



CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS,
IMMIGRATION, AND STUDY ABROAD

**WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING
EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION**

WHAT IS IT?

Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) is off-campus employment authorization 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 United States. You can use it to work for any employer anywhere in the United States.

HOW CAN IT BE USED?

- **Prior to completion of course requirements for an associate’s degree or certificate program during the Fall or Spring semester – *part-time employment only***
- **Prior to completion of course requirements for an associate’s degree or certificate program during the Summer or Winter session – *part-time or full-time employment***

HOW CAN YOU QUALIFY FOR IT?

1. You must have been enrolled full-time for a 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, though it is wise that you be sure as possible of a job so that you don’t waste any of your OPT “account”

HOW DO YOU APPLY?

Download an application for F-1 Optional Practical Training Employment Recommendation, fill it out, and submit it to our office. When you submit it, we will review your application to ensure it is complete and that you qualify. If everything is in order, we will issue a new Form I-20 recommending your OPT and contact you to come pick up your application. When you pick up your application, we will provide you with instructions on how to submit your application to USCIS and track its progress.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

After your application is filed at USCIS, plan that it will take **about three months** for your EAD (Employment Authorization Document) to be returned to us from USCIS. It could take less or more depending on their workload and any security clearances.

It's 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!!

WHAT IF YOU WANT TO TRAVEL BEFORE STARTING PRE-COMPLETION OF STUDIES OPT?

Since pre-completion OPT applicants' primary responsibility is full-time study, overseas travel guidelines follow those of regular F-1 students (i.e., students obtain I-20 travel signatures valid for 12 months from Center for International Affairs after proving their continuing valid F-1 status)

STUDY AND PRE-COMPLETION OPT

Even if you are accepted for pre-completion OPT, bear in mind that your primary responsibility is full-time study; employment is incident to your F-1 status. Be aware that part-time work subtracts from half the total time you have available for post-completion OPT. (e.g., 1 year of pre-completion OPT uses 6 months of post-completion OPT). If you wish to continue OPT after you complete your degree, you must reapply for post-completion OPT, which requires a new filing fee.

APPLYING FOR DSO RECOMMENDATION FOR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

COMPLETE THE ATTACHED FORMS

1. Pre-OPT DSO Recommendation Request Form:

- Expected date of Completion of Studies: this is important as this date will determine the latest end date of your pre-completion OPT.
- Indicate what type of OPT you are applying for and the dates you want to work
- If you have completed 12 months of OPT for the same or higher education level, you are ineligible for OPT
- 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.
- Read and sign the Acknowledgement of Understanding (see item 6, page 6)

2. F-1 STUDENT STATUS RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE ON PRE-COMPLETION OPT

3. **Form I-765: APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION.** Go to uscis.gov, complete items 1-16, print out, and sign in black ink

- Item 5: _____ Address. If you would like us to help track the adjudication of your application, enter our office address
- Item 27: Enter the code that applies to the type of OPT you are requesting: Pre-completion OPT – (c)(3)(A); post-completion (c)(3)(B)
- Your Certification: sign in BLACK INK, put your telephone number and the date

4. **Form G-1145** E-NOTIFICATION OF APPLICATION/PETITION ACCEPTANCE. Go to uscis.gov, complete, print out and sign in BLACK INK the MOST RECENT Form G-1145 available.

ATTACH THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS TO YOUR APPLICATION

- **Two passport-type photographs.** Print your name and I-94 number on the back in pencil
- **Forms I-20.** Photocopies of all previous forms I-20 issued by us and other schools you have attended
- **Photocopies of any previous EAD Card(s)**
- **[Form I-94](#)**
- **Photocopies of your passport identification page(s) and visa**
- **\$410 fee** in the form of a check or money order made payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. If you are using a personal check, it must have your name and address on it.

INFORMATION ABOUT APPLICATION PROCESSING

1. **If everything is in order, we will issue you a new form I-20 with our recommendation on it.** We will contact you to come in and pick up your application
2. **We will provide you with information about how and when to send your application to USCIS**
3. **If you put our office address on your form I-765, USCIS will communicate with us about your application.** If they request additional information, we will contact you. If your application is approved the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will be sent here and we will contact you to come in and pick it up.
4. **You cannot begin working until you have received your EAD card**