Optional Practical Training
12 month application
Optional Practical Training for F-1 Students

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is defined by the U.S. government as temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major area of study. An F-1 student can be authorized to receive up to a total of 12 months of practical training either before (pre-) and/or after (post-) completion of studies. Pre-completion OPT is work authorization before the student’s program end date. Students may work up to 20 hours per week while school is in session. Students who are eligible to register for the next term may have approval to work full time when school is not in session. Graduate students are eligible for part or full time pre-completion OPT after completing all course requirements for a degree, excluding thesis or dissertation. Post-completion OPT is work authorization which begins after the student’s program end date.

Eligibility

F-1 students enrolled in a full-time degree-seeking program for one academic year who have maintained legal F-1 status at the time of application are eligible to apply for OPT.

Application Process

Students must initiate the process by requesting a new OPT I-20. Students then file Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). If approved, USCIS will issue an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) to the student. The student may begin employment only after an EAD has been issued and the OPT start date has begun.

Before beginning Step 1, we highly recommend you attend an OPT workshop. Go to the International Affairs website for workshop dates and registration.

Link: http://international.uoregon.edu/index.php/students/employment/305-optional-practical-training-opt

Step 1: Submit the following documents to International Affairs to receive a new SEVIS I-20:

- OPT SEVIS I-20 Request Form (attached)
- Advisor Certification Form (attached)
- I-765 (see instructions on page 3)
- Unofficial Duckweb Transcript
- Current I-20

Step 2: Mail the following documents to:

USCIS Phoenix Lockbox, PO Box 21281, Phoenix, AZ 85036
(Express : USCIS, Attn: AOS, 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S, Suite 100, Phoenix, AZ 85034)

- I-765
- Photocopy of new SEVIS I-20 and CPT I-20s (if you had any CPT work authorization)
- Photocopy of passport identification page
- Photocopy of F1 visa page (even if expired)
- Photocopy of I-94 card (both sides)
- 2 passport-sized photos (taken within last 30 days)
- Check or money order for $380, payable to Department of Homeland Security

Keep a copy of your application documents for your records!
E-Notification
You may choose to receive an email and/or text message notifying you that your application has been accepted. You must complete Form G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance, and clip it to the first page of your application. To download a copy of Form G-1145, click on the link www.uscis.gov “FORMS.”

If you choose not to use the E-Notification system, you will receive a Notice of Action Receipt from USCIS by mail within 2-4 weeks.

Instructions for Completing Form I-765

✓ Download I-765
Link: http://international.uoregon.edu/index.php/students/employment/305-optional-practical-training-opt

First, check box “Permission to accept employment” near the top of the document.

#3 Return Address: This must be an address at which you can receive mail for at least the next 3-4 months. You cannot put in a forwarding order to the U.S. postal service on this address because the immigration service envelopes state “Do Not Forward.” If the OPT card is sent to an address with a forwarding order, or if you cannot receive mail at the address you use, your card will be returned to the immigration service and destroyed.

You must use an Oregon address. You can either use your home address, or if you use a friend’s address you must write your name, c/o your friend’s name and address.

#10 Alien Registration Number of I-94 Number: You should write your I-94 number found on the I-94 card (white card stapled into your passport) that you received when you last entered the U.S.

#11 Previous employment authorization: If you applied for OPT in the past under another degree program, answer “yes” and complete the requested information. If not, then answer “no.”

#12 Date of last entry: you can find this date stamped on your I-94 card.

#13 Place of last entry: you can find the last port of entry stamped on your I-94 card.

#14 Manner of last entry: this refers to your visa status the last time you entered the U.S. For example, “F-1 student.”

#15 Current immigration status: you should write F-1 student. If you believe your visa status is other than F-1, please talk to an international student advisor in the office of International Affairs.

#16 Eligibility categories: if you applying for pre-completion OPT, write (c) (3) (A). If you are applying for post-completion OPT, write (c) (3) (B).

Certification: remember to sign, date and list a home or cell phone number.
Regulations to Maintain F-1 Status

General
✓ You must maintain your F-1 status by being employed (part time or full time; paid or unpaid) 9 out of 12 months of your OPT period.

✓ You may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days unemployment during your OPT period.

✓ Your OPT work authorization begins when you receive the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and your OPT start date arrives.

✓ You must update your address and employment information with the office of International Affairs within 10 days of any change. Download OPT Update Form and email to sevis@uoregon.edu. (The OPT Update Form link is below)

✓ International travel during your OPT period is allowed only if you have proof of employment or practical training related to your major. You must have a valid F-1 visa to enter the U.S. each time your travel outside the U.S.

Unemployment Allowance
For post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Each day you are not working during your OPT period counts as a day of unemployment. The only exception is that periods of up to 10 days between the end of one job and the beginning of the next job will not be included in the calculation for time spent unemployed. If you travel outside the U.S. while unemployed, the time spent outside the U.S. will count as unemployment against the 90 day limit.

