



OPT Information



What is OPT?



Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a unique opportunity for International Students to pursue work opportunities in the United States while still maintaining F-1 student status.

There are two types of OPT:

- PRE-completion OPT, which must be started before degree completion.
- POST-completion OPT, which must be started after degree completion.

Requirements of PRE-completion OPT



- Pre-completion OPT is an opportunity for F-1 students to work in the United States prior to the completion of their degree. Jobs worked under pre-completion OPT must be directly related to a student's field of study.
- Pre-completion OPT may only begin after a student has been in lawful F-1 status for a minimum of two semesters of full-time study.
- Students on pre-completion OPT are not allowed to work more than 20 hours per week during full-time academic studies.

Opportunities through POST-completion OPT



- Post-completion OPT is an opportunity for International Students to pursue work opportunities in the United States *after* the completion of their degree, while still maintaining F-1 status.
- Students who are approved for post-completion OPT are authorized to work full-time for up to 12 months within the 14 month period following their degree completion.

Requirements of POST-completion OPT?



- Jobs worked under post-completion OPT must be directly related to a student's field of study.
- Post-completion OPT may only begin after a student has been in lawful F-1 status for a minimum of two semesters of full-time study.
- Unlike CPT (curricular practical training), no specific job offer is required to apply for OPT.
- Post-completion OPT can only begin once you've completed ALL degree requirements.

Why most students choose POST-completion OPT

- Students pursuing OPT are limited to work no more than the equivalent of 12-months of full-time work, regardless of the type of OPT (pre- or post-completion).

For example, a student that completes 12 months of part-time, pre-completion OPT (the equivalent of 6 months of full-time work), will *only* be eligible for 6 months of post-completion OPT. (*Post-completion OPT must be full-time*).



IMPORTANT: An overwhelming majority of students choose to participate in POST-completion OPT. This allows them to stay in the United States and pursue career options for a longer period of time following the completion of their degree.

STEM OPT?

- Students who received science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees will be eligible for a 24-month extension (total of 36 months of OPT)
- You will have to file for an extension 60 days prior to your end date on your initial 12 months of OPT.
- <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf>

How do I apply?

1

✓ Before you apply for OPT, you'll need to check with your academic advisor and the registrar's office, to make sure that you have met all the requirements to finish your degree program in the expected semester.



How do I apply?

2

After compiling all required paperwork, meet with the P/DSO to make sure you have the following forms ready to send to the USCIS Service Center.

- Form [G-1145](#):
- Original, signed Form [I-765](#)
- Photocopy of passport ID page with photo, passport number and expiration date
- Photocopy of your visa
- Printout of I-94 arrival/departure document (www.cbp.gov/I94)
- Photocopies of previous I-20s and any previously issued Employment Authorization cards
- Two (2) U.S. Style Passport Photos: Write your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo
- \$470.00 check payable to: U.S. Department of Homeland Security



How does the PDSO support me?

3

The P/D SO will check these documents, and will again verify your eligibility for OPT. They will also recommend your OPT request online, in SEVIS.

4

Once the P/D SO has recommended your OPT request in SEVIS, immediately send your documents, with the required fee, to the USCIS Service Center



IMPORTANT: USCIS periodically updates the I-765 form and corresponding application fee. Before applying for OPT, go to www.uscis.gov to make sure that you are sending in the most updated form and fee.



When do I apply?



Earliest date you may apply for OPT with the USCIS

Because applications can take up to 90 days for USCIS to process, we recommend that you apply no later than 30 days prior to the end of your term.

If approved, your employment authorization will begin at some point within these 60 days following the end of your academic program

OPT begins, and will expire 12 months from the start date listed on the EAD you receive from USCIS.

90 days

60 days

Completion of Degree Requirements

End of 60 day grace period after expiration of Original I-20

When can I start work?



You are not allowed to work on OPT *until* the **start date** listed on your Employment Authorization Card.



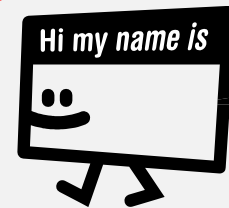
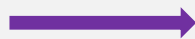
What about unemployment?

- During your 12-month period of OPT, you are not allowed to collect more than 90 days of unemployment (beginning from the start date of your Employment Authorization Document, or EAD).
- However, **volunteer work** and **unpaid internships** DO count as “employment” for OPT, as long as the work is directly related to your field of study, and you are working full-time. This is a great way to “fill in the gaps” if you are not able to find a job right away, or if there is an interruption in your employment for any other reason.
- Weekends, holidays, vacation leave, and sick leave do NOT count as unemployment.



Who keeps track of me during my 12 months of OPT?

- During your 12 months of OPT, you remain in F-1 status with your I-20 issued through NDNU.
- All employment issues (Form I-9, Form W-4, payment, etc.) will be handled between you and your employer.
- While you will likely not be in frequent contact with NDNU during your 12+ months of OPT, *you are still required to update the P/DSO at NDNU of any changes to your name, U.S. address, and employment information within 10 days of the change.*



Can I travel outside of the United States during OPT?



According to the Immigrations and Customs Enforcement website (http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq_f2.htm), you may travel outside of the United States during OPT



IMPORTANT: For travel in and out of the U.S., a Customs and Border Patrol officer will only permit your re-entry into the U.S. if page 3 of your current I-20 has a non-expired signature from an NDNU DSO! When on OPT, a travel signature from a DSO is valid for 6 months

Where can I find more information about taxes?



Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Website:
www.irs.gov

FORM 1040NR :
<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f1040nr.pdf>

Publication 519 (“U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens”):
<http://www.irs.gov/publications/p519/index.html>

IRS Helpline (toll-free tax assistance):
[1-800-829-1040](tel:1-800-829-1040)

When does OPT end? What happens next?



OPT ends one year, minus one day, following the start of your EAD. For example, if your EAD begins on May 20th, 2023, your OPT/EAD will expire on May 19th, 2024.

Following the expiration of your OPT/EAD, you will have a 60-day grace period before you are required to leave the country.

What if I want to stay in the U.S. after OPT?

Students wishing to stay in the U.S. after completing OPT *may* be able to do so by pursuing one of the following options:

Applying for an H1-B Visa:

You may be eligible to apply for a H1-B (work) visa if you have a sponsoring employer. Consult your employer's human resources office for more information about this possibility.

Another way to stay in the US

You may also choose to pursue another degree at an approved academic institution and continue as an F-1 student:

In this case, please consult the DSO of the academic institution at which you have chosen to continue your studies. Also, you'll need an NDNU DSO to transfer your I-20 if continuing at a different school.



IMPORTANT: Transferring your I-20 to another institution will automatically end your OPT. To complete the entire length of your OPT *and* have your I-20 transferred to another institution, request your I-20 transfer to occur during the 60-day grace period after completion of your OPT.

Questions about OPT...



Please make an appointment!

International
Students Office

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