

**Check List Reminder Once You are in Optional Practical Training (OPT) After You Graduate**  
**KEEP THIS INFORMATION FOR FUTURE REFERENCE**

**Ensure your graduation date is correct.**

Your SEVIS I-20 will be shortened to your graduation date. If you will not graduate before the expected term, please inform the Kearney International Center immediately.

**Work in your field of study - Begin / End work dates listed on your EAD.**

OPT is considered gaining work experience in your field of study. You are not eligible to begin working until you have received the Employment Authorization Document [EAD] card and the beginning date of the EAD has arrived. You may change employers during the OPT/EAD dates as long as the work relates to your field of study. Please be in contact with the Kearney International Center for updates to employment and your address change. You may stay in the USA 60 days after your OPT/EAD expires as a “grace period” but you may not work.

**Keep the Kearney International Center and Immigration / Dept. of Homeland Security updated on your address and your employment.**

Immigration regulations require you to report changes in your name or address within 10 days. You may complete this process by updating your address in BOTH places:

- MSU HUB at <http://www.mnsu.edu/campushub/addresschange/index.html>. and follow the process listed.
- SEVIS the AR-11 or AR-11SR Form (Special Registrants I-94 contains a FIN number). Send finished form to the address indicated. Forms are on the USCIS website: [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) then click on immigration forms and scroll down to the first two forms.
- Complete the form to inform the Kearney International Center of your employment. New requirements state that you must secure employment within area of study. You can find the form at [http://www.mnsu.edu/international/currentstudents/f-1/opt/info\\_update.php](http://www.mnsu.edu/international/currentstudents/f-1/opt/info_update.php)

**Restrict any travel outside the USA or at least receive guidance from the Kearney International Center before you depart.**

Applicants should restrict travel outside the USA during the time that their OPT application is pending with the USCIS. Please see the Kearney International Center staff prior to making travel arrangements. Once the application has been issued with the EAD card, you should have the following items:

- SEVIS I-20 must be signed within the past 6 months and SEVIS information must be updated
- Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card
- Valid F-1 entry visa
- Have a letter from your employer (stating your employment)

Students who do not meet these requirements may not be allowed to reenter the USA. Please consult with a Kearney International Center advisor if planning to temporarily depart the USA during the OPT.

**Follow transfer procedures if you wish to return to full-time study.**

Students on Post-Completion (after graduation) OPT are only permitted to enroll in recreational or vocational courses. New regulations do not allow you to pursue a degree program while participating in Post-Completion OPT. To return to school after completing OPT, you need to obtain an I-20 for the next program and have your SEVIS record transferred by MSU to the new school before the OPT ends, or within 60 days of the OPT end date. To resume studies at MSU, we must create a new I-20 in the same time period. Note: You must begin the new program within 5 months of your OPT end date. Failure to comply with either of these items will leave you needing reinstatement, or the need to get an “Initial Attendance” I-20 to use to re-enter the USA within 30 days of the new program start date. The MSU SEVIS “Transfer Out” form is available at [www.mnsu.edu/international/forms/](http://www.mnsu.edu/international/forms/)

**Notify the Kearney International Center if your status changes (such as H-1B temporary worker) or leave the USA prior to the end of your OPT end date.**

If you have an employer who has indicated they are interested in pursuing an H-1B for you, please work very closely with them to ensure that they apply for the H-1B in a timely manner. Only a certain number of H-1B’s are available for a year from October through next October, and this limit/cap is quickly reached (some employers are exempt from this cap - such as colleges/universities). It is to your benefit to have your employer apply for the H-1B as quickly as possible, even if your OPT is still pending or valid. If your status changes or you re-enter the USA in H-1B status, please provide the KEARNEY INTERNATIONAL CENTER with a copy of the approval (I-797) so we can notify Immigration that you are no longer considered an F-1 student. Also, if you decide to depart the USA prior to the end of your OPT, we can enter that information. Some provisions have been given for “cap gap”. Make an appointment at the Kearney International Center.

**Inform OPT employer that F-1 students are exempt from Social Security (F.I.C.A.) withholding.**

According to the IRS, there should be no withholding of social security or Medicare taxes from your pay if you are considered a non-resident for tax purposes [been in the USA less than five years]. For reference, see last FAQ on IRS website at <http://www.irs.gov/faqs/faq13.html> or <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=139412,00.html> and/or IRS Publication 519, “U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens.” at <http://www.irs.gov/publications/p519/index.html>

**Retain alumni contact.**

Please register on [www.MSUGrads.com](http://www.MSUGrads.com) after your graduation to stay in touch and receive the Today magazine. Sign up for the “International Community” and find the e-mails from old friends. We wish for you to remain connected to MSU long after your academic experience.

**Best wishes, from the Kearney International Center!**



**Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

**Kearney International Center**

**250 Centennial Student Union**

**Minnesota State University, Mankato**

**Mankato, MN 56001**

**Tel: (507) 389-1281 Fax: (507) 389-2790**

**iss@msu.edu**

**What Is OPT?**

OPT is work authorization which allows a student to work in a job directly related to the student’s major area of study either before or after degree completion. The far majority of students use OPT to work after degree completion. OPT authorization is provided by USCIS and is usually granted within 3 months after the student submits an application; however experience of some students has shown that the process may take longer than three months, so plan ahead.

