

F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

What is OPT?

Optional Practical Training is practical work experience in your field of study. OPT employment authorization is granted for 12 months typically after completion of a degree. There are no OPT extensions beyond 12 months except for the students who qualify for the 17-month extension.

Special 17-month OPT Extension:

Students who graduate from STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields and whose employer is enrolled in E-Verify program may qualify for an additional 17 month OPT extension. Please refer to the OPT extension application for further details about this option.

Who is Eligible?

- Students who are in F-1 status and have been enrolled on a full-time basis for at least nine months; **and**
- Who will be completing a course of study this semester or in the near future; **and**
- Whose proposed OPT employment will be directly related to their course of study.

When to Apply for OPT?

A student can apply for an OPT up to 90 days prior to the end of his/her program end date and up to 60 days after his/her program end date.

Though it is possible to file the I-765 (OPT) after graduation, we do not recommend doing so as the USCIS processing times vary and you may lose some of your 12-month employment authorization.

Please Note: If you plan to spend your last semester outside of the US, you might not be eligible for OPT. Please consult with an OISS advisor.

Reporting Requirements while on OPT

All students on OPT are required to report to the OISS at Michigan State University:

- any change of name or address, or
- any interruption of employment

Any name or address change should be reported through MSU Registrar's office:

<http://www.reg.msu.edu> Click on "Address Changes" and use "local address" to report your address change. Any interruption of employment should be reported to OISS.

Students with an approved 17-month OPT extension have additional reporting requirements. Please refer to the OPT extension application for further information.

Employment requirements to maintain Status while on OPT

- During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment.
- Employment **MUST** be related to the field of study.

- The employment does NOT have to be paid employment. Therefore, a student who is engaged in “free-lance” employment (including performance majors with regular “gigs”), interning, or volunteering in a position directly related to the academic field would be considered “employed” for the purposes of OPT employment.
- Students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT.
- Employment authorization will begin on the date requested or the date the employment authorization is adjudicated (approved), whichever is later.
- Students must comply with the employment reporting requirements.

H-1B cap-gap extension of D/S and work authorization until October 1.

Duration of visa status and work authorization will be extended for a student on OPT who is the beneficiary of a H-1B petition filed in a timely manner requesting an employment start date of October 1 of the following fiscal year. This would apply to all students on OPT. The extension of duration of status and work authorization would automatically terminate upon the rejection, denial, or revocation of the H-1B petition filed on the student's behalf.

Application Procedure:

1. Attend an OPT workshop listed at <http://www.oiiss.msu.edu/calendar.php> OR Consult the on-line OPT Workshop at http://www.oiiss.msu.edu/students_employ.php
2. Assemble the following documents and come meet with an OISS advisor during walk-in hours (1-3 p.m.):
 - Completed **I-765 form** (blank form attached; may also be downloaded at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf>)
The answer to Section 16 on the I-765 is (c) (3) (B)
 - Completed **Student Status Form** (blank form attached)
 - Photocopy both sides of your **I-94** card.
 - Photocopy of the picture page/expiration date of your **passport**.
 - Photocopy of your **US Visa page**
 - Photocopies if all I-20s showing previous **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)** Authorization(s).
 - **2** full frontal/passport **photos** (See reverse for example). Gently print your name and SEVIS number on the back of each photo.
 - **\$340.00** check or money order made payable to: **Department of Homeland Security** (please do not abbreviate).

OPT expediting is available for exceptional cases only. If you already have a job offer please discuss this option with an OISS Advisor.
3. OISS will prepare a new I-20 for you and provide you with an envelope for mailing out your application. In most cases your I-20 will be ready for pick-up the next day.
4. **Checklist for mailing out your application to USCIS:**
 - PHOTOCOPY of all pages of your **new I-20 endorsed for OPT**. (Do not send the original). Please make sure to sign your new I-20 before you make the photocopy.
 - Completed **I-765 form**.

- Photocopy of both sides of your **I-94** card.
- Photocopy of the picture page/expiration date of your **passport**.
- Photocopy of your **U.S. Visa page**.
- Photocopies of all I-20s showing previous **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)** Authorization(s).
- **2** full frontal/passport **photos** (See reverse for example). Gently print your name and SEVIS number on the back of each photo.
- **\$340.00** check or money order made payable to: **Department of Homeland Security** (please do not abbreviate).

5. Within approximately two weeks of sending your application you will receive a Notice of Action. This is proof that you have an application pending with USICS. The Notice of Action will contain your Receipt Number (“LIN number”). You can use this number to check your case status online at www.uscis.gov (in the lower right corner).

