OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

An application for Optional Practical Training should be submitted at our front desk, it does not need to be submitted during walk-in hours. We are open Monday – Friday from 8:30 – 5:00.

Your application will be accepted at the front desk and then given to an international student advisor for review. It will be reviewed by an and a new I-20 will be generated recommending your optional practical training will be made and a new I-20 created.

You will be emailed when the packet is ready for you to pick it up. You must review the application and then mail it to the USCIS. The USCIS generally takes between six and eight weeks to review and approve your application. As long as you apply in a timely manner and are otherwise eligible, the application will be approved.

There are three types of Optional Practical Training:

- **Pre-Completion OPT**: Applicable to students who intend to do a paid practical training while they are pursuing degree.
  - You must be in valid non-immigrant status for one academic year before applying.
  - You do not need a job offer to apply. However, you should be fairly certain you will find/have a job. If you apply for OPT and the USCIS grants it, it will be deducted from your twelve months whether you use it or not.
  - **Employment must be directly related to your major field of study.**
  - Students authorized to participate in pre-completion OPT must work part-time (20 or fewer hours) for the duration of the approval.
  - **You may not work full-time if your OPT has been recommended/ and approved for part-time authorization.**
  - You can only request full-time pre-completion OPT during the fall or spring semester if you have met all degree requirements
  - **Must remain registered for a full-course of study while engaged in Pre-completion OPT.**
  - Students who have not yet met the one full academic year requirement at the time they begin their application can file for pre-completion OPT no sooner than 90 days before meeting that requirement.
  - Students who have already met the one academic year requirement at the time they are submitting their application may apply for pre-completion OPT up to 120 days in advance of the requested employment start date.
Post-Completion OPT: Applicable to students who intend to do a paid or non-paid practical training after they complete program of study.
- You must be in valid non-immigrant status for one academic year before applying.
- Post-completion OPT can only be authorized full-time.
- Employment must be directly related to your major field of study.
- The I-765 must be received by USCIS no sooner than 90 days before the program end date, and no later than 60 days after the program end date.
- In addition, the Form I-765 in support of post-completion OPT must be received by USCIS no later than 30 days after the DSO submits the OPT recommendation to SEVIS.
- Here are two examples of how the standard post-completion deadline works with the 30-day filing limit.
  - Example 1. Student's program end date is May 15, 201X. The DSO updates SEVIS with an OPT recommendation on May 1, 201X. This student in this case will have to file Form I-765 with USCIS by May 31, i.e., within 30 days of the date the DSO updated SEVIS with the OPT recommendation.
  - Example 2. Student's program end date is May 15, 2010. The DSO makes the OPT recommendation in SEVIS 45 days after the program end date, on June 30, 2010. This student would have to file Form I-765 with USCIS by July 14, 2010, which is 60 days beyond the program end date.
- You must apply for post completion OPT before departing the U.S. You cannot meet degree requirements depart and re-enter the U.S. and then apply for post completion OPT.

STEM OPT Extensions: For the special 17-month extension of OPT for students with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Medical) major.
- The employer must be enrolled in the E-verify program.
- See http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm for a recent listing of STEM degrees.
- Students can file for STEM OPT Extensions no sooner than 120 days before 12 month OPT expiration date.
- After the expiration of 12 month OPT, students are no longer eligible for extension.
Regardless of the type of OPT for which you are applying, follow these steps:

1. You read this handout. It has been developed to answer the questions most frequently asked by students.
2. You get the Academic Advisor form (in this handout) completed by your academic advisor. That’s the person in your academic department who helps you with registration, academic advising, etc.
3. You review the advisors’ form. The advisor must fill in the “date student will meet degree requirements.
4. You must choose a “start date” for your employment
   - For Post completion OPT the start date must be within 60 days of your program completion date.
   - For pre-completion the start should be selected based on the fact that the application should take between 6-8 weeks to be approved.
2. It is highly recommended that you attend OPT session before you apply.
4. You submit the entire application to the ISSS at any time. We will not review the application during walk-in hours. The application will be reviewed when the advisor makes the OPT recommendation.
5. **DO NOT STAPLE ANY MATERIALS TOGETHER.**
6. International Student Advisor will thoroughly review your application and upon determining that you are maintaining your status, makes a recommendation for the OPT. Again, please do not bring the packet in during walk-in hours for a review.
7. You will be emailed within 3-5 business days by the ISSS to let you know that your packet is ready. We will email your TU email account. Please be sure to check that account regularly.
8. You must come back to the ISSS to collect your packet, sign the new I-20 that was generated by the advisor recommending OPT and mail the application to the USCIS.
9. You must make sure that you mail the application to the USCIS within 30 days of the OPT recommendation.
10. USCIS reviews and notifies you of the decision. This generally takes between 60 and 90 days.
11. **You must receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS before work begins.**