Student Reporting Requirements
You must report any changes to the information listed below within 10 working days to International Affairs using the OPT Update Form.

- Your legal name and UO ID number
- SEVIS identification number (in top right-hand corner of I-20)
- Your residential address
- Your non-UO email address
- Employer name and address
- Employment start date for the current employer
- Employment end date for last employer (if more than 10 days of unemployment)
- Date of leaving the U.S. (if prior to the end date of your OPT)

OPT Update Form: http://international.uoregon.edu/index.php/students/opt-current-students
Frequently Asked Questions

When should I apply?
You should begin the application process one term before you complete your academic program or wish to start working. You may apply for pre-completion OPT up to 90 days before your requested OPT start date. You may apply for post-completion OPT up to 90 days before the last day of the final term of study, or up to 60 days after the last day of the final term of study.

How do I choose my OPT start and end date?
For pre-completion OPT, your start date will depend on your employment start date. You should talk to an international student advisor in the office of International Affairs about your particular situation. There may be other options available to you including Curricular Practical Training. For post-completion OPT, you can choose an OPT start date within the first 60 days following the last day of the final term of study. The requested end date cannot be more than 12 months after the requested start date.

Is a job offer required to apply for OPT?
A job offer is not required to apply for OPT. However, you must secure some type of practical training related to your major within 90 days of your OPT start date.

Can I continue to work on-campus?
On-campus work is only allowed while you are a student. You cannot work after you complete your degree requirements and your program ends. You cannot work until you receive your EAD card and your OPT start date has begun.

What happens if I fail to complete the requirements for my program after I have applied for post-completion OPT?
You should contact the office of International Affairs and schedule an appointment with an international student advisor. Depending on the status of your OPT application, your SEVIS record will need to be updated. You may work part time while enrolled in courses to complete the requirements for your program.

What types of employment are allowed?
All OPT employment must be directly related to the student’s major field of study and commensurate with the degree level. The following types of paid and unpaid employment are considered valid OPT activities according to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and should be reported to International Affairs using the OPT Update Form.

Paid Employment. Students may work part-time (at least 20 hours per week when on post-completion OPT) or full-time.

- Multiple employers. Students may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the student’s degree program.

- Short-term multiple employers (performing artists). Students, such as musicians and other performing artists may work for multiple short-term employers (gigs.) The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration. If requested by DHS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing a list of all gigs.

- Work for hire. This is also commonly referred to as 1099 independent contractors where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. If requested by DHS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.
Frequently Asked Questions continued

• Self-employed business owner. Students may start a business and be self-employed. In this situation, the student must work full-time. The student must be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to the student’s degree program.

• Employment through an agency. Students must be able to provide evidence showing they worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.

Unpaid Employment. Students may serve as volunteers, unpaid interns, researchers, community service workers, etc., where this does not violate any labor laws. These students must be able to provide evidence from the organization that the student performed services at least 20 hours per week during the OPT period.

How do I show that employment is directly related to my major?
You should maintain evidence – for each job – of the position held, proof of the duration of that position, the job title, contact information for your supervisor or manager and a description of the work. If it is not clear from the job description that the work is related to your major, you should obtain a signed letter from your supervisor or manager stating how your major is related to the work performed.

What is my visa status while on OPT?
Your visa status remains F-1 while you are on OPT. You must follow the guidelines above to maintain F-1 status while on OPT. If you travel internationally, your F-1 visa must still be valid to re-enter the U.S.

Can I travel internationally while my OPT application is pending?
If you filed a timely application for OPT, you may travel outside the U.S. while the OPT application is pending. However, you must present a Notice of Action Receipt (I-797) as proof of eligibility, along with your OPT SEVIS I-20, valid F-1 visa, valid passport and evidence of job search. If you are unsure of your travel plans and visa status, please schedule an appointment to meet with an International Student Adviser by calling 346-3206.

Can I travel internationally during my OPT period?
If you travel outside the U.S. during your OPT period provided you re-enter the U.S. within 5 months of your departure. You must also be prepared to present the following:
• valid passport (with expiration date more than 6 months in the future)
• valid F-1 visa
• OPT SEVIS I-20 signed by an international student advisor within the past 5 months
• unexpired EAD
• evidence of job or practical training (for example, a letter from your employer)

Can I study while on OPT?
For pre-completion OPT, you must maintain legal F1 status by enrolling full-time. You can work part-time while school is in session, and full-time during holiday breaks and summer vacation. For post-completion OPT, you cannot study full-time during your OPT period because the main purpose of OPT is to gain practical experience in your field. However, if you fail to complete the requirements for your program after applying for post-completion OPT, you should contact an international student advisor in the office of International Affairs immediately for guidance. Transferring to another school or enrolling in another academic program automatically terminates your OPT benefit.
Frequently Asked Questions continued

What if I can’t find a job or internship?
You may accrue up to 90 days of unemployment while on post-completion OPT. If you are having difficulty finding a job or practical training, or if you lose your job, continue to dedicate your full effort to looking for a job and keep documentation that can demonstrate the job search. For example, you should keep a list of employers you have contacted, where you have sent resumes, calls you have made, interviews you have had, and time you have spent researching companies. Such documentation would be expected to justify gaps in employment.

