**Post Completion OPT Information and Eligibility**

**What is Post Completion OPT?** Optional Practical Training is an opportunity for F-1 visa students to gain a year (12 months) of professional experience relating to their academic major. You are eligible for 1 OPT per degree level (Bachelor, Master, PhD).

**What kind of work can I do during OPT?** Your employment must be directly related to your academic major. You are not allowed to work in your minor. Double majors can work in either or both fields. (See “Employment Guidelines” for more information.)

**Must I already have a job in order to apply?** You do not have to have a job at the time you apply for OPT. You do not have to have a job 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 1 year (365 days) or more of *full-time* CPT during your degree program, you are not eligible for OPT.

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

**How do I apply for OPT?** You must apply for OPT with the assistance of OIA. You must submit a paper applicaton. Do NOT apply online.

1. Attend an OIA OPT workshop during the semester you graduate.
2. Collect all required documents.
3. Schedule a processing appointment with OIA. (OIA will provide you with a new I-20.)
4. Send your completed application to USCIS within 30 days of the issue date on your new I-20.

Receipt of OPT is not guaranteed.

**Timelines to Keep in Mind:** As you prepare your application, keep the following time frames in mind. They will may help you decide when to apply, an OPT Start Date, and whether to postpone travel.

* **Application Timeframe:** No earlier than 90 days before graduation and no later than 60 days after graduation.
* **Approval Timeframe:**  Expect to wait between 2-1/2 to 3-1/2 months for approval.
* **OPT Start Date:** You must select a Start Date between 1 to 60 days after graduation.
* **Unemployment Days:** During your 365-OPT period, you receive 90 days total unemployment days.

**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 this site: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>
   * If you spot any **ERRORS**,you must **CONTACT USCIS** to correct them.

**Email**: [i94chi@cbp.dhs.gov](mailto:i94chi@cbp.dhs.gov)

**Address:** Chicago Deferred Inspections, 610 S. Canal St., Room 900

**Phone:** (312) 542-5700.

1. **Form I-765: Application for Employment Authorization**
   * Download this form: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
   * Fill out form I-765 electronically. Follow the directions on USCIS Form I-765 instruction sheet (see “Foreign Student” section.
   * Answers to the following questions:
     + **5.a.** “In Care of.” ONLY fill in this line if you will not be at your current address when your OPT is approved. Ask a friend if you can have your EAD card sent to their address. (Make sure they are home to sign for the delivery.) *Example*:

***In Care of:*** Ms. Jane Doe

***Address:***5200 N. Broadway, Chicago, IL 60625

* + - **7.** ONLY fill out this section if you checked the “No” box in **6.** Put down the address where you are living currently (even if you will move before your card arrives).
    - **27.** Write (C) (3) B). Skip questions **28-31.b.** and proceed to **Part 3**.
  + Write “N/A” in any remaining blank fields. (The machine reading your form requires that all fields be filled.)
  + Sign your name in **black ink** being careful not to touch the sides of the box.

1. **Photocopy of your valid passport**
2. **Photocopy of your F-1 Visa or Change of Status Authorization**
3. **Photocopies of all previous Forms I-20**
4. **Photocopy of your most recent EAD** (if you did OPT previously or received Economic Hardship)
5. **Two passport-sized photographs** (CVS, Walgreens, US Post Office)
   * 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.
6. **Application fee in the amount of $410**
   * You can pay using a regular check, cashiers check, or money order. All of these can be obtained from the bank.
   * Make check payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security.” (See example below.)
   * Write your SEVIS ID# somewhere visible on the check or money order.
7. **New I-20 with OPT requested** (OIA will provide)
8. **Record of Curricular Practical Training** (OIA will provide)
9. **OPT Acknowledgment Form** (page 7 of this packet)
   * This form is for OIA. You won’t send it with your OPT application. If you need help selecting a Start Date leave this section blank.
10. **Copy of Graduation Audit** (NPU will email)
    * This form is for OIA. You won’t send it with your OPT application.

**Sample of Bank Check**

**Text

Description automatically generated with low confidence**

**Submitting the OPT Application**

**Submission Timeline**

USCIS must receive your OPT application within 30 days of the date of issue of your OPT I-20. Allow extra days for shipping so your application is received on time. **Do not leave the U.S. during your grace period without applying for OPT.**

**NEW! OPT Signature Confirmation Delivery Service**

USCIS now uses a process called Signature Confirmation Restricted Delivery to ensure the security, integrity, and efficiency of document delivery. **Applicants must now present identification to sign for their documents upon delivery.** Information on how to track delivery of secure documents is available on the [USCIS website](https://www.uscis.gov/forms/forms-information/how-track-delivery-your-green-card-employment-authorization-document-ead-and-travel-document).

**You can sign up for**[**USPS Informed Delivery**](https://informeddelivery.usps.com/box/pages/intro/start.action)**to receive delivery status notifications**. You can also select the “Hold for Pick Up” on the website to pickup your mail from a post office at a time that’s convenient for you.

