

## OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR F-1 STUDENTS

### What is “OPT”?

*Answer:* Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a 12-month work benefit allowed to international students in F-1 immigration status who are enrolled in, or completing a degree program in the U.S. This employment card can be used pre-completion of studies, over the annual vacation or leave term, or post-completion of studies, after the student finishes the degree. Work can be done at one or several locations for any amount of hours at any rate of pay. OPT is an extension of F-1 status and is not a ‘work visa’ and does not require you to remain at one company for the entire OPT period. OPT is a benefit, not a right. There is no guarantee that your application will be approved by USCIS. Make sure to follow all guidelines precisely.

### What is the difference between CPT and OPT?

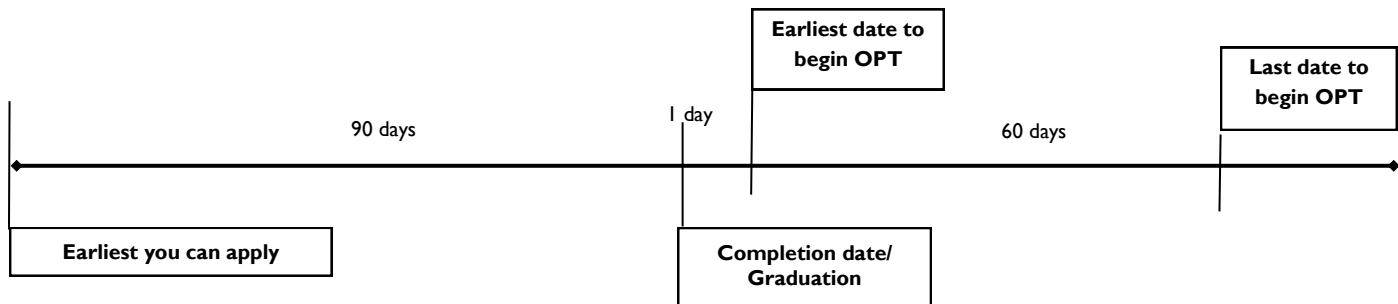
*Answer:* In short, CPT is employment that is required to successfully complete a course or internship. OPT is employment that is directly related to the student’s major but not part of the student’s curriculum and is typically used after graduation.

### Am I eligible for OPT?

*Answer:* F-1 students who have been enrolled in legal status for a minimum of 9 months are eligible for up to 12 months of OPT work authorization by the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS). Employment under OPT must be directly related to a student’s field of study and appropriate to the level of education.

### When can I apply for OPT?

*Answer:* The earliest you may apply for OPT is 90 days (3-months) prior to the completion of studies, and the latest you may apply for OPT is 60 days following program completion. It can take several months to receive the OPT work card, so we recommend that you apply at least 90 days prior to the beginning of your intended job opportunity. See the timeline below for additional information.



### How long does it take to get authorization for OPT and when should I apply?

*Answer:* Authorization for OPT is granted by USCIS can take 3-5 months to obtain. Therefore it is important that you apply 3 months before you finish your last final. You may apply for post-graduation OPT up to 90 days before your completion date and the immigration service must receive your application no later than 60 days beyond your completion date or 60 days beyond the end date of your I-20 (whichever is earlier) or, if you are an advanced graduate student, no later than 60 days beyond the last day that you are registered as a student or the end date of your I-20 (whichever is earlier). You cannot apply more than 120 days before the start date you choose. You must file your application with USCIS within 30 days of getting a new OPT I-20 from the OIE.

### Do I need a job to be eligible to apply for OPT?

*Answer:* No, you do not need a job offer prior to applying for OPT, and your job may be anywhere in the United States. You may also change jobs during the course of your OPT period, but you must notify Office of International Education of any interruption or change to your employment status so your SEVIS record is updated.

### What if I don’t file within 30 days of getting my OPT I-20? What if I file and get an RFE or application rejection?

*Answer:* Contact the OIE immediately.

**Does the job I have while on OPT have to be paid employment, or can it be unpaid?**

*Answer:* The employment does NOT have to be paid employment. Therefore, a student who is self-employed (including performance majors with regular “gigs”), interning or volunteering in a position directly related to the academic field would be considered “employed” for the purposes of OPT employment. If you are “self-employed,” keep careful records of all the work you do—it is supposed to be more than 20 hours per week.

