Optional Practical Training (OPT) is permission for off-campus employment directly related to a student’s major field of study, granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). OPT enables students to gain work experience in their field of study. 12 months of OPT is available per degree level for students of any major as long as the subsequent degree is at a higher educational level. OPT may be used before or after completion of a program.

Students with certain majors in science, technology, engineering or math may be eligible for a 24 month extension of post-completion OPT. International Student Services (ISS) must recommend OPT for a student. USCIS then provides final approval and issues an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Individuals must have an EAD before they can begin OPT employment. OPT authorization granted by USCIS cannot be changed, voided, or canceled.

Eligibility Requirements:
- Completed one full academic year of full-time study
- Maintained valid F-1 status
- Employment must be in the student’s major field of study
- Have not been authorized for 12 months or more full time CPT (Curricular Practical Training) at the educational level for which the student will apply for OPT
- Have not regained legal status through reentry during the previous academic year
- Have passed the OPT quiz administered by ISS

NOTE: You lose your OPT eligibility if you depart the U.S. during your grace period following the completion of your degree and USCIS has not received your OPT application prior to your departure.

**OPT Categories**

1. **Pre-completion**
   - **Academic Year**
     During fall and/or spring semesters and student has not completed required coursework. On- and off-campus work combined may not exceed a total of 20 hours per week.
   - **Vacation Period**
     Authorization may be part-time or full-time.

2. **Post-completion**
   - For students who do not need to complete a master’s degree Plan A or Plan B paper or a Ph.D. thesis, the date of completion is the final day of the last semester of required coursework, as indicated on the University’s academic calendar.
   - For students who need to complete a master’s degree Plan A or Plan B paper or a Ph.D. thesis, the date of completion is the student’s choice of either (a) completion of all required classroom credits (including thesis credits); (b) the day the student has completed all requirements for the degree, including submission of the final paper or thesis; or (c) the last day of the month that the student submits the final paper or thesis.

Students may not postpone the completion date by “holding” a completed thesis. Once defense and thesis revisions are completed, the thesis must be submitted within a reasonable time after defense.

**When to Apply:**
- **Pre-completion** Applications can be submitted to ISS 100 days before your requested employment start date.
- **Post-completion** Applications can be submitted to ISS 100 days before your expected date of completion

**Step 1: Request an OPT Recommendation from ISS**

ISS must process a recommendation for your OPT request and prepare a new I-20. Allow 6 working days for ISS to complete this process. Please submit the following items to the ISS adviser. ISS cannot accept your application for processing unless all these items are completed. Please bring:
- Student Request/Academic Adviser Verification Form
- Form I-765*
- Reduced Course Load form(s) if applicable
- Complete OPT Quiz (in ISS office)
*Form I-765 and instructions for completing Form I-765 can be found on the USCIS website (go to “FORMS”): http://www.uscis.gov (please also see page 5 of this form for additional I-765 instructions).

**Step 2: Submit the Following Items to USCIS**

Staple the application materials together in the following order:
1. Check or money order, payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security” for the OPT application fee ($410)
2. Two passport style color photos taken within 30 days of your application. Do not use a previously used photo. The instructions with Form I-765 provide detailed photo requirement information. Print full name and most recent Form I-94 number lightly on the back of each photo. Place the photos in a clear plastic bag or an envelope and staple it to the application. Do not put staple holes in the photos.
3. Original Form I-765 (keep a copy for your records).
4. Photocopy of I-20 page 1 with your signature and page 2 with OPT recommendation. OPT applications must be received by USCIS:
   - **No earlier than 90 days before – and no later than 60 days after – the student’s date of degree completion indicated in item #11 on the OPT Student Request and Academic Adviser Verification form.**
   - **Less than 30 days after the student’s OPT I-20 was issued.**
5. Print out of most recent electronic I-94 (https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov). If you have a paper I-94 stapled in your passport, photocopy both sides of the form I-94 (Copy the back side even if it is blank). Do not mail the original paper form I-94 in your passport.
Step 4: Requirements while you are on OPT