**You can designate someone else to sign on your behalf** by completing the Postal Service’s [PS Form 3801, Standing Delivery Order (PDF)](https://about.usps.com/forms/ps3801.pdf). TOP OF FORM: Put your name and your friend’s address on the top line. Get the person who will be accepting your mail to provide their signature and phone number on the second line. CHART: Type your friend’s name in the first column. Check columns 2 and 3. Have your friend provide their signature in column 4. (If a hotel or the apartment where you live will receive your mail, fill out this form: [PS Form 3801-A, Agreement by a Hotel, Apartment House, or the Like (PDF)](https://about.usps.com/forms/ps3801a.pdf)).

**Mailing Your OPT Application**

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| **Use the following address when sending by US Postal Service**:  USCIS PO Box 805373 Chicago, IL 60680  If mailing by USPS use Certified Mail so you will receive a receipt of delivery. | **Use the following address when sending by mail service** **(FedEx, UPS, DHL)**:  USCIS Attn: I-765 C03 131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor Chicago, IL 60603-5517 |

**Waiting for Approval**

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 (Case Number) at <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>
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.
4. **Starting work**: You can begin work 1) once you receive the EAD and 2) your start date is 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 responsible for reporting information related to your OPT employment both to SEVP and OIA**.**

1. **Accessing the SEVP Portal**: On/around your OPT Start Date expect to receive an email from SEVP from the following address: [do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov). Remember to check your spam/junk mail folder! The email will explain how to login to the SEVP Portal. If you do not receive an email or have issues logging in, contact OIA or the SEVP Response Center at (703) 603-3400. You can consult Study in the States for more information about the Portal: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevp-portal-help>.
2. **Using the Portal to Report Employment:** During OPT you must report and make any changes to your OPT employment information directly in the SEVP Portal. For each position you work, you must input the following information:
   * + Name of Company/Organization:
     + EIN Number (if applicable):
     + Address of Company/Organization:
     + Supervisor’s Name:
     + Supervisor’s Phone
     + Supervisor’s Email:
     + Hours per week:
     + Start Date:
     + End Date: (If you were not given an end date, enter the End Date on the EAD Card)
     + Job Title:
     + How Employment Is Related to Course Work: Describe your work responsibilities in as much detail as you can (you can use the job posting as a reference). Then add 1-2 sentences that clearly connect your job duties to courses you took in your academic major. *Example:* “In my daily work I use information and skills gained in my Supply Chain Management and Organizational Change Management courses.”

**3. Reporting to OIA:** We advise students to get a letter from their employer containing the above information for each position worked. ***This is not a regular job offer letter.*** Ask your supervisor to write a letter on company letterhead and sign it. Keep the letter in your records and provide OIA with a copy.

**4. Using the Portal to Update Personal Information:** During OPT you must report changes to your address, email, phone, etc. directly in the SEVP Portal WITHIN 10 DAYS OF THE CHANGE.

**5. Retaining SEVP Portal Information:** You will lose access to the SEVP Portal after OPT. Print out a copy of your information once entered and after making changes.

***USCIS uses the Portal to calculate your unemployment days. If you fail to report OPT employment information within a timely fashion, you risk losing your F-1 status. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, NOT OIA’S, TO REPORT OPT EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION.***

**Employment Guidelines**

OPT employment must relate to your academic major. It must be full time (20+ hrs/week). It should be paid.

* **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.

**Unemployment Regulations**

While on Post-Completion OPT you can be unemployed for a maximum of 90 days. If you exceed 90 days your SEVIS record will be auto-terminated. You will be out of status and must leave the U.S. immediately.

***If you exceed the allowable days of unemployment, you may be denied future immigration benefits.***

**Traveling during OPT**

During OPT you must travel with the following documents:

* Passport
* Visa
* I-20 with OPT Request validated for travel (during OPT the **travel signature is only valid for 6 months**)
* EAD Card
* Letter from employer verifying employment, travel dates, and reason for travel

**Unless absolutely necessary, do not travel outside the U.S. before your OPT is approved!!!**

**STEM OPT**

* **What is STEM OPT?** If you majored in a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) field you are eligible to apply for STEM OPT, which extends your OPT employment authorization for 24-months (2 years). Check Study in the States [STEM OPT Hub](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub) for eligibility requirements, application instructions, and other STEM OPT information.
* **Am I eligible for STEM OPT?** Check whether your major (CIP Code) is designated as a STEM field by the Department of Education: <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/stem-list.pdf>
* **Do I have to have a job before I can apply?** Youmust currently hold a job or have a job offer from an eVerify employer.
* **If I want to apply for STEM OPT what should I do next?** Contact OIA about next steps. You must submit your I-983 to OIA and receive a STEM OPT I-20 before applying for STEM OPT.

**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.

**Acknowledgment of Optional Practical Training Responsibilities**

Please complete this form prior to your OPT appointment.

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| **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 my employment information through the SEVP Portal and understand that my failure to do so may jeopardize my F-1 visa status.
* 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): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_