ⁱOPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is defined as "temporary employment related to the student's major area of study".

The purpose of Optional Practical Training is for the student to gain work experience in his or her **field of study** during or after completion of a bachelors, masters, or doctoral program. There are two types of OPT. Pre-completion OPT, which is done prior to your program completion and Post-completion OPT, which is done after commencement. The application procedures on the document explain the procedures for <u>Post-completion OPT</u>.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. The student must have been studying consecutively for one full academic year (completion of one Fall and Spring semester), full-time.
2. The work must be directly related to the student's major field of study.
3. The student must be in good academic standing.
4. For Post-completion OPT, the student needs to graduate.
5. The student must not have used OPT at another college.

Timeline for Filing OPT Application:

1. Students can apply no earlier than 90 days prior to completion of studies.
2. The application must be received by USCIS no later than 60 days after your program completion date. "All OPT must be completed within 14 months of your program end date."
3. USCIS must receive your paperwork no later than **30 days** after the date the DSO produced your new I-20 with OPT recommendations.

Things to Consider:

1. Optional Practical Training may be used before or after completion of studies for a combined period of no more than twelve months per education level. If you choose to do OPT while still in your program, you can work no more than 20 hours per week.
2. Full-time CPT may disqualify you from applying for OPT, or may impact the length of your OPT.

3. Students are **NOT** required to have a job offer prior to applying for OPT. You can register with the Center for Career Services to participate in their job search programs.

4. You can have more than one employer and the work can be paid or unpaid.

5. You must have at least 20 hours per week, and you cannot have more than 90 days of unemployment.

6. TRAVEL: An F-1 student with an expired visa should wait for OPT approval to travel if a valid visa is required for reentry. The Department of State will **NOT** issue a visa to an applicant with a pending OPT application. Students should have a valid F-1 visa, Form I-20 signed by DSO, valid passport, EAD card and letter from employer.

7. You must file form I-765 while in the United States.

Application Procedure:

Go to www.uscis.gov and print out form I-765.

1. **Fee** (Use your credit card if you are doing the application electronically). For student's sending in hard copies, look for USCIS' instructions on their website.
2. **Form I-765**, filled out, signed, dated (submit all pages)
3. A copy of your **I-94 sheet**
   - Examples: http://www.cbp.gov/travel/international-visitors/i-94-instructions
4. A copy of your **visa**
5. A copy of the **ID pages from your passport** (or for applications for renewal of work authorization, a copy of your EAD card)
6. Photocopies of **all I-20's** pages 1 & 2 including the one with OPT recommendations. (signed)
7. **Two passport photos (2 x 2)** (with name in marker on back), taken within the past 30 days
   Examples:
   http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/photos/photo-examples.html

GUIDELINES for form I-765:

PART 1:
   - Item 1.a: Check the "Initial Permission to accept employment" box.

PART 2:

- **Item 5:** This is the address where USCIS will mail your documents related to this application only. If using anyone else's address, BE SURE to put their name in the "In Care Of Name" field, to ensure delivery
- **Item 6:** Check YES if you currently in the same address you just gave as the place to send your documents, in item 5. If you check yes, you do NOT have to complete Item 7. If you check NO, please complete item 7.
- **Item 7:** Please give the address where you currently live. USCIS will NOT mail documents here, and it's okay if this will change over the course of your application processing. Just use the address where you live today.
- **Item 8 -9:** Write "none"
- **Items 13 – 17:**
  - If you have an SSN, please give it in Item 13b. You can then check NO for Item 14, and skip down to item 18.
  - I do not recommend applying for a Social Security Number with this application; however, only fill out 13-17, if you would like to apply for SS card with your I-765.
- **Item 21a:** The link to **"Get Most Recent I-94"** is on this webpage. Print a copy to go with your application.
- **Item 21c:** Write "NA" if you have a passport. For almost everyone, this will be "NA."
- **Item 24:** This is "F-1 student" unless you changed your status from within the US, and have not left the US since then.
- **Item 25:** This is "F-1 student."
- **Item 26:** You can find your SEVIS ID number at the top left of your I-20. It starts with N00.
- **Item 27:** This item is asking you to give the regulatory citation of the kind of work permission you are applying for.
  - OPT: (c)(3)(B)
- **Items 28 – 31b:** Write N/A, as they are for other immigration categories only.

PART 3:
- **Item 1a**: Check the box that reads "I can read and understand English".

- **Item 7.a**: sign in black ink – this should be an original signature, and cannot be typed or stamped.

PARTS 4-5:
- Draw a diagonal line across each page you are not completing, and write "NA" next to your line.

PART 6:
Complete this section only if:
- You have been approved for **CPT or OPT** in the past
- You have **used a different SEVIS ID** in F-1 status in the US (for example, you attended school for a while, left the US to take a break from school, and returned with a new I-20, you would have a SEVIS ID from your first period of attendance that is different than your current SEVIS ID). If you need to complete this section because one or more of these apply to you, please complete item 1 and include the I-20s with this application.

For <u>each</u> of the items listed above, complete one box in Part 6. We suggest using the following to complete the Page number, Part Number, and Item number:

Page 3, Part 2, Item 27

- **CPT:** Please list your CPT approvals. We suggest this format: **CPT Authorizations.** (as a title to the section). Employer Name; Start date – End date; Part-time or Full-time; Degree level (Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD). You can find your CPT details on the I-20 that was approved for each period of CPT.
- **OPT:** Please list your past OPT approvals. We suggest this format: O**PT Authorizations.** (as a title to the section). Start date – End date; Degree level (Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD)
- **Previous SEVIS ID's:** Please list your other SEVIS ID's you have used in the past. We suggest this format: **Previous SEVIS ID's** (as a title to the section). SEVIS ID: N00…..; program start date – program end date; Degree level (Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD).

Print OPT Recommendation form. Fill out the form and email it to the DSO to create a new I-20 with OPT recommendations. Make sure all information on your current I-20 is correct.

a. Add **new SEVIS I-20** with **<u>DSO's recommendation for OPT</u>** to your application paperwork. Students must sign the I-20.

Note: Remember to mail your application **Certified/Return receipt** so that you will have a record that the USCIS received and signed for your packet.

Make sure your mailbox has your name on it. The post office will **NOT** deliver mail to you from the government without your name on the mailbox, or if you checked "In Care of Name" field.

YOU CANNOT WORK UNTIL YOU HAVE RECEIVED YOUR EAD CARD FROM USCIS, AND YOU MUST BEGIN WORK ON OR AFTER THE START DATE LOCATED ON THE CARD.

Reporting Responsibilities:

SEVIS now requires that once employment is secured, you must input this information in the SEVP portal (name of employer and their address, start date and relevance of employment to student's field of study) to maintain your F-1 status. Additionally, the student is responsible for reporting, within 10 days, any changes to the following:

Legal name
Residential and mailing address
Phone number
E-mail address
Employer name
Employer address
Job title or position
Employment start and end date

SEVP will email you to open a portal account once they have mailed you the EAD card.

<u>Failure to report employment to the DSO while participating in OPT starts the clock for unemployment, and after 90 days, your visa will be canceled. Loss of status starts the accrual of unlawful presence in the United States.</u>

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[i] Updated 03/15/2023