- As a person on an F-1 visa at UMD, you are required to have the University health insurance at all times. If you have an employer-sponsored group health plan, you may request a waiver. Talk to your ISS advisor about how to continue your insurance.
- You must continue to update your Current Mailing address through your MyU
- You must report to ISS the following information by completing the OPT Employer Report Google Form:
  - Name of your employer, your address, and your employment start date;
  - Any changes in your employer and their address;
  - Any interruption in your employment or periods of unemployment.
- You may not accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment during the 12 month period of initial post-completion OPT. Employment must be 20 hours per week or more. Volunteer work or unpaid internships in your field count as employment. Keep written documentation of all employment.
- If you have accumulated more than 90 days of unemployment, you will no longer be in F-1 status. You must contact ISS to report this information before your status expires.
- Notify ISS if you decide to permanently depart the U.S. during your OPT
- Notify ISS if you change your visa status during your OPT.
- Students must also report their employment information to ISS every 6 months (even if there is no change)

Travel during Post-completion OPT

- Under normal circumstances, a student who has both (1) an EAD for post-completion OPT or receipt notice [Form I-797] and (2) a job or job offer should not experience difficulty reentering the U.S. If either of these two conditions is missing, then the student is assuming risk.
- Travel signatures are only valid for 6 months.
- When you have completed your degree, your expenses and source(s) of funds might have changed. If this change is greater than 25%, you will need to obtain a new I-20 from ISS by completing the Financial Certification for Students on OPT Google Form. Once you have applied for post-completion OPT, ISS will only produce a new I-20 if you have provided ISS with a photocopy of your EAD
# Optional Practical Training—Student Request and Academic Adviser Verification

## Student Request – Student will complete this portion.

1. **Student Name**
   - Family name
   - First name
   - Middle Name

2. **UMD Student ID#**
   - 3. **SEVIS ID#**

4. **Email**
   - 5. **Phone**

6. **Academic Major on I-20**
   - 7. **Degree Level on I-20** (e.g., BA, BS, MA, MS, PhD)

8. Students completing a master’s program, check on: □ Plan A □ Plan B □ Plan C or coursework only

9. **I-20 expiration date**
   - Month/Day/Year
   - **Passport expiration date**
   - Month/Day/Year
   - **Visa expiration date**
   - Month/Day/Year

10. **Type of optional practical training:**
   - □ Pre-completion part-time / full-time
   - □ Post-completion. All coursework finished by completion date.
   - □ Post-completion. All program requirements will be completed.

11. **Read below, and write your date of degree completion here**
    - Month/Day/Year
    - • The date written here will be the new end date indicated in section 3 “Program of Study” on your OPT I-20. Any work, on- or off-campus, after this end date will require OPT authorization. Previously authorized CPT will be expired.
    - • For students who are NOT completing a Master’s degree Plan A or Plan B paper or a Ph.D. thesis, this is the final day of your last semester of required coursework, as indicated on the University’s academic calendar.
    - • For students completing a Master’s degree Plan A or B paper or a Ph.D. thesis, this date is either (a) the day you complete all required classroom credits (including thesis credits); (b) the day you complete all requirements for your degree, including submission of your final paper; or (c) the last day of the month you submit your final paper or thesis.
    - • Once you have applied for post-completion OPT, you are no longer eligible for a program extension.

    **Note:** Employment (including assistantships) is not possible after the date of degree completion written above, even if you have not completed your degree until the start date on your EAD. You may not delay completion of your degree to pursue on- or off-campus employment.

12. **I want my OPT to begin on**
    - Month/Day/Year
    - **and end on**
    - Month/Day/Year

    **Note:** These dates cannot be changed once your application is sent to USCIS.

13. **Describe proposed employment**

**STATEMENT:** I have read the information on the attached cover pages regarding optional practical training and fully understand the implications of the authorization during and after my program of study. The information I have provided is true and correct.

Student signature ___________________________ Date __________________

## Academic Adviser Verification – Academic adviser will complete this portion.

- Do not sign this form if the “Student Request” section above has not been completed.
- Optional Practical Training (OPT) is work authorization that allows F-1 students to gain practical work experience in their field of study.
- Most often, students will use OPT to work for one year after completion of their degree, known as “post-completion OPT.”
- Students are not required to have an employment offer to apply.
- Review the “Student Request” section (above) and indicate below whether the information is correct (you agree) or incorrect (you disagree).
- If you have questions, please call the ISS adviser at 218-726-7305
  - □ I agree with the information above. □ I disagree with the information above.

