

DEFINING OPT

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an employment option available to F-1 students when the employment is directly related to the major area of study. ISSS facilitates the OPT application process, but final authorization is processed by Immigration. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the application is submitted at least two weeks in advance of the program completion date.

- Pre-Completion OPT – OPT used before degree completion – part-time employment that can only be full-time while classes are not in session.
- Post-Completion OPT – OPT used after degree completion – issued only as full-time employment

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for OPT; you must have maintained legal F-1 status for at least 9 consecutive months or one full academic year. You must not have used full-time CPT for 12 months or more and you must not have already completed your degree.

OPT HOURS & LIMITATIONS

- Employment on OPT must be directly related to your major area of study and commensurate with your educational level
- Total OPT time per degree level is 12 months; the 12-month allotment per degree level may be divided into various segments
 - A B.A. student who completes 3 months Pre-Completion OPT during one summer is eligible for 9 months remaining after program ends
 - If the same student then begins an M.S. degree in the U.S., he is eligible for a new 12 months of OPT. Any leftover (unused) OPT time from the previous degree level does not carry over to the new degree level. OPT time is not cumulative.
- Part-time OPT is authorized for up to 20 hours per week; Part-time OPT is deducted from the 12-month limit at 50%
- OPT may be used full-time only during official annual summer vacation or after all course work is completed for degree
- OPT after program completion is granted for full-time use only
- OPT start date must fall within 60 days of program completion (this is not necessarily the same date as graduation day)
- On full-time OPT, you may enroll in classes that are "incidental" to the employment; Do not begin a new degree program on OPT.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Complete OPT Application form and obtain appropriate academic advisor signature
2. Schedule appointment with your International Student Adviser at least 3 months in advance of degree completion date
3. Submit the following OPT application documents to your International Student Adviser at the scheduled appointment:
 - Completed [OPT Application Form](#)
 - \$340 check or money order payable to DHS (fee as of 07/30/2007)
 - 2 [Passport-style](#) photos
 - Form [I-765](#)
 - Copy of I-94 card (front and back)
 - Copy of Passport I.D. page(s) including expiration date
 - Copy of Visa Stamp
 - Copy of all previous Employment Authorization Documents (EAD cards) if you previously been granted employment
4. During your appointment, your International Student Adviser will review your application materials, issue a new I-20 for OPT authorization, and finalize your OPT Application Package.
5. You must mail the completed OPT application packet to Immigration (USCIS) to one of the following addresses:

<u>Address for Regular Postal Mail</u>	<u>Address for Express Mail</u> (i.e. FedEx, UPS)
USCIS, Texas Service Center	USCIS, Texas Service Center
Attention: I-765 Unit	Attention: I-765 Unit
P.O. Box 851041	4141 St. Augustine Rd.
Mesquite, TX 75185-1041	Dallas, TX 75227
	Phone: 1-800-375-5283

NOTE: Do not begin employment until you have received the EAD for approved OPT authorization. The EAD is a license-sized picture card that indicates the approved employment start and end dates. Employment is not permitted before the approved start date or after the approved end date. OPT is not contingent upon an employment offer.

CHANGES TO OPT

- Changes to the OPT start and end dates are not easily made. Please be certain of your anticipated employment start and end dates prior to scheduling your appointment with your International Student Adviser. Changes may delay receipt of the EAD.
- Cancellation of the OPT Application must be submitted prior to issuance of the EAD; Application fee will not be returned
- Job change is possible; OPT is not related to a specific employer or place of employment. [Submit changes of address to ISSS!](#)