

WHAT IS OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is off campus employment authorization approved by USCIS that lets F-1 students get work experience in their major field of study. The amount of work you are permitted is a maximum of 12 months of *full-time* employment for each *higher* educational level you pursue in the U.S. You can use it during or after your studies once approved. You can work for any employer, anywhere in the country. Part-time employment is considered to be less than 20 hours per week. Full-time employment is considered to be more than 20 hours per week. Part time employment accrues at half the full time rate.

Think of it as an OPT bank account. In that account are 12 months of full-time Optional Practical Training for your current program of study. Let's say you'd like to work full-time for three months during then summer break after your sophomore (second) year of your Bachelor's degree. That's a three month withdrawal of full-time employment, leaving you nine months left to spend during your Bachelor's degree. During your junior (third) year, you decide to work part-time (less that 20 hours a week) for two semesters (nine months). Since part-time employment counts at half the full-time rate, you've made a withdrawal of four and a half months of full-time employment. This leaves you with four and a half months of full-time employment remaining in your account to use once you graduate.

If you decide to spend all of your OPT after you complete your degree, you must request all of it at once, that is, the full year. You cannot use it in pieces.

If you decide to go on for your Master's degree after completing your OPT for your Bachelor's, your bank account will be *full* again with another 12 months available to you!

HOW CAN IT BE USED?

- ✓ **Summer vacation and semester break** – either part-time or full-time employment.
- ✓ **While school is in session** – part-time employment only.
- ✓ **After completion of all course requirements for a Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degree, excluding the thesis or equivalent** – either part-time or full-time employment.
- ✓ **After completion of ALL requirements for the course of study** – full-time employment only.

HOW CAN YOU QUALIFY FOR IT?

1. You must have been enrolled full-time for at least one academic year.
2. You must be able to describe how the type of work you are seeking directly relates to your major. You do not have to have a job offer to apply for OPT. If you are applying for "before completion of studies OPT" it is wise that you be as sure as possible of a job so that you do not waste any of your OPT "account".
3. You may apply for after-completion of studies OPT up to 90 days before your program completion date and 60 days after your program completion date.

PLEASE NOTE: You will **NOT** be eligible for OPT if you have used 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT).

IMPORTANT INFORMATION



You must not begin employment prior to receiving employment authorization from USCIS. Working off-campus without authorization is a very serious violation of your F-1 status, and it may result in deportation and denial of future immigration benefits. If you make a Designated School Official (DSO) aware that you have worked illegally, the government requires the DSO to report this to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services. Please be advised that you must always consult with the International Student Services (ISS) Office if you have any questions about your status. The ISS office is located in the lower level of the Post Hall. You can contact us at (516) 299-1451 or email iss@cwpost.liu.edu.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR OPT?

***** IF YOU COME TO YOUR APPOINTMENT WITHOUT ALL OF THE PAPERWORK (INCLUDING PHOTOCOPIES), WE WILL RESCHEDULE YOU FOR ANOTHER DAY! *****

OPTION 1: Paper Application

- Step 1:** Read and review OPT information on page one.
- Step 2:** Gather all required paperwork listed at the bottom of page 3:
- **I-765 Form**
 - **Certification of Completion form**
 - **OPT Request Form**
 - **Two Passport Style Photographs**
 - Size must be 2" x 2"
 - white background
 - Print you name, SEVIS # and Date of birth on back of both pictures
 - **Photocopies of all previous I-20 forms issued by us and other schools you have attended (ONLY pages 1 and 3).**
 - **Photocopy of Form I-94 (both sides)**
 - **Photocopies of your passport identification pages and visa**
 - **Fee: \$340 fee, in the form of check or money order**
 - write out check/MO as: three hundred forty and 00
 - Make it payable to **USCIS**.
 - If you are using a personal check, it must have your name and current address on it.
 - Please write your SEVIS # and date of birth on the check
 - **Photocopy of any previous EAD Card(s)** (will only have if you have applied for OPT of Serve Economic Hardship in the past)
- Step 3:** Make an appointment with your ISS advisor (appointments are for 1 hour).
- Step 4:** Be on time for your appointment! At this appointment you and your advisor will put together an OPT packet for USCIS. You will receive a new I-20 at this time. Your packet is mailed and you can track the package online.
- Step 5:** You will receive a receipt notice in the mail within 2 to 4 weeks from the application arrival date. You can track your application online using the EAC number on the receipt notice.
- Step 6:** Once you receive your approval notice and EAD card, please bring them to the ISS office. At this time you will receive a new OPT approval I-20.

OPTION 2: E-file Application *

- Step 1:** Read and review OPT information on page one.
- Step 2:** Gather all required paperwork listed above in part 1, step 2.
- Step 3:** Go to www.uscis.gov and click on the "file online" link at the bottom right hand corner of the page. Register as a new user on this page and follow the instructions to e-file the **I-765 form**. This method requires you to pay the OPT fee online using a credit or debit card. Print out the receipt and completed application.
- Step 4:** Follow instructions as above from Step 3.

*** Please note that if you e-file your application your will be called to a local USCIS office for a biometrics appointment (fingerprints and photos).**

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

After you return your application to the International Student Services Office, it can take up to three months for your EAD (Employment Authorization Document) to be returned to us from USCIS. If there is an emergency and you need the EAD Card earlier, you may request "Expeditious Handling" of your application.

It is important to take USCIS processing time into consideration when planning the date you want to start working! You cannot begin to work until you have your EAD Card!