**OPT application is authorized by USCIS for a work experience directly related to a student’s major area of study. It may be used before or after completion of studies.**

**OPT Guidelines**

- Limit of 12 months at every level of study
- Must be in a student’s area of study
- Must receive recommendation by the Kearney International Center in the SEVIS immigration database
- Must have approval from the USCIS
- Must be issued an Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card)
- Must have been enrolled as a full-time student for (9) consecutive months
- Must have valid F-1 status, valid passport, & SEVIS I-20
- Must be in good academic standing
- Once granted by USCIS, an OPT cannot be changed, voided, or canceled

Additional materials to be enclosed in this folder:

- > Supplement paper for Kearney International Center use (required)
- > I-765 instructions
- > I-765 form
- > USCIS photo information

Information in the brochure will be made available in alternative format, such as large print or cassette tape, upon request.  
Minnesota State University, Mankato is an affirmative action/equal opportunity educator and employer.

## Optional Practical Training (OPT)

### Application Deadline

The application for OPT must be submitted first to the Kearney International Center before sending it to the USCIS. Please give yourself 90 days before completion of studies to start your application. You need to get the complete OPT application to USCIS within 60 days of your graduation date.

### Application and Authorization Procedures for Initial Period of OPT

For extension of existing OPT, visit our website at [www.mnsu.edu/iso/employment/opt](http://www.mnsu.edu/iso/employment/opt) for details and the most up-to-date information.

#### Step 1

You can pick up an OPT application package at the Kearney International Center during regular office hours. Please make an appointment with the one of the Assistant Directors to discuss your OPT application, procedures, and practical training plans.

#### Please bring the following documents (the original and one copy) to your appointment

- \_\_\_\_\_ Unofficial MSU Transcript (full time each term)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unexpired Passport
- \_\_\_\_\_ I-94 Card (both sides)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Previous EAD cards (if they have)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Completed I-765
- \_\_\_\_\_ Previous I-20s
- \_\_\_\_\_ Letter from Advisor
- \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** \_\_\_\_\_ Supplemental Info sheet for OPT

#### Step 2

If you meet all eligibility requirements, the Kearney International Center will issue you a SEVIS I-20 recommending you for OPT and update your record in the SEVIS database. Then you will send the following documents to the USCIS:

- Photocopy of new SEVIS I-20 with OPT recommendation and your signature
- A check for \$340 payable to USCIS, put your I-94 number on the check
- Two photos with your name and I-94 number on the back of the photos
- I-765 form
- Copy of Unexpired Passport (or a receipt of an in-progress renewal with an expired passport)
- Photocopy of both sides of I-94 Card
- A copy of previous EAD (if issued)
- Copies of previous I-20s

Mail to USCIS using the address on the following page —————>—————>

#### For U.S. Postal Service Deliveries—

#### Mail Your Application to:

USCIS  
PO Box 21281  
Phoenix, AZ 85036

#### Express Mail & Courier Deliveries:

USCIS  
Attn: AOS  
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S  
Suite 100  
Phoenix, AZ 85034

**NOTE** - For overnight delivery, express or courier mail to USCIS, make sure to include 850 S. Street. (Submit to the address above if you are residing in the state of Minnesota. If you are submitting your USCIS documents from out-of-state, please check [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) for other mailing locations.)

**IMPORTANT**—You can only begin your employment upon receiving your EAD card from USCIS and may work **ONLY** on the dates authorized. It can take up to 120 days to receive your card from the USCIS in Lincoln, Nebraska. If you already have a job offer, there is an expedite process that may speed up the application process but it is not guaranteed to do so.

### Other Things to Keep in Mind About OPT

#### Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training

Full-time during summer vacation period practical training or part time during academic year (work up to 20 hours and must maintain full-time status) undergraduate or graduate status is classified as Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training. Full-time enrollment for the preceding nine (9) months is required and the student must plan to register for 12 credits and meet the requirement guidelines for the next term.

#### Post Completion Practical Training

Full time OPT upon completion of studies, on your graduation day for undergraduates and /or when a graduate student has completed all course requirements for a Master's Degree except their thesis or alternative plan paper is classified as Post Completion Practical Training.

#### Change Of Employer

An employer may be changed after authorized employment has begun, provided the new job is directly related to the major field of study or appropriate for someone with that level of education. Notify the Kearney International Center when you obtain employment. New immigration requirements limit the amount of time you can be unemployed to 90 days. Part-time and volunteer work do count as employment.

#### Checking Your Status

To check your application status, use your LIN number which you will find in your receipt and check on the USCIS web-site [www.USCIS.gov](http://www.USCIS.gov). You can also telephone the USCIS at 1-800-375-5283.

#### Travel Outside the United States

When you obtain or are waiting to obtain an EAD card, and you return to the USA from outside the country it becomes more complex. Please read the checklist on the backside of this page before you begin to think about leaving the USA.