Standard Post-Completion Optional Practical Training

Please read this entire packet!
You are responsible for understanding all the regulations!!

What is OPT?
Standard Post-Completion Optional Practical Training, or “OPT”, is off-campus work authorization in your field of study. If granted by Immigration, the authorization is full time employment for a maximum of 12 months. **Please note regulations allow for an extension of OPT for an additional 24 months for students in STEM fields, see advisor.

Who can apply?
Students who will complete their degree requirements within 90 days and have been in full time status for two consecutive semesters by the program completion.

When should I apply?
It is highly recommend that you submit the application packet to an adviser in the International Student Program at least 8 weeks before your program completion. The program completion date is the last day of your final program requirement, which can be the last day of the semester, the end of a summer session, or after completion of all degree requirements.

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is able to receive Standard Post-completion OPT applications up to 90 days prior to the completion of a student’s academic program. USCIS must have received and processed your OPT application by the 60th day after completion of your academic program (i.e. by the end of the grace period). Applications received after the 60th day will not be considered.

All Standard Post-completion OPT must be completed within 14 months of the program completion. This means if you apply during the post completion 60 day grace period, you will most likely lose OPT time. You must have received your OPT card to begin working, and USCIS may take up to 90 days to process your application.

How do I choose my OPT dates?
Immigration allows you to begin working up to 60 days after the completion of your program. You must choose a start date between the day after program completion and 60 days later.

What if I find a job before my card arrives?
You may not work until you have your OPT card and are within the dates listed on that card.

What if I am unemployed during my OPT?
During the OPT period, maintaining F-1 status is dependent upon current employment. Students may not be unemployed for a total of 90 days or more during the initial OPT period. Students with 90 days or more time unemployed would be considered in violation of F-1 status.

What counts as employment?
- **Paid employment** at least 20 hours per week, including work for hire and employment through an agency. This employment may be with one or more employers.
- **Unpaid employment** at least 20 hours per week.
- **Self employment** if a student chooses to start a business. Student must be able to prove to Immigration that he/she has the proper business licenses.

**ALL Employment MUST be related to the student’s degree program.**

The International Student Program (ISP) **cannot** provide a list of employers or types of employment for each degree. Students must be able to prove their job is related to their degree, if asked by Immigration.

**While I am on OPT do I have to inform ISP that I am employed or have moved?**

Yes, all students on OPT are required to report any change in name or address, their employer’s name and address, and any breaks in employment to ISP. **Changes must be reported within 10 days. Email changes to ISP.**

**What if I would like to travel after I have applied for OPT?**

We **strongly** recommend that you travel outside of the US only if you have a job in the US to which you will return. Your OPT/EAD card states that it is not valid for entry to the US. This means that the OPT/EAD card alone is not enough to enter the country, you need all immigration documents. You may wish to bring a copy of a pay check from your employer as evidence that you are engaging in practical training. **If you chose to travel, you are required to obtain a travel signature on page 2 of your I-20 every six months.**

**I am ready to apply for OPT, what do I do?**

Set an appointment with an ISP adviser. We will help process the paperwork and create a new I-20 for you. Once your packet is assembled, you will be directed to mail the packet to Immigration via certified return receipt mail. Address and other mailing information will be provided to you.

**Items needed to apply for OPT- Optional Practical Training Checklist**

1. **Cover sheet** which clearly states your desired start date for OPT
2. **Unofficial transcript**: Getting your unofficial transcript is convenient and free. Log into MyU: Academics to print a copy. You may also request a copy in person.
3. **A Payment of $410.00:**
   - A check or money order for $410.00 made out to the **U.S Department of Homeland Security.** (DO NOT WRITE ON THE BACK OF THE CHECK!) Your name and address must be on the check. Write your I-94 # on the bottom left hand of the check (in the “memo” or “for” section.)
   - When filing at a USCIS Lockbox facility, you may also pay by credit card using **Form G-1450, Authorization for Credit Card Transactions**
4. **Two passport sized photographs** taken within the last 6 months. Each photo must be cut to 2 inches by 2 inches with your name and I-94 # printed lightly on the back in pencil. Place the photos and check/money order in an envelope. Write your name and I-94 # on the outside of the envelope as well.
5. Complete form I-765 online using the PDF version located at the following website: **https://www.uscis.gov/i-765** Adobe Acrobat Reader will be needed to open the file. **Be sure to enter (c) (3) (B) in step #16 (See completed sample below). Print completed form I-765 and sign.**
6. Copies of: (copies can be made in ISP office)
   a. All I-20’s
   b. Visa
   c. Passport
   d. I-94 Record
   e. New I-20 with OPT notation by ISP adviser and signed by DSO and student.
7. If you wish to receive an **E-notification** that your application was received by USCIS you can print and complete **form G-1145** and include it with this packet.