

F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING INFORMATION



What is Optical Practical Training?

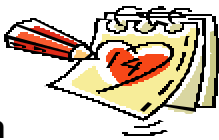
Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a type of Immigration Employment for payment that is directly related to your major and appropriate for your level of study.

What Are the Qualifications

To be eligible for OPT, students must have been in school and registered full-time for at least one academic year. The student must be in good academic standing at the time of the application and must maintain good academic standing while working.

How long can I work in Optional Practical Training? Students are eligible for up to 12 months of full-time OPT (or 24 months of part-time OPT) in any combination of the following (numbers 1, 2, 3 are allowed **PRIOR** to graduation):

- 1) Part-time or full-time during the student's annual vacation (summer).
- 2) Part-time when school is in session.
- 3) Part-time or full-time after completion of course work, but before completion of thesis or dissertation.
- 4) **Full-time after** completion of course of study (this may or may not coincide with the date of your graduation ceremony).



When can I apply for Optical Practical Training? Students can apply for OPT **that is to take place after completion of course work** at any time during the semester in which they are going to graduate **up to your graduation day**. For example, students graduating in December can apply between the start of courses in August and graduation day in December. **Apply any time during the semester of graduation, up to the day before graduation, BUT NOT AFTER GRADUATION.**

How many times can I apply for Optional Practical Training? Students are allowed only **one year of full-time OPT during their time as an F1 student** after each level of study, and they may become eligible for another twelve months of OPT after those rights have once been used if they have:

- 1) spent at least five months outside the U.S. and then return in F-1 status to begin a new program; or
- 2) changed from F-1 to another visa status, spend at least five months in the other status, and then return to F-1 visa status to begin a new academic program.



Can I change my mind after applying for OPT? Authorization for OPT may **not** be rescinded or deferred once permission has been granted and an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) has been issued. Students are strongly encouraged to apply for a full 12 months of OPT following graduation. No extensions will be allowed after your graduation day.

When Can I Begin Working? Students may begin work only after they have received the EAD (Employment Authorization Document) from the USCIS and the beginning date on the EAD has been reached.



Can I change jobs in Optional Practical Training? Students may change employers at any time during OPT as long as the employment is always directly related to their major and appropriate for their level of study; **no job offer is required when you apply for OPT.**



Can I travel while in Optional Practical Training and can I travel outside the U.S. while waiting for my EAD card? Students planning to travel outside the U.S. between completion of studies and the end of OPT will need the following items to re-enter the U.S.:

- Valid Passport
- Valid F-1 visa
- Valid I-20 signed by international advisor
- EAD card
- Letter from their employer indicating that they either have a job offer or have already begun employment and that the company expects the student to return to complete the terms of their contract.

Note: Students may have difficulty receiving a new F-1 visa during this time and may not be able to return to the U.S. to resume a job search especially if they have not already obtained a job.

Note: It is possible that USCIS will consider you have abandoned your I-765 application if you leave the US before your application has been adjudicated.

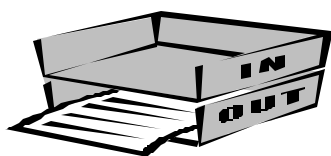
How do I apply for Optional Practical Training? Be sure to attend an Employment Information Seminar. Two seminars are offered each month by the International Studies Office. Students will receive very specific application information at the seminar. Dates and times are posted on our website: <http://www.internationalstudies.ilstu.edu/>. When ready to apply for OPT, students should call International Studies at 438-5276 to set up an appointment with Betsy Drillon.



What do I need to bring to my appointment when applying for OPT?

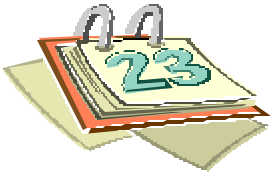
- A signed form from your academic advisor (see sample)
- A completed form I-538 (students only complete Section A on the top of the 1st page)
- A completed form I-765
- A personal check or bank draft for \$180.00 made out to the U.S.C.I.S.
- Two photographs meeting new requirements
- Current I-20 along with all past I-20's (originals)
- Valid passport and I-94 card
- A letter from your prospective employer (optional)

How and when is my application sent? We will process and help you prepare your application at your appointment and **you will be responsible for mailing the packet**. It is advisable that you send your packet immediately after processing (at the International Office) in **overnight mail** and **“certified mail, return receipt”** in order to receive notification of receipt and tracking information in the event that there is a delay.



What happens after I send in my application?