HOW TO COMPLETE THE ATTACHED OPT REQUEST FORM (PAGE 4)

- ✓ Item #1: Personal and Program Information. Please note that we will only accept a paper application no less than two weeks away from 60 days after your completion date. If you apply after this time you will need to e-file your application (follow instructions on page 2, option 2 of this application).
- ✓ Item #2: Indicate what type of OPT you are applying for and the dates you want to work. Tell us how much of your 12-month OPT benefit you have already used for this degree level, if any.
- ✓ Item #3: Describe how your proposed employment for practical training is directly related to your major and appropriate for your level of education. Take time to do this carefully. Do not say that you are seeking an entry-level job in your major. Your description must clearly explain to an Immigration Officer what you expect to do on the job you are seeking. Do not use any abbreviations or acronyms in your description.

HOW TO COMPLETE THE ATTACHED USCIS I-765 FORM (FINAL PAGE)

- ✓ If this is your first OPT, under, "I am applying for" check off "**Permission to accept employment**".
- ✓ Item #3: Address: This is the address your EAD will be mailed to. List your current physical address.
- ✓ Item #10 – A-Number or I-94 Number: Put your I-94 number unless USCIS has previously assigned you an alien registration number.
- ✓ Item #11: If you have ever applied for Severe Economic Hardship or Optional Practical Training employment before, answer yes, where and when you applied, whether it was granted or denied and attach a photocopy of any EAD card issued for it.
- ✓ Item #16: Write (c) (3) (A) for pre-completion OPT; (c) (3) (B) for post-completion OPT.
- ✓ Item #17: Write N/A in each line unless you are applying for an extension of your current OPT.
- ✓ Your Certification: Sign, put your telephone number and the date.
- ✓ If you do not complete a line please write N/A in that line.

HOW CAN YOU EXTEND YOUR OPT?

You can extend pre-completion of studies by filing another application. You may not continue to work until it has been authorized by USCIS.

For post completion OPT, you must apply for the full amount of time remaining in your 12 months bank account. You will be entitled to another 12-month period of OPT if you go on to a higher level of study. Post-completion OPT can be extended only for STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) degree programs.

STUDY AND POST-COMPLETION OPT

Immigration regulations state that, "Authorization to engage in optional practical training employment is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level." If you decide to begin studying again, your OPT will end automatically at the start of your studies here or when you transfer your I-20 to a new school.

TRACKING YOUR APPLICATION AFTER IT IS SUBMITTED

USCIS will send you a receipt within four weeks of receiving your application. This receipt will have an EAC Number that you can use to track the status of your application online at: <https://egov.immigration.gov/cris/jsps/login.jsp>.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND STATUS

During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT. Students granted a 17-month OPT extension may not accrue an aggregate of more than 120 days of unemployment during the total 29-month OPT period.



STOP! DON'T START WORKING UNTIL USCIS AUTHORIZES YOUR EMPLOYMENT AND YOU HAVE YOUR EAD CARD!

1. PERSONAL AND PROGRAM INFORMATION

Last Name: _____ First Name _____

SEVIS ID#: N _____ CW Post ID#: _____

Local address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Degree Program: Doctorate Graduate Undergraduate Other _____

Final date of classes: _____ (if less than two weeks away, must e-file)

2. WHAT TYPE OF OPT ARE YOU APPLYING FOR?

Please choose one:

Pre-Completion Studies:

Full-Time. Only available during vacation periods or if you have completed all of your coursework except for comprehensives, thesis or dissertation.

Starting on _____ **and ending** _____

Part-Time. (Less than 20 hours a week)

Starting on _____ **and ending** _____

Post-Completion Studies:

Starting _____ Your start date could be as early as the expected date of completion of studies you put above, or any other date within the 60-day period following it.

Ending _____ You must apply for all of the 12-month benefit you have remaining for this program of study.

Please check one:

I have received OPT employment authorization in the past: **YES** **No**

If you answered yes, what were your approved dates: _____

3. EMPLOYMENT TYPE AND HOW IT RELATES TO YOUR MAJOR?

DESCRIBE THE TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AND EXPLAIN HOW IT RELATES TO YOUR MAJOR. Do not say that you are "seeking an entry level position that is appropriate for your skills and experience!"

A. What is your current major (listed in Section 5 of your I-20): _____

B. How does the employment you are seeking relate to your major? _____



CERTIFICATION OF COMPLETION OF STUDIES FOR F-1 STUDENTS

TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT

Student's Name _____
Last Name First Name Middle Name

Major _____ Degree Level _____

C.W. Post ID# _____ Social Security # _ _ _ - _ _ - _ _ _

TO BE COMPLETED BY ACADEMIC ADVISOR

(Please return form to student)

Degree Expected: Doctorate Graduate Undergraduate Other _____

Major field of Study: _____

When will this student complete his/her studies at CW Post (mm/dd/yyyy)? ____/____/____

This date represents (please check one):

- Final day of classes in student's final semester
- Submission of dissertation/thesis
- Masters/PhD Defense Date
- Other (please explain)

Please be specific with additional comments: _____

Advisor's Name (Print) _____ Ext. _____ Date _____

By signing below, I certify that the information above is true and accurate. I am aware that any questions regarding this form should be directed to International Student Services, (516) 299 – 1451, prior to signing the form.

Signature _____ Dept. _____

Please return this original form to International Student Services, Post Hall.