For your Information:

- You **must** have your **Employment Authorization Document/card (EAD)** in-hand and the start date must be valid in order to begin employment.
- The EAD will be mailed to the address that you put on the I-765 form. The Post Office **will NOT forward** mail from USCIS if you change your address after you apply. USCIS will not mail your EAD to a P.O. Box or overseas address.
- USCIS will issue an EAD **approximately 60-90 days** after receipt of your application unless you are found ineligible.
- Travel outside of the US after you apply OPT can be risky. Please contact an OISS advisor if you plan to travel after you submit your OPT application. To re-enter during OPT, you will need the following *original* documents: (1) Valid passport (2) Valid F-1 visa stamp (3) I-20 endorsed for OPT with a travel signature less than 6 months old (4) Unexpired EAD card (5) Job offer/confirmation letter from a U.S. employer.
- You **MUST** submit a photocopy of your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) to OISS. It is your responsibility to submit a copy of your EAD for your student file.
- If you change your status prior to the OPT expiration date, please inform OISS and send a copy of your change of status approval to the office.
- Please note that while you are on OPT you are still in F-1 visa status. Please see the attached handout **While you are on OPT** to learn about your responsibilities during your practical training year. Also attached is some basic information to help you prepare for employment in the U.S.

Color Photograph Specifications:

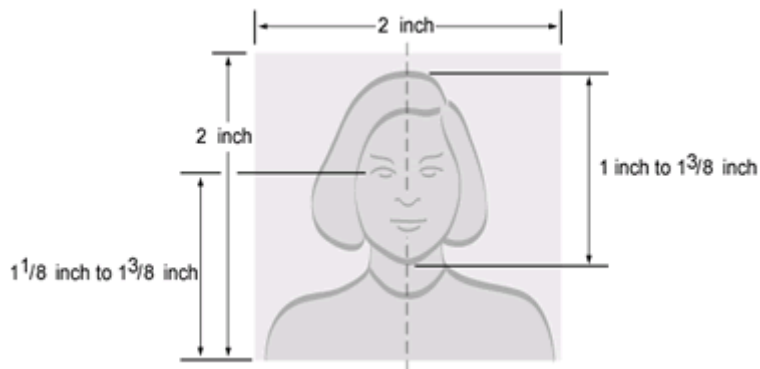
All photos must be of just the applicant and must be identical. All photos must meet the specifications for full frontal/passport photos and must be no more than 30 days old when an application is filed.

Where to Get Photos on campus:

Please contact University Relations at 355-7505 or email photos@ur.msu.edu to set up an appointment. Hours of availability are between 8am-5pm.

7 Steps to Successful Photos:

- Frame subject with full face, front view, eyes open
- Make sure photo presents full head from top of hair to bottom of chin: height of head should measure 1 inch to 1-3/8 inches (25 mm to 35 mm)
- Center head within frame (see Figure below)
- Make sure eye height is between 1-1/8 inches to 1-3/8 inches (28 mm and 35 mm) from bottom of photo
- Photograph subject against a plain white or off-white background
- Position subject and lighting so that there are no distracting shadows on the face or background
- Encourage subject to have a natural expression



While you are on OPT... you are still considered an F-1 student
PLEASE NOTE THAT FAILURE TO FULFILL THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS CAN
JEOPARDIZE YOUR STAY IN THE US.

- 1) Remember to report all address changes to MSU via the registrar's website within 5 days of moving to your new residence. Your address must describe where you live. It cannot be a P.O. Box or an office address. <http://www.reg.msu.edu> Click on "Address Changes" and use "local address" to report your address change.
- 2) Any change of name
- 3) Any interruption of employment
- 4) Make sure OISS has a photocopy of your EAD card on file

REMINDERS DURING OPT:

- 1) Remember to depart the United States within the 60 day grace period that follows your last day of OPT.
- 2) If you plan on changing your status we recommend that you begin this process before your OPT is expired.
- 3) If you are transferring to another school, make sure to contact OISS so that your records may be electronically transferred BEFORE the end of your authorized stay.
- 4) If you are subject to Special Registration, please make sure to use official ports of departure to exit the US and allow time at airports and land crossings to complete exit interview (even if traveling to Mexico and Canada).
- 5) Please check the OISS website (<http://oiss.msu.edu>) and your MSU e-mail account for immigration updates.
- 6) **Note on major medical insurance coverage:** many times students on OPT do not go directly into a job where insurance coverage is provided. If you do not have access to other health insurance options during this interim period, you may extend your MSU student coverage by purchasing additional months. Please come to OISS *at least two weeks before you graduate* for more information.