Academic adviser signature ___________________________ Date __________________

Name (please print) ___________________________ Phone ___________________________

Department or college ___________________________
ISS ADVISER TASKS

☐ Discuss steps 1-4 with student
☐ Previous OPT at this degree level?
☐ More than 12 months full-time CPT?
☐ Program Plan/Holds/Registration
☐ Financial Information
☐ Travel discussed
☐ Check Assistantship end date, if any
☐ One Academic Year Met

Date I-765 Reviewed _________________________

Opt Quiz completion date _________________________

90 days prior = _________________________

Date additional OPT info sent = _________________________

OPT SUMMARY

Type of OPT

☐ Pre-completion

☐ Post-completion. All coursework finished by completion date.

☐ Post-completion. All program requirements will be completed.

Completion date: ___________________________ # of Months: __________________

OPT dates: ___________________________ - ___________________________

Adviser Comments: ___________________________
Form I-765 Instructions
Application for Employment Authorization
(F-1 Optional Practical Training)

Put an “X” in the box next to the benefit for which you are applying (e.g. Permission to accept employment).

1. Name: Print last, first, and middle names. Write “family name” or “last name” with all CAPITAL letters. This should match your visa and there should not be any hyphens (-). If you do not have a middle name, write “(none)”.  
2. Other Names Used: If you have not used other names, write “(N/A)”.  
3. U.S. Mailing Address: Use a residential address that will be valid for 4 months after submission of application. USCIS mail cannot be forwarded to a new address by the postal service. Talk to an ISS Advisor if you will be moving during that time.

4. Country of Citizenship/Nationality: Country that issued your passport  
5. Place of Birth:  
6. Date of Birth: See passport (mm/dd/yyyy)  
7. Gender: Check one  
8. Marital Status: Check one  
9a. SSN Question: Check one  
9b. SSN Question: Write your SSN if you have one  
10. SSN Question: If you already have a social security number, check “no.” If you need an SSN, check “yes”  
11. SSN Question: If you answered “yes” in #10, check “yes” otherwise leave blank  
12a & b. Answer only if you checked “yes” in #10 otherwise leave blank  
13a & b. Answer only if you checked “yes” in #10 otherwise leave blank  
14. Alien Registration Number or I-94 Number:  

F-1 Students: Use the 11-digit number on your most recent Form I-94 (https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov)  

15. Have You Ever Before Applied for Employment Authorization from USCIS?  
F-1 Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorized by ISS is NOT employment authorization from USCIS. If you have previously submitted an employment authorization application to USCIS for approval, check “yes” and provide additional information requested in item 15.  

16. Date of Last Entry into the U.S.: See most recent stamp in passport or I-94  
17. Place of Last Entry into the U.S.: U.S. city applicant went through U.S. port of entry. See most recent stamp in passport or I-94  
18. Status of Last Entry: See most recent Form I-94. (F-1 Student, Visitor, etc.)  
19. Current Immigration Status: See most recent Form I-94. (F-1 Student, etc.)  
20. Eligibility Category: The eligibility category for…  

Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training is: (c) (3) (A)  
Post-Completion Optional Practical Training is: (c) (3) (B)  
21. Leave this item blank.  
22. Leave this item blank.  
23. Leave this item blank  

Signature, Date, and Telephone Number: Write these items exactly between the lines. Try not to cross the lines above or below when you write your signature.

Mail all of the materials for your application (See “Step 2” on the OPT instruction sheet) to USCIS. The address the materials are sent to depends on what you wrote for the address in #3 on the Form I-765 and also how the materials are sent (using USPS or an Express mail service like FedEx).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you live in:</th>
<th>If you live in:</th>
<th>File you application at: USCIS Phoenix Lockbox</th>
<th>File you application at: USCIS Dallas Lockbox</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For Fedex, UPS, and DHL deliveries:</td>
<td>USCIS</td>
<td>USCIS PO Box 21281</td>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USCIS PO Box 660867</td>
<td>Attn: AOS</td>
<td>2501 S. State Hwy. 121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas, TX 75266</td>
<td>Business Suite 400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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