**What am I supposed to do once I get my OPT card?**

*Answer:* Students must: 1) Send a copy of your EAD card once received to the OIE. 2) Find some type of work directly related to your field of study. Make sure to not accrue no more than 90 days of unemployment. Work is a flexible term and includes many options like: self-employment, online work, volunteer work—basically anything that gives you experience in your field. Work more than 20 hours per week. 3) Report employment (name and address of employer) as well as your U.S. address to the OIE to update your SEVIS record. This can be reported through our online form found at [www.iup.edu/intl/students/forms](http://www.iup.edu/intl/students/forms) (click on Reporting OPT Employment for SEVIS Record on the menu bar on the left) or email [intl-education@iup.edu](mailto:intl-education@iup.edu) with this information. The IUP Office of International Education can update your SEVIS record as soon as you report employment to us. If you do not report Employment during OPT and have more than 90 days of unemployment, your I-20/FI status will automatically BE TERMINATED by U.S. Department of Homeland Security. You will no longer be able to work or remain in the U.S.

**Am I eligible for more OPT if I progress to another degree program?**

*Answer:* Yes. If you begin a new degree program at a higher level (i.e. Bachelor to Masters or Masters to Ph.D.) program, you will become eligible for an addition block of 12-months of OPT as outlined above. Those in the STEM fields are eligible for one period of 24 month STEM OPT-extension.

**Can I extend my OPT after the 12 months is over?**

*Answer:* There are two types of extensions available: 1) a 24 month extension for those in certain fields (discussed below) and 2) an “OPT Cap Gap Extension” which extends your work authorization through to the start of your H1B visa if your OPT ends after your cap subject company has applied for a H1B for you but before the H1B starts on the following October 1st. This cap gap extension is available to all F-1 students using OPT in any field, as long as you have a pending or approved “cap subject” H1B application and the employer applied for in with a request for change of status as part of the application. The extension is automatic, you do not have to do anything at all to get the extension. Contact [intl-education@iup.edu](mailto:intl-education@iup.edu) if you timely filed for an H1B visa and your OPT is ending.

**What are my options at the end of OPT?**

*Answer:* You have a 60 day grace period following the end of your OPT period to remain in the U.S., file to change your visa status or transfer your I-20 to a new program.

**What if I want to travel outside the United States during practical training?**

*Answer:* The best general advice is that an F-1 student on OPT who has received the EAD card, and has to travel abroad should make sure to carry documentation from his or her employer confirming the employment or the job offer. Otherwise the student assumes a risk that he/she may not be allowed to re-enter the United States. Also, students should carry their passport, valid F1 visa, OPT I-20 and EAD card. Students waiting for OPT to begin should carry: proof that the EAD card was filed (USCIS receipt), OPT I-20, passport, valid F1 visa and potential interviews/volunteer jobs returning to. For updated travel info see: [http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq\\_f.htm](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq_f.htm)

**Can OIE help me with H1B and permanent residency question if I am planning to pursue these options after finishing OPT?**

*Answer:* OIE is not legally authorized to advise IUP students regarding H-1B filing and procedures. Please consult with either an immigration lawyer or the company who is intending to hire you. See: [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) for general information.

**Do I file taxes during OPT?**

*Answer:* F-1 students who have been in the US for less than 5 calendar years are exempt from Social security and Medicare taxes. Let your employer know this. Be sure to file taxes the year after you work, **even if you depart the U.S.** F1 students are required to file taxes and in most cases will get a refund.

## Optional Practical Training Application

### Step 1: Watch OPT video or attend OPT workshop

Go to <http://www.iup.edu/international/students/current/employment/>. Scroll to the OPT section and review the video and other information. This presentation provides an overview of OPT and walks through the necessary steps and general requirements to obtain OPT documentation.

