



OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR STUDENTS ON F-1 VISAS

Summary: Optional Practical Training (OPT) is employment authorization granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). OPT enables a student to gain work experience in his or her field of study. It may be used during or after completion of a program.

- There are three categories of optional practical training (see the section “Three Categories” below).
- OPT must be recommended by the Office of International Admissions (OIA). Immigration provides authorization through the issuance of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).
- You must be in possession of the EAD before you can begin employment.
- Part-time OPT is available on a pre-completion basis only after one year of course work.
- Part-time employment authorization is defined as 20 hours per week or less. Full-time is more than 20 hours per week. On-campus work hours must be included when determining total work hours.
- Part-time OPT authorization (20 hours/week or less) is deducted from the total 12 months at one-half the full-time rate.
- A job offer is not required
- OPT authorization granted by immigration cannot be changed, voided, or restored if you do not secure employment within the dates of authorization.
- A 12-month period of OPT is available per degree program as long as the subsequent degree(s) is at a higher educational level.

Eligibility Requirements: To qualify you must:

- Have been enrolled in the U.S. for full-time studies for one full academic year AND,
- Be in valid F-1 status AND,
- Be in good academic standing AND,
- Have not regained legal status through re-entry during the previous academic year.

Three Categories:

1. Summer Vacation or Semester Break Periods.
 - Authorization can be part-time or full-time. Student must be registered for the next semester.
2. While School is in session (Pre-Completion). Limited to part-time authorization. Total hours under this category cannot exceed 20 hours/week, on and off campus.
3. Post-Completion Practical Training. All requirements for your degree, including submission of thesis, must be complete. The completion date is the date all requirements have been met – not the official graduation date. Authorization is granted for full-time employment.

When to Apply:

Pre-Completion Application: 4 months before your requested “employment begin date”.

Post-Completion Application: 3 months before your expected date of completion. The application must be submitted to immigration before all requirements for the program of study have been completed. Students may not submit an OPT application after completion of studies.

Important: To obtain pre-completion OPT you must apply no sooner than 120 days before beginning employment. To obtain post-completion OPT U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) must have received your application **NO LATER THAN 60 days FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF THE DEGREE AND NO SOONER THAN NINETY (90) DAYS PRIORS TO THE DATE OF COMPLETION OF THE DEGREE. Please note: USCIS must receive your OPT application within 30 days of the DSO’s recommendation in SEVIS. This date is on the second page of your updated I-20.**

To obtain the **17 month STEM** extension USCIS must receive your application no later than the date your current EAD card expires, but preferably 120 days prior to the date the EAD card expires. We encourage all students to make application no later than the graduation date. Your lawful F-1 status expires 60 days after the date you complete your degree requirements. You are expected to leave the country by that date **UNLESS** you have filed a **TIMELY** application for OPT or a status change which will allow you to remain in the U.S.

Step 1: Apply to OIA for new I-20 with recommendation for OPT. OIA must process a recommendation for your OPT request. Please submit the following items to OIA. OIA cannot accept your application for processing unless all of these items are completed and submitted:

- Student Request/Academic Advisor Verification Form
- Form I-765
- Reduced Course Load Forms (if applicable)
- Unofficial Transcript
- Valid passport/I-94

It will take OIA approximately one week to process the recommendation for practical training. You are responsible for submitting your application to immigration.

Immigration Application Procedure:

- Immigration requires that your middle name be included on Form I-765. If you do not have a middle name, write “None” in parentheses.
- Immigration requires a fee to process an application (the fee printed on the Form I-765 might not be accurate).
- Your application must be mailed to the USCIS service center that has jurisdiction over the address you have specified on Form I-765. If you intend to relocate to another state for employment, please discuss your plans with OIA. Note: immigration has instructed the postal service to return to sender any mail not deliverable to the addressee, even if a forwarding address is on file with the post office. If you do not plan to relocate, your EAD card must be mailed to OIA.

- It may take as long 45 to 120 days for the service center to process your request and mail your employment authorization document (EAD) to you.
- Several weeks after your application has been received by USCIS, you should receive a receipt in the mail from USCIS. If 90 days have passed since the “received date” on the receipt, you may apply for an interim EAD through a district immigration office (downtown Columbus).
- You cannot begin employment until you have received the EAD. Any employment, including on-campus, after the completion date noted on your OPT application must be under OPT (i.e. if your OPT application reflects a 6/30/xx completion date, any employment in which you plan to participate after 6/30 must be under OPT authorization, even if you do not complete your program by that date). The EAD will reflect the dates of your employment authorization. OIA is not able to make requests to the service center for special handling of applications.

Step 2: Submit the following items to immigration:

- The application must be submitted to immigration before all requirements for the program of study have been completed.
- Form I-765 (send original, keep copy for your records)
- Photocopy of I-20 page 1 and 3 with OPT recommendation (sign page 1 before copying)
- Photocopy of Form I-94.
- Two color photos. The instructions with the I-765 provide detailed information on the photo requirements. You need to print your full name and most recent 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 your application.
- Photocopies of the identity page of your passport and visa with entry visa stamp. Due to the potential for fraud, immigration will not mail your EAD directly to you unless they are able to verify your identity through one or more of these photocopies. Be sure that the photocopies are of good quality, clear and distinct. If immigration does not feel you have provided sufficient identity verification, your EAD will be mailed to the local immigration office, and you will be asked to pick up personally in order to verify your identity.
- A check or money order payable to “Department of Homeland Security” in the correct amount. Check with the USCIS website:
<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>

Staple your application materials together in the following order:

Form I-765, photocopy of I-20, copies of identity verification, and the photocopy of your I-94.

