



International Student Services
(803)754-4100, extension 3236
Student Center, Student Life Office

Optional Practical Training Fact Sheet

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an employment option available to F-1 students who have been lawfully enrolled on a full time basis for one full academic year. The employment must be directly related to the major area of study. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the application is submitted at least one month in advance of the program completion date.

Eligibility:

- Must be an F-1 student who has been enrolled full-time for at least one academic year.
- Proposed employment must be directly related to the student's area of study.
- Must not have been granted full time CPT for more than one year, or already done more than 12 months full time OPT at the same program level.

Application Process:

- Schedule appointment with the International Student Advisor at least one month in advance of the program completion date.
- Submit completed I-538 and I-765 forms along with the following documents at your appointment with the International Student Advisor:
 - Completed CIU OPT Application Form (available in ISA office)
 - Completed I-538 (available in ISA office or online at website listed below)
 - Completed I-765 (available in ISA office or online at website listed below)
 - 2 Adit (passport) style photographs
 - Copy of I-94 (front and back)
 - Copy of all previous Employment Authorization Documents (EAD cards)
 - Copy of Passport ID page(s) (Picture identification page and expiration date page)
 - Copy of Visa
 - Copy of most recent I-20
 - Check for \$180 made payable to The Department of Homeland Security. (as of 10/26/05)
- The International Student Advisor will review paperwork and issue you a new I-20 with your OPT request.
- You are responsible for mailing your OPT request.
- Do not begin employment until you receive the EAD for approved OPT authorization. Employment is not permitted before the approved start date or after the approved end date.

OPT Hours and Limitations:

- Employment on OPT must be directly related to your major area of study.
- Total OPT time per degree level is 12 months; the 12 month allotment per degree level may be divided into various segments.
- Part time OPT is authorized for up to 20 hours per week; Part time OPT is deducted from the 12 month limit at 50%.
- OPT after program completion is granted for full time use only
- OPT start date must fall within 60 days of program completion; this is not necessarily the same date as graduation day
- Do not begin a new degree program while on OPT

Travel & OPT

- After program completion, you should NOT depart the US before you receive the EAD. If you travel with the EAD, you must present the following at the US Port of Entry: valid EAD, valid visa, valid passport, and proof of employment/offer.

Forms are available at the USCIS website. <http://www.uscis.gov>