Standard Post-Completion Optional Practical Training

Please read this entire packet!

What is OPT?
Standard Post-Completion Optional Practical Training, or “OPT”, is off-campus work authorization in your field of study. If granted by Immigration, the authorization is full time employment for a maximum of 12 months.

Who should apply?
Students who will complete their degree requirements within 90 days and have been in full time status for two consecutive semesters by the program completion. Please note that your program may complete before the end date on your I-20.

What is my program completion date?
The program completion date is the last day of your final program requirement, which can be the last day of the semester; the end of a summer session; or after completion of a modular or Saturday course. Please check your course registration to determine the end date of your final course.

When should I apply?
We highly recommend that you apply for OPT 90 days prior to your program completion date. United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is able to receive Standard Post-completion OPT applications up to 90 days prior to the completion of a student’s academic program. USCIS must have received and processed your OPT application by the 60th day after completion of your academic program (i.e. by the end of the grace period). Applications received after the 60th day will not be considered.

All Standard Post-Completion OPT must be completed within 14 months of the program completion. This means if you apply during the post completion 60 day grace period, you will most likely lose OPT time. You must have received your OPT card to begin working, and USCIS normally takes 90 days to process your application.

How do I choose my OPT dates?
Immigration allows you to begin working up to 60 days after the completion of your program. You must choose a start date between the day after program completion and 60 days later.

What if I find a job before my card arrives?
You may not work until you have your OPT card and are within the dates listed on that card.
What if I am unemployed during my OPT?
During the OPT period, maintaining F-1 status is dependent upon current employment. Students may not be unemployed for a total of 90 days or more during the initial OPT period. **Students unemployed for more than 90 days WILL BE AUTO-TERMINATED in SEVIS and therefore out of status.**

What counts as employment?
- **Paid employment** at least 20 hours per week, including work for hire and employment through an agency. This employment may be with one or more employers.
- **Unpaid employment** at least 20 hours per week.
- **Self-employment** if a student chooses to start a business. Student must be able to prove to Immigration that he/she has the proper business licenses.

**ALL Employment MUST be related to the student’s degree program.** Global Education Center **cannot** provide a list of employers or types of employment for each degree. Students must be able to prove their job is related to their degree, if asked by Immigration.

While I am on OPT do I have to inform Global Education Center that I am employed or have moved?
Yes, Immigration **requires** all students on OPT to report any change in name or address, their employer’s name and address, and any breaks in employment within 10 days. Global Education Center provides an employer update form on our website and USCIS offers an online portal to update information. Global Education Center prefers that you use the Global Education Center form to report changes. It is not necessary to utilize the portal. **You must report your employer information or your immigration record will auto-terminated on the 91st day of OPT, and you will be out of status.**

What if I would like to travel after I have applied for OPT?
We **strongly** recommend that you travel outside of the US only if you have a job in the US to which you will return. Your OPT card states that it is not valid for entry to the US. This means that the OPT card alone is not enough to enter the country; you need **all** immigration documents (valid passport and visa, signed I-20, and EAD card). You may wish to bring a copy of a pay check from your employer as evidence that you are engaging in practical training. **If you chose to travel, you are required to obtain a travel signature on page 3 of your I-20 every six months.**
What items do I need to apply for OPT?

1. A check or money order for $410.00 made out to the U.S Department of Homeland Security. (DO NOT WRITE ON THE BACK OF THE CHECK!) Your name and address must be on the check. Write your I-94 # on the bottom left hand of the check (in the “memo” or “for” section.)

2. Two passport sized photographs taken within the last 6 months. See the following website for photo requirements: http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/photos/photos.html. Each photo must be cut to 2 inches by 2 inches with your name and I-94 # printed lightly on the back in pencil. Place the photos and check/money order in an envelope. Write your name and I-94 # on the outside of the envelope as well.


4. TYPED form I-765 online using the PDF version located at the following website http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf you will need Acrobat Reader to open the file. Write “none” if the answer is none; write “N/A” if an item is not applicable. Be sure to enter (c) (3) (B) in step # 16 (See completed sample in this packet). Print completed form I-765 and sign in BLACK INK.

5. Color copies of Visa and Passport or a copy of last EAD (if applicable, front and back), copies of all I-20s, a copy of Form I-94, Arrival- Departure Record (front and back), if available. If you entered the U.S before May 21, 2013 or I-94 print out from www.cbp.gov/i94 if you entered after May 21st.

After I have gathered all the above, what do I do?

You will need to provide Global Education Center with the Advisor’s Recommendation Form and the OPT Contract (included in this packet). If you have any questions about the items required for the application or want an advisor to review your I-765 form, we will do so. We will issue a new I-20 for you and provide you with mailing instructions to mail your application. You should mail all the items (# 1-5) listed above plus a copy of your new I-20. Do not mail in your application without receiving your new I-20 or your OPT application may be denied without sufficient time to reapply.
Advisor’s Recommendation for OPT
(Optional Practical Training)

To Be Completed by the Student:
Student’s Name: _________________________
Student’s ID #: _______________
Student’s WCTC Email Address: _______________
Student’s Phone number: _______________
Desired OPT Start Date: ______________

To Be Completed by the Academic Advisor:
The student is expected to complete all course requirements for _________________
(major):
by: ________________
(exact date of completion)

Will the student have at least the minimum GPA required to graduate? ______________
If unsure, please explain: ______________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Advisor’s Signature: ____________________________   Today’s Date: ______________
Print Name and Title: ______________________________________________________
Phone #: __________________________________

Please return to the Global Education Center (C-018).
Post Completion OPT Contract

1. Under immigration regulation, it is mandatory that you provide certain forms of information to the Global Education Center (GEC) during your OPT period. Failure to update your information as requested is considered a violation of status, and a student’s F-1 SEVIS record WILL BE auto-terminated for this violation.

The following information must be received within 10 days of the start date of your OPT period:

- Your current mailing address
- Your employer’s name
- Your employer’s address
- Periods of unemployment (You must notify us of the date which you became unemployed, then notify us again when you become reemployed. We require the date which you resumed employment as well as employer information.)

You must also ensure that this information is always up-to-date and report any changes in this information within 10 days. To submit this information to GEC you must complete the OPT Address and Employer Information Form. You may email this form or drop it off at our office.

2. There is a penalty for anyone on Post Completion OPT who is unemployed for more than 90 days total while on OPT. Unemployment of 90 days or more (cumulative) is considered a violation of status, and students WILL BE auto-terminated for this. This does not apply to students on Pre Completion OPT.

Important note: Immigration policy is subject to change without notice. You should always contact the GEC to discuss any questions or concerns related to your legal status in the United States.

“I have read the information above about maintaining legal status while on OPT and understand that I must comply fully with these regulations to maintain legal F-1 status and retain OPT authorization. Most importantly, I understand that it is my responsibility to make sure I maintain proper status. I know that the office of International Student Services will do everything possible to help me, but that I am personally responsible for my decisions and to staying up to date on all important immigration information that affects me.”

Student’s Name (please print):________________________________________________

Student’s ID number: ______________________ Today’s Date: ____________________

Student’s Signature: _______________________________________________________

Student’s Non-WCTC Email: ______________________________________________