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 17 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 5 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

*Form I-765 and instructions for completing Form I-765 can be found on the USCIS website (go to "FORMS"): [http://www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) (please also see page 5 of this form for addition I-765 instructions)

**Step 2: Submit the following items to USCIS**
- Original Form I-765
- Photocopy of I-20 page 1 with your signature and page 3 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;
  - No later than 30 days after the “date issued” on the student’s OPT I-20.
Step 4: Requirements while you are on OPT

- Include photocopies of pages 1 and 3 of previous I-20s. Do not mail original I-20s.
- Photocopy of both sides of Form I-94. Copy the back even if it is blank. Do not mail the original Form I-94.
- 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 in pencil on the back of each photo. Place the photos in a clear plastic bag or an envelope and staple it to the application.
- Photocopies of as many as possible of the following that contain your name and photo: the identity page of your passport, entry visa stamp with a photo, driver’s license or state ID, student ID, and any previously issued EAD.
- Check or money order, payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security” for the OPT application fee ($380)

Keep a copy of the above documents for your records.

Staple the application materials together in the following order: Form I-765, photocopy of I-20, copies of identity verification, and the photocopy of Form I-94. The small pieces (bag/envelope containing photos and check) should be placed on the top and stapled with the entire application. Do not put staple holes in the photos. Mail the application by registered or express mail to obtain a receipt. Keep the receipt for your records.

Step 3: Wait for EAD to be mailed from USCIS

- It takes approximately 2 to 4 months for USCIS to process your request and mail your EAD to the address on Form I-765.
- Several weeks after you apply, you should receive a receipt notice (Form I-797) in the mail from USCIS.
- You may not begin OPT employment until you have received your EAD, even if your requested start date has passed
- You may not continue student employment (including assistantships) after the completion date in number 5 of your OPT I-20, even if you have not yet completed your degree. Any on- or off-campus employment after this completion date must be with OPT authorization.
- The EAD will reflect the dates of your employment authorization.

Step 4: Requirements while you are on OPT

- During OPT you are still in F-1 status at UMD
- ISS is required to have a copy of your EAD. Upon receipt of the EAD email naug0026@d.umn.edu a copy. Include your UMD student ID number.
- If you have applied for post completion OPT before you finish your final paper or thesis, you must complete all degree requirements by the OPT end date. A program extension is not possible after this date.
- Official admission to a new degree program or transfer to a new school during OPT will void any remaining time on your EAD. This time cannot be re-captured at a later date.
- Enrollment “for administrative purposes” (Grad 999) is allowed.
- You must continue to update your Current Mailing address through the University’s One Stop website: http://www.d.umn.edu/students/ (“Update Personal Information”)
- You must report to ISS the following information by emailing it to pokeefe@d.umn.edu:
  - 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 90 days of unemployment, you will no longer be in F-1 status. If you contact ISS to report this information before your status expires, you will have a 60 day grace period to depart the U.S. or gain another status. If your F-1 status expires, you are required to leave the U.S. immediately. You will not be granted a 60 day grace period if you do not report to ISS.
- 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

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, the student is assuming risk. For more information, access the following web page: www.iss.s.umn.edu/fstudent/TravelOUS.html and look for the heading “F-1 travel during Post-Completion OPT only” near the bottom.
- 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 a Student Financial Certification Statement with an F-1 adviser. 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 ___________________________ Passport expiration date ___________________________ Visa expiration date ___________________________
   Month/Day/Year Month/Day/Year 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 number 5 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 ___________________________ and end on ___________________________
    Month/Day/Year 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 218-726-7531

□ 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

Date submitted to ISS ____________________

Adviser Comments:

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: ________________ - ________________

Revised: 10/2014
Form I-765 Instructions
Application for Employment Authorization
(F-1 Optional Practical Training)

***ISS does NOT recommend electronically filing the I-765***

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. Address in the U.S.: 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. If correspondence will be “in care of” a trustworthy friend or family member in the U.S., write the person’s name in number 2 (i.e., C/O John Doe) and the person’s address in number 3.

4. Country of Citizenship/Nationality: See #1 on your I-20

5. Place of Birth: See passport

6. Date of Birth: See passport (mm/dd/yyyy)

7. Gender: Check one

8. Marital Status: Check one

9. Social Security Number: If you do not have a social security number, write “(none)”.

10. Alien Registration Number or I-94 Number:
   - F-1 Students: Use the 11-digit number on your most recent Form I-94

11. 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 11.

12. Date of Last Entry into the U.S.: Includes entry from Canada or Mexico. See Form I-94.


14. Manner of Last Entry: See most recent Form I-94. (Student, Visitor, etc.)

15. Current Immigration Status: See most recent Form I-94. (F-1 Student, etc.)

16. Eligibility Category: The eligibility category for...
   - Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training is: (c) (3) (A)
   - Post-Completion Optional Practical Training is: (c) (3) (B)

17. Leave this item blank.

Signature, Telephone Number, and Date: Write these items just below the words. 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>File you application at: USCIS Phoenix Lockbox</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, or Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands</td>
<td>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries: USCIS PO Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036 For Express mail and courier service deliveries: USCIS Attn: AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you live in:</th>
<th>File you application at: USCIS Dallas Lockbox</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, or West Virginia</td>
<td>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries: USCIS PO Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266 For Express mail and courier service deliveries: USCIS Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>