Optional Practical Training (OPT)

OPT is work authorization granted by Immigration/USCIS to allow F-1 students to gain experience directly related to their major area of study. You may apply for OPT authorization during your academic program, after your program completion, or a combination of both. You are eligible for 12 months of full-time OPT per academic level and you do not need a job offer to apply for OPT authorization.

Eligibility Requirements

- You are currently in F-1 status.
- You have been enrolled in a full course of study for one academic year (two semesters) or will complete one academic year by the date the OPT approval begins.
- You have not exceeded 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorization.
- You have not already used OPT at your current academic level.

Types of OPT

- Post-Completion OPT – *(C) (3) (B)*
    - OPT authorization that begins after completion of your academic program is called "post-completion OPT". This is the most common type of OPT. Post-completion OPT is full-time and it can begin:
        - After you complete your degree program
        - After you complete all course requirements for your degree excluding thesis or equivalent
- Pre-Completion OPT – *(C) (3) (A)*
    - OPT used while you are still enrolled in your course of study is called "pre-completion OPT". Students who do not have academic internships available in their program of study and cannot use CPT may consider this option. Pre-completion OPT is deducted from the 12 months of OPT eligibility, so most students prefer to save OPT for after program completion.
        - Full-time (21 hours/week or more) or part-time (20 hours/week or less) during summer or breaks
        - Part-time (20 hours/week or less) while enrolled in a full course of study
- [STEM OPT Extension](#) – (C) (3) (C)
    - Students in their 12-month OPT authorization period with a qualifying STEM approved degree and working for an E-verify registered employer, may apply for a 24-month extension of their OPT.

When to Apply

Apply early! You do not need a job offer to apply for OPT. We suggest you apply **three months** from the predicted date you wish to start working. OPT is recommended by advisers (known as Designated School Officials or DSOs) within the Kearney International Center, but final approval is granted by USCIS. USCIS issues the approved OPT with an Employment Authorization Document/Card (EAD) which typically takes approximately 90 days to process.

Deadlines to consider:

- 9 months = Been enrolled and in F-1 status prior to applying
- 90 days before completion date = Earliest to apply for post-completion OPT
- 60 days after completion date = Latest to apply for post-completion OPT
- 30 days = Between receiving OPT recommendation from the Designated School Official (DSO) with signature on the I-20 <u>and</u> sending to and be received by USCIS.
- 90 days = Typical processing time of OPT approval (EAD) by USCIS

The Application Procedures

STEP ONE: First, apply for graduation through Graduation Services. Then, complete page 3 below. Do not forget to have your Academic Advisor (not your Immigration Advisor) complete the box at the bottom of the form. Email your OPT form and Application for Graduation Evaluation Summary to your Immigration Advisor. Your Immigration Advisor will then email the following documents to you, which you will upload to your online application in step 2:

1. SEVIS event history print out

2. I-20 with OPT recommendation

   o   You will sign and date it.

   o   **You will send a copy of the I-20 and keep the original.**

STEP TWO: Follow the Filing I-765 Online instructions to create a USCIS online account and begin your application.

STOP   **DO NOT SUBMIT your application without reviewing your application with your Kearney International Center Advisor!**
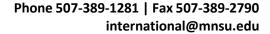
STEP THREE: Before submitting your I-765, you will need to meet with your Kearney International Center Advisor to review your application. Schedule a Zoom meeting with your Immigration Advisor via MavConnect. During the meeting, you will share your screen with your advisor so that you advisor can confirm your application has been completed correctly.

STEP FOUR: After reviewing your online OPT application with your immigration advisor, digitally sign and submit your application. Next, pay the filing fee ($410) using a credit card, debit card, or withdrawal from a checking or savings account. See Steps 6, 7, and 8 in the Filing I-765 Form Online for complete instructions.

STEP FIVE: Read through "After Applying for OPT" and "Once You Are Approved for OPT" for more information on the next steps.

Resources to Check Out:

-Follow the Kearney International Center on LinkedIn! We will have OPT specific posts:
https://www.linkedin.com/school/kicmnsu
-After Applying for Post-Completion OPT : https://mankato.mnsu.edu/academics/global-education/centers-of-global-education/international-student-services/employment/f-1-students/optional-practical-training/after-applying-for-opt/
-Once you are Approved for Post-Completion OPT: https://mankato.mnsu.edu/academics/global-education/centers-of-global-education/international-student-services/employment/f-1-students/optional-practical-training/once-you-are-approved-for-opt/

Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) - FORM

Complete and return to the Kearney International Center —CSU250

Name:

LAST (CAPS)   First   Middle

Tech ID:

Email Address   Non-MSU Email Addresses

Current Address (where you are currently living):   **List Future Address if Known:**
Address: **Address:**
City/State/Zip Code: **City/State/Zip Code:**

IMPORTANT: Always update your current address at the Campus Hub, CSU117 or in eservices

Have you applied for Graduation with the Registrar's Office? ❑ No *(If not, visit here: https://www.mnsu.edu/graduation/prepare/apply.html)*

❑ Yes *(Make sure you submit your **Application for Graduation Evaluation Summary** with your OPT Form)*

Do you have a job offer letter currently?   ❑ Yes   ❑ No

Current Semester Course Load Registration (if applicable):   ❑ Full-time   ❑ Part Time
          If less than full-time, Reduced Course Load Form completed and filed: ❑   Yes   ❑   No   ❑ Not Applicable

Choose your Start Date (as you wish to you have on your OPT Card):
Beginning Date:_____/_____/_____(MM/DD/YYYY)
   *For Post-Completion OPT, beginning date must be a date between your graduation date and 60 days after

Ending Date:_____/_____/_____(MM/DD/YYYY)
   *For Post-Completion OPT, MAXIMUM end date is 1 year from the beginning date

By signing below, I verify my eligibility for OPT, that the employment I pursue will be related to my course of study as listed on my I-20, and I understand that working without authorization constitutes illegal employment and will result in the termination of my F-1 status. I understand the requirement of reporting all employment to the Center for International Studies during my OPT authorization. In addition, I authorize the Center for International Studies to open any mail in reference to my application for OPT.

_____   _____
Student Signature certifying the information above is accurate.   **Date**

<mark>**The box below is to be completed by your Academic Advisor:**</mark>

Program/Department Section
Student's field of study:_____Degree level: _____   Student is expected to complete his/her educational objective on: _____   mm/dd/yyyy   Advisor's Name:_____phone: _____   Signature:_____date: _____   **To the best of my knowledge, the student will complete all of his/her coursework by the date noted above.*