degree requirements, not necessarily the date of commencement ceremonies.*Please check the **one** statement that will be true during the student's requested period of OPT from Section A: The student has (or will have) completed all **course** requirements, **excluding** thesis, comprehensive exams, or other non-course degree requirement. The student has (or will have) completed all **degree** requirements.

Office Signature _____ Date _____

Name (typed/printed): _____ Dept: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____