

## 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 program (most students choose this option)  
**OR**
- Before you have finished your program, but after you have completed all course work (very rare)

The earliest you may apply for Post Completion OPT is **90 days (3 months)** before your program completion date, the latest you can begin is 60 days after you complete your program. The latest we recommend applying is 30 days after your program completion date.

You must be 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 full-time

### FIRST STEP

- Complete form I-765 online at [www.uscis.gov/i-765](http://www.uscis.gov/i-765)
  - Part 2, Question #5
    - Make sure you will remain at the address you list for at least the next 3 months. USCIS will **not** allow any of your documents to be forwarded to a new address if you no longer live there.  
**NOTE: You may use the CIE office address if you might be moving in the near future.**
      - 5a. University of Northern Colorado
      - 5b. CIE - Campus Box 52
      - 5c. Leave Blank
      - 5d. Greeley
      - 5e. CO
      - 5f. 80639
  - If you use an address other than your own for Part 2 Question #5, select "No" to Part 2 Question #6
  - Provide your Physical Address in the fields for Part 2 Question #7
  - The I-765 allows you to apply for a social security card at the same time you apply for work authorization. If you wish to apply for a new or replacement social security card, select "Yes" to Part 2 Question #14. If you already have a social security card, select "No" and skip to question 18.a.
  - For item 27 enter **(C) (3) (B)**
  - Leave items 28-31.b blank
  - **Use Part 6. Additional Information** to provide all previously used SEVIS numbers and evidence of any previously authorized CPT or OPT and the academic level at which it was authorized.
- To receive optional e-notifications, complete form G-1145 at: [www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf)
- Two recent (within 30 days) passport photographs (available at CIE for \$10.00)
- Copies of any previous EAD cards
- Make sure your passport is valid at least 6 months into the future when applying.
- Write a check or money order for \$410 to: **U.S. Department of Homeland Security** (do **NOT** abbreviate)
- Decide on a start date and end date for your OPT employment
- Schedule an appointment with CIE to complete the application process, allow for 30 minutes

### SECOND STEP

Bring to CIE:

- Your completed form I-765
- Your passport

- Your F-1 Student Visa w/ most recent arrival stamp
- Your I-94 (found at [www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94))
- Your I-20's listing any authorized CPT
- Your check or money order for \$410
- Two passport photographs
- Your G-1145 (optional)

### THIRD STEP

The international advisor at CIE will:

- Recommend OPT in your SEVIS record
- Print and give you a new SEVIS I-20
- Photocopy your documents
- Review your application
- CIE will mail your materials for you. If you choose to mail it yourself, submit your assembled application to USCIS within 30 days of your new I-20 being issued.

## **YOU MUST HAVE AN EAD IN YOUR POSSESSION BEFORE STARTING 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 (or CIE if mailing here) 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 [www.USCIS.gov](http://www.USCIS.gov) then click “Check your Case Status” and type in your receipt number (i.e., YSC0123456789). This site is updated when applications are processed, and states the mailing date EAD's or requests for information
- Travel and reentry after applying for OPT:
  - Prior to graduation travel is the same as before you applied for OPT
  - You may travel while your application for OPT is **pending**, although this is not recommended. You will need to carry with you a copy of your receipt notice for reentry into the US.
  - Once your OPT has been approved, you must keep with you your EAD document for travel. It is recommended that you also have a letter from your employer for reentry into the US.
  - You still need to first obtain a travel signature on your I-20 from a DSO at UNC. Travel signatures must be dated within 6 months while you are on OPT. You will need to carry:
    - your I-20, signed within the last year
    - your EAD (OPT card)
    - your valid F-1 visa
    - your valid passport
    - letter of employment (optional)
- CIE must maintain a current SEVIS record for you, you must notify us when you
  - change your physical address or name
  - obtain 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 could 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 24 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 [international.advising@unco.edu](mailto:international.advising@unco.edu).