

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Instructions

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is OPT? Optional Practical Training (OPT) is up to one year of temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study. While practical training restricts the kind of work you do, it does not restrict you to a particular job or location.

Who is eligible?

In order to qualify for post-completion OPT, you must:

- Accrue less than a total of one year of any full-time curricular practical training (CPT),
- Be in lawful status for at least one academic year (generally nine months),
- Submit your OPT application so that it is received by USCIS between 90 days before and 60 days after the completion of your program—USCIS must receive your OPT I-20 within 30 days of the Designated School Official's signature date,
- Receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and wait until your OPT start date.

How do I receive authorization for OPT? You must submit an application to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). See the detailed steps below (Application Procedure).

When do I apply? Post-completion OPT may only begin after the completion of your studies. Students can apply for OPT 90 days prior to their completion of studies date and up to 60 days after completion of studies. The application process for the EAD card, through USCIS, takes approximately 90 days to complete.

How long may I work?

- Availability extends for one 12-month period directly after each higher educational level and may not be carried over if not used from one level to another.
- Any authorized Pre-Completion OPT or Curricular Practical Training (CPT) months are deducted from the available 12 months.

When does my F-1 status expire?

- 60 days after completion of your studies if you do not apply for OPT or
- 60 days following completion of your OPT.
- Your OPT is automatically terminated when you transfer your SEVIS record to another school or begin study at another educational level with a new I-20.

May I travel?

- We advise you not to leave the United States between your program end date and when you receive your employment card. Such travel is considered an abandonment of your application, and you may be ineligible to reapply.
- If your OPT has been approved:
 - If you travel before you get a job, you may not be able to reenter unless you have a written job offer.
 - If you have a job, you may travel and reenter to resume employment. However, this travel time is added to your total of allotted unemployment days unless authorized by your employer. See the explanation of unemployment days under Requirements.

REQUIREMENTS

- Your employment must be related to your degree, may be paid or unpaid and must be for at least 20 hours per week or full-time if you are self employed.
- You should keep records for each employment experience including the position held, proof of the duration of that position, the job title, contact information of the supervisor and a description of the work.
- You may accrue no more than 90 days of unemployment—exceeding this time limit will cause you to lose your status.
 - Each day during the period when OPT authorization begins and ends that you do not have qualifying employment 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 will not be included in the total.
 - If you travel outside the U.S. while unemployed counts in the calculation.
 - If you travel while employed either during a period of authorized leave or as part of your employment, the time spent outside the U.S. will not count as unemployment if authorized by your employer.
- USCIS has placed responsibility upon you to report any employment events as defined below within 10 days.
- All students are required to report to the International Student Program office via email (isp@yvcc.edu) or in person within 10 days any changes to the following information:
 - Name
 - Residential address
 - Phone and email address
 - Employer name
 - Employer address
 - Employment

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Because your EAD will only be delivered to the address listed in your application, if you are planning to move, you may elect to list our office address on your I-765 (1113 South 14th Avenue, Yakima, WA 98902). However, if you do, you must keep your address, email and phone up-to-date with the International Student Program office so we can reach you when your EAD arrives.

Step 1 - Submit the following to International Student Program office:

- Signed letter from your academic advisor on letterhead stating your degree title and expected completion date,
- Completed Optional Practical Training Request form which will result in a new Form I-20 recommending your OPT,
- Completed Application for Employment Authorization [Form I-765](#) - answer Item #16 with (c) (3) (B).

Step 2 - Five days later return to International Student Program office and do the following:

- o Pick up, sign and copy your new Form I-20

Step 3 - Mail your application paying attention to the following:

- It is advisable to make a copy of everything you send to USCIS for your personal records.
- Assemble your application materials in the following order (do not staple the following items together):
 - o Completed [Form I-765](#)
 - o **\$380 check** - preferred - or money order payable to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
 - o Copy of your new application Form I-20, properly endorsed, showing recommendation of your OPT and dated within 30 days of USCIS receipt (DO NOT MAIL THE ORIGINAL SIGNED I-20)
 - o Copies of all previous Form I-20s if you have participated in Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
 - o Copy of your [Form I-94](#) Departure Record (front and back)
 - o Copy of your passport
 - o Copy of F-1 Visa
 - o Two identical passport-style color photos of yourself taken within 30 days of filling - recommended that you place them in a small plastic bag
 - o Copy of your last EAD (front and back) if you have received one. If no prior EAD has been issued, you must submit a copy of your federal government issued identity document, such as passport showing your picture, name, and date of birth; a birth certificate with photo ID; a visa issued by a foreign consulate; or a national ID document with photo and/or fingerprint. The identity document photocopy must clearly show your facial features and your biographical information.
 - o (Optional): Clip a completed form [G-1145](#) (E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance) to the front of the first immigration form, if you wish to receive an electronic notification (e-mail and/or text message) of your application.
- We recommend that you use certified return receipt mail as you send your materials to:
(for U.S. Postal Service deliveries)
[USCIS](#)
[PO Box 21281](#)
[Phoenix, AZ 85036](#)

Step 4 - After you have sent your application to the USCIS Service Center:

- Wait until your EAD arrives before you start working.
- Make sure that you fax, send or leave a copy of your EAD with International Student Program office.
- Report your employment information as described above as soon as your OPT begins.
- Report any changes in the above information within 10 days and confirm it again every six months even if there have been no changes.
- Terminate your employment when your EAD expires or when you transfer your SEVIS record to another school or begin study at another educational level with a new I-20 whichever occurs earliest.

Change of Address

If you move during the processing of your OPT application to an address not in your application materials, within 10 days of the move submit the information to both places listed below:

1. USCIS, using [Electronic AR-11](#) to inform those processing your application of your new address.
2. YVC, contacting the International Student Program office (isp@yvcc.edu) to update your personal information.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Please contact the International Student Program office for additional questions.

Phone (509) 574-4885
FAX (509) 574-4747
E-mail isp@yvcc.edu