



## Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training (OPT) allows F-1 students to engage in work that is directly related to their major area of study for 12 months during the 14 months after they complete their programs. You may be authorized for temporary employment:

- after you have finished your degree or after completing OPT (most students choose this option) **OR**
- while you are still pursuing your course of study or before completing OPT (very rare)

You may:

- apply for Post Completion OPT **90 days (3 months)** before you anticipate beginning work. Because completion dates for Doctoral students vary, please meet with an International Advisor before applying.
- have been in F-1 status and enrolled full time for at least 1 academic year before OPT may begin

You may use OPT

- during your annual vacation and other times when school is not in session if you are currently enrolled, eligible, and intend to register for the next semester
- while school is in session, provided that practical training does not exceed 20 hours per week
- after completion of course requirements for your degree and work up to 40 hours per week

### First Step:

- Complete form I-765 online at [www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf).
  - For item 16 enter **(C) (3) (B)**
  - Leave item 17 blank
- Make sure you will remain at the address you list for at least the next 3 months; **use the CIE office address if you think you might be moving in the near future:**  
Center for International Education  
Campus Box 52  
Greeley, CO 80639
- Have two recent (within 30 days) passport photographs taken and lightly print your name and 1-94 number with a pencil on the back of each photo.
- Make sure your passport is valid
- Write a check or money order for \$340, payable to: **Department of Homeland Security** (Do NOT abbreviate)
- Decide on a start date and end date for your OPT employment: Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Second Step:

Bring to CIE

- Your completed form I-765
  - your passport
  - your I-94
  - your check or money order
  - two passport photographs
- The advisor will:
- Recommend OPT in your SEVIS record
  - Print and give you a new SEVIS I-20
  - Review your application
  - Photocopy your documents

### Third Step:

The advisor will submit your assembled application to USCIS:

- Your check or money order
- Form I-765
- Your new SEVIS I-20
- A copy of Form I-94 (front and back)
- Copies of your passport
- Your two passport photos

**YOU MUST HAVE AN EAD IN YOUR POSSESSION BEFORE YOU CAN BEGIN WORK**



## I Applied for OPT- Now What?

While on OPT you are still in F-1 status and you must still maintain ties with the University of Northern Colorado and CIE as your SEVIS record remains active through us.

- Please bring CIE a copy of:
  - The receipt notice you should receive 2 weeks after applying
  - Your card (your “EAD” - “Employment Authorization Document”) in the letter in which it was enclosed
- To check on the progress of your application, go to <https://egov.immigration.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp> and type in your receipt number (i.e., LIN0123456789). This site is updated when applications are processed, and states the mailing date EAD’s or requests for information
- Travel after applying for OPT:
  - You may travel **while** your application for OPT is **pending**. If you have not completed your program travel is the same as has been during your stay as an F-1 student.
  - If you travel after your application for OPT has been approved, but before you find a job, you may **not** reenter the U.S.
  - Once your application for OPT has been approved and you have a job, you may travel out of the US and reenter only to resume work at the same job. You must present a letter from your employer verifying your employment when you reenter the U.S.
  - You still need to first obtain a travel signature on your I-20 from a DSO at UNC. You will need to carry:
    - your I-20, signed within the last six months
    - your EAD (OPT card)
    - your valid F-1 visa
    - your valid passport
    - your employer’s letter
- CIE must maintain a current SEVIS record for you, you must notify us when you
  - change your physical address or name
  - get or change employment
  - leave the U.S. permanently
  - change your status to something else (for example, if you become a permanent resident, or H-1 B). Provide a copy of your approval notice so that we can terminate your record in SEVIS
- Drivers Licenses can be renewed only for the dates on your EAD.
- If unemployed for more than a total of 90 days OPT may be terminated and you will be required to leave the US
- Authorization for OPT will be automatically terminated if you enroll again as a full time student
- You may be eligible to extend OPT for an additional 17 months. Minimum qualifications include:
  - Degree field in **Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM)**
  - Currently employed or have a job offer
  - Employer must be enrolled in E-Verify

If you have any further questions about OPT, your immigration status, or SEVIS, please contact an International Advisor at the Center for International Education at 970-351-2396. You may also email us at [cie@unco.edu](mailto:cie@unco.edu).