### Step 2: Gather paperwork

- ◇ A completed OIE OPT Application Form (see page 4)
- ◇ A personal check or money order for \$410 made out to U.S. Department of Homeland Security, or credit card form G-I450 ([www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) – click on “FORMS”)
  - ◇ (Note: personal checks take additional 2 weeks to clear)
- ◇ Two passport-style photographs US style passport photo—(Rite Aid or CVS is recommended in Indiana) White background only. Print on the back of the photos: Full name, Date of birth, SEVIS ID number, I-94 number
- ◇ IUP transcript (it can be unofficial and printed from MyIUP )
- ◇ Request a letter from your academic department (see attached)
- ◇ A completed form G-1145 ([www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)—click on FORMS)
- ◇ A completed form I-765. (print all pages of this form even if not used)
  - ◇ Use PDF version. (if you use online version and pay with credit card online—additional steps are required).
  - ◇ Go to [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) click on “Employment” and click on ‘I-765’ and then I-765 PDF. For #27 use (c)(3)(A) for Pre-completion OPT and (c)(3)(B) if using Post-completion OPT.
  - ◇ Print out **ALL** pages in the form, even if they do not apply to you.
- ◇ Photocopies of **ALL** immigration documents: current passport, visa, I-94 ([www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94)) and all I-20s ever issued (every degree/program ever studied in US)
- ◇ Any previously-issued Employment Authorization Document (EAD), if applicable
- ◇ Evidence of any previous OPT and/or CPT, if applicable

### Step 3: Submit Documents to OIE for review

- ◇ Option 1:  
Mail all the documents above to : ( Please use tracking number)  
IUP Office of International Education  
OPT APPLICATION  
920 Grant Street, B25 Delaney Hall  
Indiana, PA 15705  
Complete a return shipping request - [www.iup.edu/international/mailing](http://www.iup.edu/international/mailing)
- ◇ Option 2:  
Make an appointment at the OIE and bring all documents under Step 2 with you.

### Step 4: Mail materials to USCIS

- ◇ See page 4 for mailing instructions. USCIS must receive your completed OPT packet within 30 days of the OPT I-20 being created or your application will be denied.

### Step 5: Complete OPT Employment Verification form

- ◇ Complete this form online once you have obtained employment: <http://www.iup.edu/international/students/current/forms/reporting-opt-employment-for-sevis-record/>. Failure to do so within 90 days of OPT starting, will mean your I-20 and FI status will be auto-terminated in SEVIS.
- ◇ Complete a return shipping request - [www.iup.edu/international/mailing](http://www.iup.edu/international/mailing).

### What if I have more questions and I do not see the answer in this packet?

Answer: If you have any questions that have not been answered, you can look at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) and search for the information you need or feel free to contact the OIE at [intl-education@iup.edu](mailto:intl-education@iup.edu).



## IUP OPT Application Cover Page

<b>NAME</b> _____	
<b>BANNER ID @</b> _____	<b>NON- IUP E-MAIL</b> _____
<b>TELEPHONE #</b> _____	
<b>OPT REQUEST:</b>	
___ I am requesting full-time OPT for use <b>AFTER GRADUATION (Post-Completion OPT)</b>	
___ I am requesting part-time OPT for use <b>DURING MY STUDIES. (Pre-Completion OPT)</b>	
<b>OPT DATES :</b>	<b>Start Date:</b> _____ <b>End Date:</b> _____

**OPT APPLICANT**

Please read these directions carefully. Note: **USCIS must receive your completed OPT packet within 30 days of the OPT I-20 being created or your application will be denied.**

- 1- Once you have a new OPT I-20, please sign it & make a copy of it.
- 2- KEEP THE ORIGINAL I-20 – DO NOT MAIL IT.
- 3- Complete G-1 I 45 (if you don't have – go to [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) – click on 'FORMS' and find form)
- 4- Write on the back of your 2 photos – Full Name, SEVIS Number (N \_\_\_\_\_), I-94 Number, and Date of Birth
- 5- Staple OPT Packet in this order from Top to Bottom:
  - a) G-1 I 45 - original
  - b) Check or Money Order- payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security
  - c) Photos – 2 passport sized photos in envelope (write your name and SEVIS number on the envelope)
  - d) I-765 - original—mail all pages of this application even if blank; make sure to sign and date in black ink
  - e) Copies of: New I-20, Old I-20(s), Passport, Visa, I-94
  - f) Letter from department recommending OPT
- 6- Make a copy of the entire application for yourself before mailing.
- 7- Mail to address listed below (according to mailing address you listed on I-765). Please use Registered Mail or Delivery Confirmation so you have proof of USCIS receiving your package.
- 8- You will receive 2 letters from USCIS – a receipt and then the OPT card.
- 9- If you hear nothing – receive nothing within 60 days – please email & I can inquire about your case.