The small pieces (bag/envelope containing photos and your check) should be placed on top and stapled with the entire application. Do not put staple holes in your photos. Mail your application by registered or express mail to obtain a signed receipt.

Complying with SEVIS Requirements: Please be aware of the following:

- While on OPT, you are still in F-1 status at OTTERBEIN
- If you have applied for post-completion OPT, you must make your best effort to complete all degree requirements by the completion date of your new I-20.
- Enrollment/transfer to another school will result in automatic cancellation of post completion OPT.
- Update your current mailing address through OTTERBEIN Banner **and** with OIA, as this information must be passed on to immigration through SEVIS.
- Notify OIA if you decide to permanently depart the U.S. during your authorized OPT.
- Notify OIA if you change your visa status during your authorized OPT.
- OIA is required to have a copy of your EAD. Upon receipt of the EAD, please email a copy of it to OIA at jseymour@otterbein.edu.
- If an F-1 international student witnesses fraudulent activity by an OPT recruiter or company, the student should contact the ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) tip line at 1-866-DHS-2ICE or www.ICE.gov/tips. Victims and witnesses of criminal activity may be eligible for immigration relief.
- International students participating in OPT must understand and abide by OPT regulations to maintain their nonimmigrant status.
- International students who rely on recruitment agencies to obtain OPT placements should ensure those agencies are trustworthy and reputable. Reputable recruiters will not modify a student's resume or academic background to secure OPT placement.
- International students who encounter fraudulent activity tied to OPT should contact the HSI tip line immediately and make a report.
- For more information about OPT regulations, visit the Practical Training section of the ICE website (<https://www.ice.gov/sevis/practical-training>) or the Training Opportunities in the United States page on Study in the States (<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/training-opportunities-in-the-united-state>)

Students may travel and return during the pendency of an OPT application when the program has not been completed and the student is returning to complete classes. After completion of study, the student is not eligible to reenter the U.S. in F-1 status without the EAD and job offer letter. Students may reenter after the EAD has been issued **only to resume employment**. Without a job there is no eligibility to travel and you may not receive a reentry endorsement. Students will also need a valid F-1 stamp to reenter while on OPT. Students who have expired visas should be cautioned that obtaining a visa while on OPT is not automatic.



INSTRUCTIONS
STUDENT REQUEST/ ACADEMIC ADVISOR VERIFICATION
(F-1 Optional Practical Training)

1. **Name, Otterbein ID:** Self Explanatory
2. **Email:** Self Explanatory
3. **Telephone (Home and Office):** Telephone numbers in the U.S.
4. **Completion Date noted on I-20:** Self Explanatory
5. **Field of Study:** Must be field that appears on your I-20
 - a. **Degree Program:** Must be the degree program that appears on your I-20
6. **Type of Optional Practical Training:** Check the appropriate box and complete additional information requested. Note: On-campus work under student status will not be possible after the graduation date you choose for post-completion OPT.
7. **Dates of OPT Request:** Fill in beginning/ending dates you are requesting. Post-completion OPT start date must be within 60 days after the completion date.
 - a. **Hours per week:** Indicate the number of hours/week you will be working under OPT. If you are applying for post-completion OPT, your application must specify 40 hours/week.
8. **Employer Name and Location:** Complete if known
9. **Describe Proposed Employment:** Complete if you do not have a job offer. Your description should indicate how your employment will be related to your field of study.

Read and Sign the Statement

Academic Advisor Verification

The form must be signed by your academic advisor in your university office if you are a professional, undergraduate, or non-degree seeking student.

Recommendation

Will be completed by OIA upon submission of application.



F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING STUDENT REQUEST AND ACADEMIC ADVISOR VERIFICATION

STUDENT REQUEST

1. Student's Name (Please Print):

Otterbein ID # (if known): _____ Email:

2. Phone: _____

3. Completion date noted on I-20 *: _____

4. Field of Study noted on I-20: _____ Degree Program:

(i.e.

BA, BS, MAE, MBA)

5. Type of optional practical training

Vacation practical training

Pre-completion – while school is in session

I will work _____ on the campus and _____ hours off the campus during the dates I am requesting

OPT authorization.

Post-completion practical training

I will complete all requirements for my degree, including thesis submission, by (date):

***Note: On-campus work will not be possible after this date under student status.**

6. Dates of the OPT request _____ to _____ hours per week: _____

***Note: These dates cannot be changed once they have been entered in SEVIS.**

7. Employer name and location (city/state), if known:

8. Describe your 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 ADVISOR VERIFICATION

To the Academic Advisor: The student is applying to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) for Optional Practical Training which is work authorization for employment directly related to the student’s major field of study as noted on his/her form I-20 (see I-20 information above to verify major and degree program). The student is not required to have an employment offer to apply. Your verification of the information the student has provided is needed to insure that OTTERBEIN UNIVERSITY is in compliance with immigration law. If you have questions, please call OIA at 614-823-3263.

I agree with the information

I disagree with the information

Academic Advisor Signature: _____ Date:

Name (Please Print): _____ Phone:

Department: _____

Comments:

RECOMMENDATION

TO BE COMPLETED BY OIA STAFF

Completion Date: _____

OPT Dates: _____ -

End Date: _____

- Pre Post Vacation
- Part-time Full-time Financial Info
- Program Plan Holds

No. of Months: _____

Passport Expiration: _____

F-1 Visa Expiration: _____

Date submitted to OIA: _____