

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

Definition

Students in F-1 or M-1 visa may apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) before the completion of their studies. OPT allows the student to be employed in his/her field of study for a total of 12 months during his/her stay in the U.S. OPT used prior to the completion of studies is subtracted from the 12 month total. Each period of OPT requested requires a recommendation from a designated official (DSO) in the International Student Services Office, Several documents must be presented and mailed to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) Texas Service Center to request an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

Eligibility

F-1or M-1 students who are eligible to apply are those who have been enrolled full time (except for the terminal semester; if the student is preparing for “comps” or writing a thesis and border commuters) for the last academic year, even if in another type of visa and who have been otherwise “on status,” (i.e. I-20 or passport hasn’t expired, or has not worked illegally). Students may apply during the last semester before graduation. The date for beginning O.P.T. is determined by the date when requirements for the degree program have been met. Eligibility for OPT may be lost if grades have not been posted for incompletes, correspondence courses, thesis requirements, etc.

Procedures

1. The following items should be presented to the International Student Advisor (DSO), nor more than 90 days prior to completion of studies:
 - * Copy/receipt of graduation application
 - * Completion of Degree Information Sheet
 - * Copy of SEVIS I-20 form updated
 - * Form I-538. Complete items 1 - 8
 - * Form I-765. Item 16 should be (c) (3) (I)
 - * Unofficial transcript (DSO will keep it in your file)
 - * Passport valid for a minimum of 1 year
 - * I-94, arrival/departure record
 - * 2 photos passport style in color
 - * Signature card.
 - * Copy of Social Security Card (If any)
 - * Check for \$____.00 payable to USCIS (Department Of Homeland Security)

2. If the student is eligible and has maintained F-1/M-1 status for one academic year, DSO will recommend OPT on Employment page of the SEVIS I-20 and on the I-538 form. All documents will be sent to the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Service at:

**United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (I.C.E.)
P.O. Box 851041
Mesquite Texas
75185-1041**

There is a 30 to 90 day processing period. The card will arrive at the University International Student Services Office or the address indicated on the application (NO PO BOX). If the card has not arrived within this period of time the DSO should make contact with the Texas Service Center via fax.

Interim Employment Authorization

If an employment application has not been denied and has not been adjudicated within 90 days of receipt by USCIS, the applicant will be granted a 240 days of interim employment authorization. [8CFR 274a 13(d)] Procedures for application under the “90-240” day rule” will vary according to the district immigration Office. The student should be able to go in person to the District Office in Harlingen, Texas and bring the dated receipt of the I-765 filing fee, I-20, passport and I-94 and request the EAD (work permit) card.

OPT Denial

If the student is found ineligible for OPT, the student will receive a written notice of the reason for denial. There is no formal appeal for denial. The student must make plans to depart the country or apply to enter another degree and request a new I-20 form.

Signature

Date

Travel and reentry while on OPT

An F-1 or M-1 student waiting for OPT approval following completion of studies **can not** travel outside the United States. Travel can only be authorized once the EAD card has been received and employment has been secured. The student, can be readmitted for the remainder of the OPT period. In order to be able to do this, the student must have the SEVIS I-20 form endorsed by the International Advisor (DSO) before departing and must carry the EAD card. The student should not leave the United States prior to obtaining the work permit because he/she will lose the opportunity of working in the U.S. Furthermore, the student will not be able to reenter into the U.S. if he/she has an expired visa. Or if she/he is reentering towards the end of the OPT period.

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING COMPLETION OF DEGREE INFORMATION SHEET

Name of the student _____ ID# _____
Major _____ Associate ___ Bachelors _____ Master's _____

To be completed by Academic Advisor

The immigration and Naturalization Services allows International Students on F-1 visa to apply for a work permit which allows students to work for 12 months anywhere in the U.S. in a field related to his/her major. INS regulations permits students to apply for this permit 60 days prior to graduation.

Student will complete all degree requirements on ____/____/____

Name _____ Title _____

Signature _____ Date _____