TRAVEL WHILE ON OPT:

Before you travel, remember to

- Make sure your passport is valid at least 6 months into the future
- Make sure your I-20 has been signed for travel within 6 months. If you need a new travel signature, bring or send your I-20 to OISS with a copy of your EAD card
- Make sure that your visa stamp is valid. If your visa is not valid for re-entry make preparations to renew your visa while overseas at the US embassy or consulate. Please note: OISS cautions F-1 OPT travel if a new visa stamp is needed. Consult an OISS Advisor before traveling.
- Carry your EAD card and proof of employment for the EAD time period with you. Proof of employment can include a letter from your employer or recent pay stubs.

Please note: If you have an expired F-1 visa stamp and you plan to make a short trip to Canada, Mexico, or adjacent (Caribbean) islands, consult an OISS advisor or visit our page on Automatic Revalidation: http://www.oiss.msu.edu/students_travel_autorevalid.php

STUDENT STATUS FORM

Student Name: _____ PID #: A _____

STUDENT IS REQUESTING OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR:

Beginning date: _____ End date: _____

Signature of Student: _____ Date: _____

THIS SECTION MUST BE FILLED OUT BY THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR OR MAJOR PROFESSOR:

Major (Field of Study): _____

Degree Objective:

Bachelors Masters Ph.D. Other Specify _____

Expected **Completion Date*** of Degree Requirements: _____
Month/Day/Year

* Completion date can be the last day of the last semester in which the student is enrolled, or the dissertation/thesis submission date for graduate students.

Signature of Academic Advisor/Major Professor Department

Type or Print Name of
Academic Advisor/Major Professor

Phone Number

Date

E-mail Address: _____

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

I-765, Application For
Employment Authorization

Do not write in this block.

Remarks, Action Block, Fee Stamp
A#
Applicant is filing under §274a.12
Application Approved. Employment Authorized / Extended (Circle One) until (Date).
Subject to the following conditions:
Application Denied.
Failed to establish eligibility under 8 CFR 274a.12 (a) or (c).
Failed to establish economic necessity as required in 8 CFR 274a.12(c)(14), (18) and 8 CFR 214.2(f)

I am applying for:
Permission to accept employment.
Replacement (of lost employment authorization document)
Renewal of my permission to accept employment (attach previous employment authorization document).

1. Name (Family Name in CAPS) (First) (Middle) Which USCIS Office? Date(s)
2. Other Names Used (Include Maiden Name) Results (Granted or Denied - attach all documentation)
3. Address in the United States (Number and Street) (Apt. Number) 12. Date of Last Entry into the U.S. (mm/dd/yyyy)
(Town or City) (State/Country) (ZIP Code) 13. Place of Last Entry into the U.S.
4. Country of Citizenship/Nationality 14. Manner of Last Entry (Visitor, Student, etc.)
5. Place of Birth (Town or City) (State/Province) (Country) 15. Current Immigration Status (Visitor, Student, etc.)
6. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy) 7. Gender Male Female
8. Marital Status Married Single Widowed Divorced
9. Social Security Number (Include all numbers you have ever used) (if any)
10. Alien Registration Number (A-Number) or I-94 Number (if any)
11. Have you ever before applied for employment authorization from USCIS? Yes (If yes, complete below) No
16. Go to Part 2 of the Instructions, Eligibility Categories. In the space below, place the letter and number of the category you selected from the instructions (For example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii), etc.).
Eligibility under 8 CFR 274a.12 () () ()
17. If you entered the Eligibility Category, (c)(3)(C), in item 16 above, list your degree, your employer's name as listed in E-Verify, and your employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number in the space below.
Degree:
Employer's Name as listed in E-Verify:
Employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number

Certification

Your Certification: I certify, under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, that the foregoing is true and correct. Furthermore, I authorize the release of any information that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services needs to determine eligibility for the benefit I am seeking. I have read the Instructions in Part 2 and have identified the appropriate eligibility category in Block 16.

Signature Telephone Number Date

Signature of person preparing form, if other than above: I declare that this document was prepared by me at the request of the applicant and is based on all information of which I have any knowledge.

Print Name Address Signature Date

Table with columns: Remarks, Initial Receipt, Resubmitted, Relocated (Rec'd, Sent, Approved), Completed (Denied, Returned)

