Optional Practical Training Information and Authorization Form

Post Completion OPT Information and Eligibility

What is Post Completion OPT? Optional Practical Training is an opportunity for F-1 visa students to gain one year of practical work experience in their major field of study after completing each academic level. (Post-Completion OPT is available once per academic/degree level.)

What kind of work can I do during OPT? Your employment must be directly related to your academic major. Working in your minor is not allowed. (See “Employment Guidelines” for more information.)

Must I already have a job in order to apply? You are not required to have a job at the time of application nor by your OPT Start Date. (See “Unemployment Regulations” for more information.)

How long is OPT? 365 days.

How does participation in CPT affect my eligibility for OPT? If you complete one year (365 days) or more of full-time CPT during your degree program, you are not eligible for OPT.

When does OPT begin? You must begin within 60 days of the Program End Date on your I-20.

How do I apply for OPT? Your application for OPT must take place in cooperation with the Office of International Affairs.

- You must attend an OIA OPT workshop during the semester you graduate.
- You must submit a paper application. Do NOT apply online.
- You must collect all required documents and schedule an individual appointment with OIA. (You will receive a new I-20 from the OIA and recommendation in SEVIS at this time.)
- You must submit your completed application to USCIS in a timely fashion. Receipt of OPT is not guaranteed.

Things to keep in mind when applying for OPT: As you consider applying for OPT, bear in mind the following. This may influence your chosen OPT Start Date as well as any post-graduation travel plans.

- **Application Timeframe:** You can apply 90 days before to 60 days after graduation.
- **Approval Timeframe:** Anticipate 4 to 4½ months.
- **Selection of Start Date:** You must choose a start day from 1 day to 60 days after graduation.
- **Unemployment Days:** You are permitted 90 days of unemployment during your 365 days of OPT.
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Required Documents
A complete OPT application will include the following:

1. **Printout of your I-94 Admission Number**
   - Enter your personal and travel information on the U.S. Customs and Border Protection site: [https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home)
   - **IF THERE ARE ERRORS, YOU CANNOT PROCEED WITH THE REST OF YOUR APPLICATION.** You can try I-94 email correction: [i94chi@cbp.dhs.gov](mailto:i94chi@cbp.dhs.gov) or appear in person at Chicago Deferred Inspections at: 610 S. Canal St., Room 900, Chicago, IL 60607. The phone number is (312) 542-5700.

2. **Form I-765: Application for Employment Authorization**
   - Download this form from [https://www.uscis.gov/i-765](https://www.uscis.gov/i-765)
   - If possible, fill out Form I-765 online. Use **black ink**.
   - Follow the instructions on the sample Form I-765 provided.

3. **Form G-1145: E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance**
   - Download this form from [http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf)
   - By submitting this form, you will receive an email or text when your application has been received.

4. **Photocopy of your valid passport**

5. **Photocopy of your F-1 Visa or Change of Status Authorization**

6. **Photocopies of all previous forms I-20**

7. **Photocopy of your most recent EAD** (only if you previously have been authorized by USCIS for off-campus employment)

8. **Record of all previous periods of Curricular Practical Training** (provided by the Office of International Affairs)

9. **Two passport-sized photographs** (available at most drug stores)
   - You must submit two identical color photographs of yourself taken within 30 days of filing your application. They must have a white to off-white background, be printed on thin paper with a glossy finish, and not be mounted or retouched. The passport-style photos must be 2” by 2”. They must be in color with full face, frontal view. Head height should measure 1” to 1 3/8” from top to bottom of chin, and eye height is between 1 1/8” to 1 3/8” from bottom of photo. Your head must be bare unless you are wearing a headdress as required by a religious order of which you are a member.
   - Using pencil or felt-tip pen, lightly print your name and your admission (I-94) number, if known, on the back of each photo.

10. **Application fee in the amount of $410**
    - Payment in the form of a personal check is preferred, but you can use a bank check or money order if necessary.
Optional Practical Training Information and Authorization Form

• Make check payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security.” Do not abbreviate the payee information!

11. New form I-20, prepared for OPT
• This new I-20 will be issued at your OPT meeting.
• You will sign the I-20 on page 1 in blue ink; the DSO will sign page 1.

12. OPT Acknowledgment Form
• This form must be completed by you. You may wish to discuss the date section at your OPT meeting.
  This form is for North Park’s use only; you will not send it with your OPT application.

13. Copy of Graduation Audit
• You should have received your graduation audit via email; it provides confirmation that you will graduate in a particular term and indicates any courses you have left to complete.
• This form is for North Park’s use only; you will not send it with your OPT application.

Submitting the OPT Application
USCIS must receive your OPT application within 30 days of the date indicated on your new I-20 OPT. Allow extra days for shipping so your application is received on time. **DO NOT LEAVE THE U.S. DURING YOUR GRACE PERIOD UNTIL AFTER YOU SUBMIT YOUR OPT APPLICATION!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use the following address when sending by US Postal Service:</th>
<th>Use the following address when sending by mail service (FedEx or UPS):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USCIS P. O. Box 21281 Phoenix AZ 85036</td>
<td>USCIS Attn: AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034 Phone: 800-375-5283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If mailing by USPS use Certified Mail so you will receive a receipt of delivery.</td>
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After Applying for OPT
1. **Paper Receipt:** In 2-3 weeks you will receive a paper receipt (I-797C) from USCIS confirming that they have received your application. This is NOT an approval. If you do not receive the receipt, CONTACT USCIS directly.