What are the consequences of exceeding the 90-day period of unemployment?
To avoid violating status, prior to reaching the limit on authorized unemployment, you should prepare to transfer to another school, change education level, depart the U.S., or take action to otherwise maintain your status in the U.S. If you exceed the period of unemployment while on post-completion OPT, your F-1 status ends unless you have taken one of the following actions:
- applied to continue your education by a change of level or transfer to another school
- departed the U.S.
- taken action to otherwise maintain legal status

How will the Department of Homeland Security enforce this unemployment rule?
You may be denied future immigration benefits that rely on your valid F-1 status if the Department of Homeland Security determines that you exceeded the limitations on authorized employment. Additionally, U.S. immigration may examine SEVIS data and terminate your record if it fails to show you maintained the proper period of employment. In such cases, you will be given an opportunity to show that you complied with all OPT requirements, including maintaining employment.

What happens after my OPT period ends?
Following your OPT end date, you have a 60-day grace period. You can neither work nor study during this grace period unless you change or visa status or begin a new academic program.

What if I move?
Within 10 days of moving, you must report any change of address to the office of International Affairs on the OPT Update Form.

Can I change employers?
You may work for more than one employer and/or change employers during OPT provided that each position is directly related to your major. You must report all changes in employment to the office of International Affairs on the OPT Update Form.

Who do I talk to if I have questions?
You can talk to an international student advisor in the office of International Affairs. Please call 541-346-3206 to schedule an appointment to meet with or talk to an advisor. International Affairs also conducts OPT workshops throughout the year to explain the application process as well as immigration regulations pertaining to OPT.
Include with this completed form:
1. Your Current I-20
2. Advisor certification form
3. Completed I-765 form

Personal information

Family Name, First Name, Middle Name
UO Student ID

Visa Type
SEVIS I-20 Number
Non-OU Email
Admit Term
I-20 Expiration Date

Level
Major
# of credits this term
Cum GPA
Phone Number

1. When do you expect to graduate? _______________ term ___________ / ___________ year
2. Do you have a spouse or children with you in the U.S.? ☐ Yes ☐ No (Check “Yes” only if they are your dependent)

Verify financial support for you and any dependents

☐ Yes, I am able to meet my financial obligations for this academic year.
☐ No, I am unable to meet my financial obligations for this academic year.

If no, please explain: ___________________________________________________________________

List OPT dates

Proposed OPT begin date: _______________ mm / dd / yyyy
Proposed OPT end date: _______________ mm / dd / yyyy

Signature I certify that the above information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Student ___________________________________________ Date ________________________

Office Use: In Status Initial OPT Approved Initial Database Initial SEVIS Initial

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
Office of International Affairs
To: Academic Advisor & Office of Registrar
From: International Student Advisor
UO Office of International Programs
Subject: ADVISOR CERTIFICATION FORM

International students in F-1 visa status have an employment benefit known as Optional Practical Training (OPT). This benefit is designed to allow students to work in jobs related to their field of study and commensurate with their level of academic training. Students are eligible for OPT in specific circumstances:

- During annual vacation periods and when school is not in session if the student has been in good academic standing and intends to register the following term.
- While school is in session, provided the practical training does not exceed twenty (20) hours/week.
- After completion of course requirements for their degree (excluding required thesis, dissertation, project, recital, or portfolio).
- After completion of all degree major requirements (usually last registered term)

Your role is to help the Office of International Programs verify the student's eligibility for OPT. This certification remains in the student's file and enables us to endorse supporting documents that the student will ultimately send to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

SECTION I—ACADEMIC ADVISOR
(FOR UNDERGRADUATES AND GRADUATE STUDENTS)

This is to certify that ___________________________ is currently enrolled at the University of Oregon in pursuit of a __________________________ degree and is applying for OPT (check one of the following):

- During the annual vacation period or for part-time work while school is in session (Section II not required under this option.)
- After completion of course requirements for their degree excluding required thesis, dissertation, project, recital, or portfolio).
- After completion of all degree major requirements (usually last registered term). The student has completed or expects to complete their studies on ______________________ (last day of classes).

Advisor Signature   Printed Name   Department         Date

SECTION II—OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR
(FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY)

It is possible for the above named undergraduate student to meet all degree requirements by ____________________________ (expected graduation date to be supplied by undergraduate student).

Graduation Specialist Signature   Printed Name   Department         Date

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS
5209 University of Oregon, Eugene OR 97403-5209 ☎ (541) 346-3206 ✆ (541) 346-1232 http://oip.uoregon.edu
An equal-opportunity, affirmative-action institution committed to cultural diversity and compliance with the ADA.