Optional Practical Training Workshop

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OPT Workshop Agenda

• OPT - Definition
• Checking your I-20
• Eligibility
• When to Apply
• Make Your Appointment
• Come Prepared (OPT Checklist)
• Traveling on OPT
• Information & Questions
OPT Definition

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a practical work experience in your field of study, usually after completion of a degree, for a maximum of one year.

With some science, technology, engineering, & math (STEM) degrees, you may be eligible for an additional 17 months of OPT. The employer must be a subscriber to the E-Verify employee verification system.
The I-20 End Date

• The end date should not have passed.

This end date controls your OPT start and end dates.
The I-20 End Date

Important: The end date shown on your I-20 is only an estimate of your program completion. Your actual program completion date may be sooner than the end date on your I-20. It is your responsibility to keep track of when you will be completing your course work, as that date will determine the OPT application timeline.

5. The student named above has been accepted for a full course of study at this school, majoring in Management Information Systems, General. The student is expected to report to the school no later than 02/14/2011 and complete studies not later than 02/14/2013. The normal length of study is 24 months.
If you know that you will need more time to finish your program, please see your advisor.
Eligibility

To be eligible for OPT you must:

• Have been lawfully enrolled in a DHS-approved institution for at least 1 academic year.
• In most cases, you should be in your last semester of study.
• Have a valid passport (six months into the future).
• Have an unexpired I-20 (Remember: Check your I-20)
When to Apply

• You should apply at least 90 days prior to your last day of class. We recommend this as OPT processing time is averaging 90 days.

• Although you can apply after this (even during your 60 day grace period), you risk losing OPT time.
Make an Appointment with OISS

• Call the OISS and request an appointment for OPT.
• The OPT process can take up to an hour.
• Two OPT appointment times will be available: 10 am & 2 pm.
What to Bring to Your Appointment

• Passport with visa stamp (If you are a Canadian or Bermudian citizen, you will not have a visa stamp.)
• I-94 card or I-94 web print-out.
• Previous OPT (EAD) cards.
• 2 American passport photographs (2" x 2").
• Personal check or money order for $380.00.
• Know the date of your last class. Your last class includes any capstone, qualifying exam, and the acceptance of your thesis/dissertation.
• I-765 Application Form

Note: If you fail to bring in the proper documentation, we will reschedule your appointment for another time.

Office for International Students and Scholars
Sample I-765 Form

Office for International Students and Scholars
OPT Photos

- Both photos must be of only the applicant and must be identical.

- All photos must meet the specifications for full frontal/passport photos and must be no more than 30 days old when an application is filed.

- Do NOT cut the pictures!

- Print your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo.
Photo example: OPT Photos
OPT Photos

• Where to Get the Photos

We recommend:

Walgreens
3015 S University Dr, Davie, FL 33328
954-475-9222
Corner of 30th and University Dr.
Traveling while on OPT

• Once you have filed your application and have completed your studies, you should NOT leave the U.S. until the Notice of Action has been issued. You will need the Notice of Action, an endorsed I-20 (signed by OISS for travel), and a valid U.S. F-1 student visa stamp to re-enter the U.S.
Traveling while on OPT (Notice of Action)

Office for International Students and Scholars
Traveling while on OPT

- Once you have been issued an EAD card, you will need a job offer letter, an endorsed I-20 (signed by OISS for travel), and a valid U.S. F-1 student visa stamp to re-enter the U.S.
Traveling while on OPT (EAD Card)
Important Information

• USCIS will send a “Notice of Action” receipt form usually within a week of receiving your application for OPT.

• If you choose, you may request status updates via email and text messages.

• You will still need your I-20 signed for travel every six months.

• If your visa has expired, you should not travel internationally. Embassies and consulates seldom renew visas during a student’s OPT period.
Miscellaneous Questions

I heard that you cannot be unemployed for more than 90 days (120 days while on STEM extension). What happens after that?

The OISS is not responsible for calculating unemployment time or taking action based on unemployment time. If a student’s SEVIS record remains in Active status and the student has otherwise maintained F-1 status, our office considers the student in status and acts accordingly.

The Department of Homeland Security maintains responsibility for determining whether a student has violated his or her status by exceeding the permissible limit on authorized unemployment.

Office for International Students and Scholars
How will the Department of Homeland Security enforce the unemployment provision?

A student may be denied future immigration benefits that rely on the student’s valid F-1 status if DHS determines that the student exceeded the limitations on authorized unemployment.

Additionally, ICE/SEVP may examine SEVIS data for an individual, a selected group, or all students on post-completion OPT and terminate a student’s record if it fails to show the student maintained the proper period of employment. In such cases, the student will be given an opportunity to show that he or she complied with all OPT requirements, including maintaining employment.
Who determines whether or not a job is appropriate for OPT?

Regulations do not require the Office of International Students and Scholars or USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) to determine if it is appropriate to a student’s standard OPT. This determination appears, by default, to fall to the employer, who is required to complete Form I-9, and to the student, who is required to adhere to the terms and conditions of F-1 status.
Am I permitted to study while on OPT?

There is little written guidance to assist in answering this specific question. INS had stated in a 1993 letter that “A student working full-time in post-completion practical training may attend school part time.” In the same letter, INS said that, “Student engaged in post-completion practical training may not also attend school full-time.”
What types of activity constitute employment while on OPT?

- Regular paid employment
- Payment by multiple short-term employers (actors, musicians, comedians)
- Work for hire—student performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. If requested by DHS, students should be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.
- Self-employed—students on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. The student should be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to his or her degree program.
- Employment agency—students must be able to provide evidence showing they worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.
- Volunteer—students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns where this practice does not violate any labor laws.
Thank you for your attendance and participation. If you have any additional questions, please contact the Office of International Students and Scholars.

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