**Write and sign the following statement below:** I must file OPT application within 30 days of receiving it. I must report OPT employment to the OIE within 90 days of my EAD start date. I can work only during the dates on my EAD card. I must notify the OIE if I move.

<p><b>If you live in:</b></p> <p>Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Guam, or the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.</p>	<p><b>Mail your application to:</b> <b>USCIS Phoenix Lockbox</b> For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:</p> <p>USCIS PO Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036</p> <p>For Express mail and courier deliveries: USCIS Attn: NFB AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034</p>	<p><b>If you live in:</b></p> <p>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, <b>Pennsylvania</b>, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, or West Virginia</p>	<p><b>Mail your application to:</b> <b>USCIS Dallas Lockbox</b> For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries:</p> <p>USCIS PO Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266</p> <p>For Express mail and courier deliveries USCIS Attn: NFB AOS 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067</p>
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Received \_\_\_\_\_ Scanned to Student \_\_\_\_\_ Last Modified 9/30/2019

Return to OIE



## F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) Student Form

### Student Responsibility Statement

**Reporting Responsibilities:** I understand the following:

- My address must be updated within 10 days of moving. This information can be updated through my IUP International Portal or by completing the Reporting OPT Employment for SEVIS Record online form. This must be my residential address, not the address of my employer or friend.
- I am required to update any changes of employer names, address, or interruption of employment to the OIE by using the Reporting OPT Employment for SEVIS Record Online Form. If I am employed off-site, I should report my physical location of employment to the OIE as well as my company's address. ([www.iup.edu/international/students/current/forms](http://www.iup.edu/international/students/current/forms)). I understand that just updating my SEVP Portal with employment information is insufficient and I must complete the OIE Form.
- If my immigration status changes, I am required to send the OIE copies of my new documents within 10 days of the change.
- I will provide the OIE with a legible copy of the front and back of my EAD card when I receive it.
- Failure to do the above could result in loss of my legal non-immigrant status and that if this occurs, I may have to stop working and/or leave the US.

**General Responsibilities:** I understand the following:

- In order to apply for OPT, I must first complete the application and submit it to the OIE and request an OPT recommendation.
- It is my responsibility to properly file my application in a timely manner. My OPT application must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the OIE issuing a new I-20 with the OPT recommendation on the 2nd page.
- It is my responsibility to sign and date my OPT Application. OPT is a benefit of my F-1 status and not a right. There is no guarantee that my application will be approved.
- My authorization to engage in OPT is automatically terminated if I transfer to another school or begin a new degree or certificate program.
- DHS regulations require me to seek employment directly related to my major area of study and commensurate with my education level. Even if I am doing volunteer work, it must be related to my field of study.
- The first day I'm eligible to work is the Start Date listed on my EAD card. I cannot work until I physically have the card.
- I cannot accrue 90 days or more of unemployment at any time during OPT. If I do not report my employer information to the IUP OIE, unemployment will continue to accrue.
- If I decide to travel while on OPT I must have a valid I-20 signed by a DSO within six months before reentering the U.S., an unexpired EAD card, a valid passport, a valid employment letter, and a valid F-1 visa stamp to be readmitted to the U.S. The employment letter should contain a statement that the employment is temporary and verification that I will be employed after returning from travel. Even with all this it can be a risk to travel outside the US while on OPT.
- It is my responsibility to stay informed about changing federal regulations that may impact my OPT or F-1 status.
- Failure to follow F-1 regulations and the above statements could result in the termination of my F-1 status.

**My signature confirms that the information provided on this form is true and accurate and that I read and understand the Student Responsibility Statement listed above (electronic signatures not permitted). I understand the rules and regulations concerning my engagement in Optional Practical Training (OPT) and agree to all conditions listed above.**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



## Sample Department Letter

### **USE IUP LETTERHEAD**

Date

To whom it may concern:

This is to verify that Ms. Ann Winslow, an undergraduate student in the Department of Marketing, will complete her degree in May 2004.

As an international student it would be beneficial for Ann to acquire practical experience in her field as a complement to her theoretical knowledge. Participation in the one year Optional Practical Training (OPT) would serve her well.

If you require any additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dr. Eric Jones  
Chair