

## Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is most commonly used by F-1 students to gain work experience in their field of study after completing a degree program, but there are certain other situations in which OPT may be possible prior to completion of a degree program. OPT has a cumulative maximum of 12 months per degree sought. No offer of employment is required to apply for OPT, but the student is expected to work during the OPT authorized validity period. Students on post-completion OPT are limited to a maximum of 90 days of unemployment. All OPT must be completed within 14 months following completion of study. Students who have been authorized for 12 months of OPT are eligible for another 12 months of OPT when they change to a higher educational level.

### **Four Types of OPT:**

1. *Vacation Period Practical Training:* A student may work full or part-time in a job related to his/her field of study during the breaks between semesters if the student is currently enrolled and intends to register for the next term of the session.
2. *While School is in Session:* A student may work up to 20 hours per week during the academic year in employment related to his/her field of study.
3. *Thesis Practical Training:* A student may work full or part-time in employment related to his/her study when all course requirements are completed for the degree and he/she is working on his/her thesis.
4. *Post-Completion Practical Training:* When all the work for a degree has been completed, the student may work full or part-time. This is the most commonly used OPT at CIIS.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

- You are in F-1 status and
- You have been enrolled full-time for at least one academic year and
- You have not used more than 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and
- You have confirmed your date of degree completion with your Faculty Advisor (see form *CIIS OPT Request Form*)

### **The Application Procedure**

All qualified F-1 students can apply for a total 12 months of OPT up to **90 days prior to their program end date and within 60 days after their program end date.** Two applications are required for students who wish to participate in OPT both before and after graduation.

The **program end date** is the last day of the semester in which you are graduating, or for MA psychology and PsyD students, the last day of your supervised practicum/internship, whichever is later. In addition, OPT applications must be received by the USCIS within 30 days of the updated OPT I-20.

In order to prepare your application, you will need to bring the following information to your appointment with the International Student Advisor:

- **Form I-765**, the Application for Employment Authorization, marked with the code: (c) (3) (A) at item 16 for pre-completion OPT and **(c) (3) (B) for post-completion OPT**. Form available at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) . \*Please review the I-765 instructions.
- **Copies of your passport and visa**
- **A copy of both sides of your Form I-94 card**, also called the Departure card. This should be stapled in your passport.
- **2 full passport style photos**, color photos with a white background, 2" x 2" and not more than six months old.
- **A copy of all previous I-20s**
- **An updated SEVIS OPT I-20**, provided by the ISA at the time of the appointment.
- **A copy of any previous Employment Authorization Documents (EADs)**, if this is your first application for work authorization you will not have an EAD card.
- **CIIS OPT Request Form** signed by your faculty advisor.
- **A copy of your practicum/internship contract** when applicable. Contact the Field Placement Office for your program.
- **A check for \$340**, made payable to the Department of Homeland Security (please double check fees on most current version of the I-765 instructions)

**Plan Ahead!!** It takes approximately 90 to 120 days to process a request for Optional Practical Training and an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). **You may not begin working until you have received your EAD card.**

**Frequently Asked Questions** Please visit the CIIS website for questions about maintaining your F1 student visa while on OPT, travel on pending and approved OPT and employment requirements.

**Check Your Application Status** online at: <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp>, or by calling 1-800-375-5283. You will need to have your 13-character application receipt number. It is a 10 digit number preceded by the letters "WAC."

---

## Optional Practical Training Request Form

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Degree Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Program End Date\*: \_\_\_\_\_

\* The **program end date** is the last day of the semester in which you are graduating, or for MA psychology and PsyD students, the last day of your supervised practicum/internship, whichever is later.

### PRACTICAL TRAINING INFORMATION

Requested Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*start date can be within 60 days of your program end date.

Requested End Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*maximum request of 12 months of OPT and the end date may not exceed 14 months from your program end date.

Describe the proposed employment for practical training/how you will use your OPT:

Number of Hours per week: \_\_\_\_\_ (full-time for post-graduation OPT)

Employer Name (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Employer Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### SIGNATURES

Student Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Advisor Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*advisor signature required to confirm degree program end date**