

Optional Practical Training Guidelines for F-1 Students February 2019

Optional practical training is a type of work permission available for eligible F-1 students. It allows “temporary work employment for practical training directly related to the major area of study.” 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii). There are three types – a) 12 months of either part-time or full-time pre-completion training used before the end date or 12 months of full-time post-completion training used after the end date, b) 24 month STEM OPT extension, c) Cap-Gap OPT Extension.

Resource

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis-help-hub/student-records/fm-student-employment/f-1-optional-practical-training-opt#c>

Eligibility

1. The proposed employment is directly related to the major area of study
2. Student has completed one academic year of full-time enrollment and is in good standing with no holds
3. Student is not studying English as a Second Language
4. Student has not used all available optional practical training at the undergraduate level
5. Student has not been authorized for 12 months of full-time curricular practical training

Disclaimer

*Information about Optional Practical Training is available at **Study in the States** (see link above). An ISS advisor requests OPT in SEVIS, prints a new I-20 and verifies the completeness of the documents. The student is responsible to file Form I-765 with USCIS and complete ALL steps successfully within 30 days from the date the Advisor made the recommendation for OPT in SEVIS. BYU-Hawaii is not responsible for a denial by USCIS.*

Application Process

- Meet with the internship coordinator of the academic department to discuss either pre-completion academic internship before graduation or a post-completion employment after graduation.
- Obtain a written employment offer. Employment must be at least 20 hours a week. It may be helpful to meet with Alumni and Career Services to identify their network of employers. Complete this step no later than the beginning of the last semester. The letter must be reviewed by the Vice President for Academic to confirm that the employment is directly related to the major area of study.
- For post-completion OPT meet with an Advisor at least three months before graduation. The Advisor confirms eligibility, enters the request recommending Optional Practical Training in SEVIS and prints and signs a new I-20.
- Student signs the new I-20 and completes Form I-765 Application for Employment Authorization. The application and supporting documents should be **received by USCIS within 90 days before graduation and no later than 60 days after graduation and within 30 days after the Advisor recommends OPT. There are no exceptions to these deadlines.**
- Mail the following documents to: USCIS, P.O. Box 21281, Phoenix, AZ 85036
 - a) Copies of signed I-765, employment offer, all I-20's, OPT I-20, I-94, passport photo page, visa stamp, G-1145, two passport photos, payment of \$410 in check or money order to:
U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- Upon receiving Form I-765 USCIS issues a Receipt Notice (Form I-797) with the receipt number
- Through an interface with USCIS, the status of the OPT request in SEVIS changes to Pending.
- If USCIS needs more information, the student will receive a Request For Evidence, which states what information is needed and the deadline for submitting it. The student must respond by the deadline.
- USCIS makes a decision on the application. If it is approved USCIS issues an EAD (Employment Authorization Document) and the OPT Request status in SEVIS changes to Approved. The student can start working after receiving the EAD.
- Processing time averages 90 days but may take longer. After receiving the EAD the student may begin employment on the authorized start date. Any changes to name, address and employer information must

be reported by the student to the Advisor as soon as possible. The Advisor has 21 days to report changes to USCIS,

- During OPT, the student must inform USCIS of address changes through the online OPT portal. A student can be unemployed for no more than 90 days, OPT must be completed within 14 months from the completion of studies.

Maintaining Contact with International Student Services

During Optional Practical Training students must report to International Student Services on a regular basis.

- At a minimum, contact internationalstudent@byuh.edu six months after you begin employment and in the last month.
- If you change your name and address or change the name and address of your employer you are required to contact International Student Services as soon as possible.
- International Student Services has 21 days to report the changes to USCIS. Regulations allow no more than 90 day of unemployment during OPT.

Health Insurance

BYU-Hawaii requires students on OPT to show proof of insurance to International Student Services. Insurance coverage must be in effect for the entire duration of OPT.

Travel

- Travel is not recommended while the OPT application is pending approval
- After you receive approval for OPT and the EAD, be sure to travel with a valid passport and visa, the OPT I-20 (with travel signature), EAD and employment offer letter
- There is no guarantee that Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will permit you to re-enter the U.S if you travel during OPT

OPT APPLICATION CHECKLIST FOR F-1 STUDENTS

4 to 6 Months Before Graduation

Student

- Review requirements at <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis-help-hub/student-records/fm-student-employment/f-1-optional-practical-training-opt#c>
- Meet with department internship coordinator to discuss OPT before or after graduation. If an internship is required for the degree pursue Curricular Practical Training.
- Obtain a written employment offer that provides at least 20 hours of employment each week. See Alumni and Career Services for assistance.
- Meet with an ISS advisor 4 to 6 months before graduation to start the application process. Make sure encumbrances are removed

3 Months Before Graduation

ISS Advisor

- Verify eligibility of student (completed 1 year, good academic standing, check for CPT used)
- Send employment offer to the Vice President for Academics to verify employment is related to major
- Obtain clearance from the Dean of Students that student has no conduct restrictions
- Set the SEVIS program date to match the expected graduation date
- Update SEVIS record, recommend OPT on the **Request OPT Employment** screen in SEVIS
- Print and sign the OPT I-20 and endorse with travel signature
- Update Document Management in Sunapsis

Student

- Sign the OPT I-20 in front of the Advisor
- Complete USCIS Form I-765. Form and instructions online at: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> . Use c(3)(B) as the I-765 eligibility code in Part 2 Item 27.
- Prepare an application packet with the following:

Form I-765 signed by student	employment offer on letterhead	copy of all I-20s
OPT I-20	latest I-94	2 passport photos
passport photo page	visa stamp page	
Form G-1145 e-notification form	\$410USD to: U.S. Department of Homeland Security	
- Meet with the Advisor for a final review the application packet.
- Mail application packet by Registered Mail **AFTER the Advisor recommends OPT in SEVIS, which must be received within 90 days before graduation and no later than 60 days after graduation.. There are no exceptions to these deadlines.** Request the tracking number at the U.S. Post Office and keep receipt.

USCIS
P.O. Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036
- Receive electronic notification via e-mail or text that the application was received
- Receive I-797 from USCIS with receipt number to track the status of the application online at: <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>

REMEMBER: Do NOT make housing and travel arrangements before USCIS notifies you of the decision.