2. **Check Status Online:** Expect the OPT application process to take up to 4 to 4½ months. You may track the status of your application by entering your receipt number at [https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard.do](https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard.do).
Optional Practical Training Information and Authorization Form

3. **OPT Approval**: If your application is approved, USCIS will send you an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). The EAD contains your photo and shows the beginning and ending dates of eligible employment. You may begin work: 1) once you receive the EAD and 2) your start date has been reached or has passed. (Please bring the card to the Office of International Affairs so it can be photocopied for your file.)

**OPT Employment Reporting Requirements**
While on OPT you are required to report your employment activities and information BOTH in the SEVP Portal as well as to OIA.

1. **Reporting to OIA**
   - You must submit an OPT Employment Information Reporting Form for each new job to OIA.
   - You must submit a copy of your job offer letter containing your job title, description of responsibilities, start and end dates, hours worked per week, and supervisor contact information. If it is not clear from the job description that your work is related to your field, ask your employer to explain how your work is related to your academic degree. (Keep the original letter.)

2. **Reporting through the SEVP Portal**
   - On or around your start date you will receive an email from do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov on logging in to your portal account. Be sure to check your spam or junk mail folder.
   - For help with troubleshooting call the SEVP Response Center at 703-603-3400.

**Employment Guidelines**
OPT employment must be related to your academic major and may be full time (40 hours per week) or part time (capped at 20 hours per week). Paid employment may include:

- **Multiple employers**—work for more than one employer.
- **Short-term multiple employers (gigs)**—performing arts students may complete several gigs. Be sure to maintain a list of all the employers, dates, and length/duration of all your gigs. Keep documented evidence of all your gigs!!
- **Work for hire**—a service provided on a contractual, rather than an employment, relationship. Keep records and documentation of who and how long you worked for the person/entity who hired you.
- **Self-employed business owner**—you may start a business and be self-employed on OPT, but any work must be full time. You must prove that you have a proper business licenses and that your business is related to your academic degree.
- **Employment through an agency**—you must be able to prove you worked at least 20 hours/week.
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Post-completion OPT may also be unpaid (volunteer) employment. You may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, as long as the employment doesn’t violate labor laws. Any volunteering must be full-time (at least 20 hours/week). You must have documented evidence that you worked the minimum number of hours.

Unemployment Regulations
While on post-completion OPT you may be unemployed for a maximum of 90 days. If you exceed 90 days you will be in violation of status unless you have
- applied to continue your education by a change of education level or transfer to another school;
- departed the U.S.; or
- taken other actions to maintain status.

USCIS, not OIA, will determine if you are in violation of F-1 status through unemployment. If you exceed the allowable days of unemployment, you may be denied future immigration benefits. Your SEVIS record may be terminated if it fails to show that you maintained the proper period of employment.

Traveling while on OPT
You must have the following documents when traveling during OPT:
- I-20 with OPT Request validated for travel (during OPT the DSO signature on your I-20 must be renewed every 6 months)
- EAD card
- Letter from your employer verifying employment and attesting to the fact that you are expected to return for work after traveling abroad.

Unless absolutely necessary, you should not travel outside the U.S. before receiving your EAD card.

Pre-Completion OPT
- This information sheet is for F-1 students who wish to apply for one year of Post-Completion Optional Practical Training after graduating from North Park. If you wish to apply for Pre-Completion OPT, please contact the Office of International Affairs.

STEM OPT
- STEM EXTENSION: Certain fields of study in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) make a student eligible for a 17-month OPT Extension if they have a job or a job offer from an eVerify employer. Only a few of North Park’s degrees are designated as STEM fields by the U.S. Department of Education. Please consult OIA for help determining if your major qualifies as STEM.
Optional Practical Training Information and Authorization Form

Acknowledgment of Optional Practical Training Responsibilities
Please complete this form prior to your OPT appointment.

To be completed by the student:

Student’s Name: ____________________________________________ NPU ID# ___________________
Requested OPT Start and End Dates: From _________________ to _________________
Academic Major/Field in which you will work ________________________________________________
(If you already have a job offer, include the name of your employer: _________________________________)

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have applied for Optional Practical Training (OPT) at North Park University, Chicago, Illinois. I have been advised of the following OPT regulations and agree to abide by them.

• I am responsible for submitting my OPT application and all required documents to USCIS. I understand that USCIS will make a decision about my application and that OPT is not guaranteed.
• My OPT application must be received by USCIS no sooner than 90 days before and no later than 60 days after the Program End Date listed on my I-20 form. Additionally, the application must be received within 30 days of the date recommended in SEVIS.
• I understand that if I leave the country while awaiting OPT approval, I do so at my own risk. There is no guarantee that I will be readmitted to the U.S. If North Park University receives the EAD card while I am away, I must pay for it to be shipped to me.
• Upon receipt of my Employment Authorization card (EAD), I must provide the OIA with a copy of the card.
• Any work I undertake during my OPT year must be directly related to my major field of study.
• I am responsible for reporting to OIA and through the SEVP Portal my employment information.
• I must input any changes to my personal contact information in the SEVP Portal within 10 days of the change.
• I must check regularly the e-mail address I have provided OIA, to assure that I receive updates and information that may affect my F-1 status.
• If I am unemployed for a total of 90 days or more during authorized OPT, I am considered out of status.
• I understand that upon completion of OPT I have 60 days to leave the US or begin a new program of study. I must follow transfer procedures in SEVIS when beginning a new program. I certify that all information provided on this form and in my OPT application is correct and agree to comply with the above-listed regulations.

Signature: ____________________________________________ Date: __________________________
Email Address (while on OPT): ____________________________________________________________
Phone (while on OPT): _________________________________________________________________