When your application is received at the Nebraska Service Center, you will be sent a Form I-797 (Notice of Action), which you should keep so you have a record of your application and filing number (LIN number). The I-797 form includes a telephone number to call for information regarding your application status. You may check the online status by accessing the U.S.C.I.S. website at <https://egov.immigration.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp> where you can type in your LIN# and find the status of your application, or call 1-800-375-5283 (and have your LIN# read to give them). Processing dates for I-765 forms for F-1 employment are listed under the Nebraska Service Center.



When will I receive information about my application?

If your application is approved, your EAD will be mailed to the address on your application form (we recommend putting the Office of International Studies and Programs address if you are planning to relocate with the next six months after filing an application). In the very unlikely event that your application cannot be granted, you will receive an explanation for the denial.

How long will it take to process my application?

The process has been taking from **70 to 90 days**. If your application has been in process for more than 90 days following the receipt of your acknowledgment and no decision has been made, you can take your receipt notice and immigration documents to the USCIS District Office at 10 W. Jackson St., Chicago, Illinois to apply for a temporary EAD which will be valid for 90 days.

How will I be notified that my EAD card has arrived at the OISP office?

When your card arrives, Betsy will email you. You will be required to show ID when you come to the office to pick up your EAD card. **The card will only be given to someone else if you have made prior arrangements with the office to do so.**

Note: If you leave the U.S. before you have received your EAD card, you may make arrangements for a friend to express mail it to you abroad when it arrives.



What happens on the first day of my job?

Students will need to prove both identity and permission to work on the first day of employment. The I-9 (Employment Eligibility Verification form) is used for that purpose and the EAD card provides proof of both identity and work permission. (However, many companies may not realize that the EAD meets both requirements and may also want to see your passport or driver's license for proof of identity.)

Internal Revenue Service

What do I do about Income Taxes while in

OPT? Students in F-1 status who have been in the U.S. for fewer than 5 years are not to have Medicare and Social Security taxes withheld from their paychecks, however they are to have income tax withheld in accordance with tax treaties. Students must complete federal and state income tax forms which are due on April 15 of each year. Students must keep former employers updated as to new addresses so that they can send W-2s (the form employers send to employees indicating the total wages paid and taxes withheld) to students.

❖ Instructions for filling out the form I-538 for Practical Training

If you are unsure about how to fill out anything on the I-538, please leave it blank. We will complete it when you come to your appointment in the International Office.

Section A:

1. Self explanatory
2. Self explanatory
3. The eleven digit number on your I-94 card
4. The date stamped in red on your I-20. If you have more than one I-20, you use the date stamped on the first I-20 you received.
5. Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate
6. Your major. If this is different than the major printed in number five of your I-20, please bring this to Betsy's attention during your appointment.
7. Provide a brief, general description of the type of employment you are seeking. Discuss the beginning and ending dates with Sarah at your appointment. Twenty hours per week is considered part-time and 40 hours per week is considered full-time.
8. Please list all previously authorized practical training here listing part-time/full-time and dates.
9. Sign and date the bottom.

Section B and the Back page: Leave these sections blank. They must be completed by International Office personnel.

Instructions for filling out the form I-765 for Practical Training

If you are unsure about how to fill out anything on the I-765, please leave it blank. We will complete it when you come to your appointment in the International Office. We recommend that you type this form.

Mark the **first box**, " permission to accept employment"

1. Self explanatory
2. Self explanatory
3. The address to which you want your employment card sent. The U.S. Postal System will not forward the card. We strongly suggest you put our office address. Make sure you always let us know how to contact you so we can reach you when your card arrives in our office.

C/o 6120 Int'l Studies, Illinois State University
Normal, IL 61790-6120

- 4 - 9. Self explanatory
10. The eleven digit number on your I-94 card and SEVIS number (N000...)
11. Self explanatory. Bring documentation with you to the appointment if you mark "yes"
12. The date stamped in red on your current I-94 card
13. The port of entry where you last entered the U.S. This is also found in the red stamp
14. For most applicants the answer is "F-1 student"
15. Your current status is "F-1 student"
16. The category for F-1 practical training is (c)(3)(i)

Optional Practical Training Academic Advisor's Form



Office of International Studies & Programs
Fell 308, Campus Box 6120
Phone (309) 438-5276

Optional Practical Training is a type of work permission for which international students in F-1 status can apply. The work that they intend to do must be directly related to the student's field of study and appropriate to their level of study. As part of the application process, the Academic Advisor, Department Chair, or Thesis Advisor must provide the following information to the International Office.

Student's Name: _____ SS Number: _____

Student's Major: _____ Graduation Date: _____

Date of all course work completed (if different from above): _____

Date of Thesis/Dissertation defense (if different from above): _____

Academic Advisor (please print) Department

E-mail Phone

Academic Advisor's Signature Today's Date