**OPT General Notes:**

- You cannot continue working under pre-completion OPT authorization after you complete your program of study.
- If you want to work part-time in your final semester and then full-time after meeting degree requirements, that would be two separate applications, two separate fees, etc.
- All types of OPT employment must be directly related to the student’s course of study; should also be commensurate with the level of the student’s study.
Additional information for Students Applying for Post Completion OPT only:

- **Double Majors:** The OPT must be directly related to the degree you **just** received. Example: if you complete a degree in Biology in December 20XX and continue studying for a degree in History your OPT would be based on the most recently completed degree, History. If you meet degree requirements for both degrees in the same semester, then you can choose which to “use” for OPT.

- The ISSS will not extend your I-20 so you can complete a minor. You would have to apply for OPT and then meet minor degree requirements while engaged in OPT. See “Study on OPT” below. Stem extensions will not be granted for a minor.

- **OPT application must be properly filed with USCIS within 60 days of meeting degree requirements.**

- **Start date for post completion OPT must be within the 60 days of meeting degree requirements.**

- **You must start employment within 90 days of your OPT start date.**

- During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. During any initial 12-month period of post-completion OPT; no student may be unemployed for an **aggregate of more than 90 days.** If a STEM student receives a 17-month extension, the limit on unemployment is raised to an aggregate of no more than 120 days, applied to the entire 29-month period on which the student is on post completion OPT.

- **You are required to report any change of name or address, or interruption of such employment to the ISSS for the duration of the authorized training. Submit “What to Report to OIS” form available in OPT section of this web site.** See “**What to Report to the OIS while on OPT**”.

**Pre-completion** OPT may be requested on a part-time or full-time basis. Each request is separate and requires a separate application, separate fee, and separate photos. Here’s an example: You want to work for an academic year. You want to work part-time during the spring semester, full-time during the summer and part-time during the following fall semester. You have to apply for part-time pre-completion OPT from January – May, full-time from May to August and then part-time from September to December. Each application would require a separate fee, etc. Your employment authorization would have to be continuous throughout, or you would have to stop working. You could only avoid 3 separate applications if you applied for one year of part-time pre-completion OPT and only worked part-time during the summer.

**You are eligible for 12 months per educational level**

- Part-time OPT is deducted from the 12 month limit at 50%. So four months of part-time OPT “counts” as two months and is deducted as such.

- **CPT does not affect OPT at all UNLESS you are authorized for 12 months of full-time employment.**

**Additional 17 months for students studying in STEM field**

- This extension may be requested one time only. It is not per degree level.

**Additional reporting requirements for students authorized for STEM extension:**

- The student must report to ISSS every six months, confirming the information listed on “What to Report to OIS”; even if there have been no changes.

- The requirement to report continues if the student’s 17-month STEM extension is extended further by the automatic cap-gap extension.
Offer of employment

- No offer of employment is required upon submission of OPT application, but the student is expected to find employment within 90 days of the start date of the EAD card.
- There is no written requirement for paid employment. However, a student should not “volunteer” to do a job that is normally paid. See http://www.temple.edu/ois/home/h1b1j1/Volunteering.htm for Department of Labor regulations regarding volunteering.

Submit to the ISSS: **DO NOT STAPLE ANYTHING TOGETHER**

- **I-765** see [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov). Click on “forms”. You can complete the I-765 on line.
- **Photocopies of ALL** prior Forms I-20. Make sure you have your “initial” I-20. If you are missing any forms I-20 you need to write a letter to the USCIS explaining what happened to it. Address the letter “to whom it may concern”
- Academic advisor form included in this packet (not required for STEM extensions)
- **Student request form** for OPT recommendation. Make sure you have selected the start and end dates of the employment. Instructions for choosing the dates are on the “Student request for OPT Recommendation” (not required for STEM extensions – the extension starts the day after your current OPT ends). We cannot make the recommendation without it. It must be dates mm/dd/yy – NOT “Early June”
- **Write a check** payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for **$380.00**
- Obtain two passport-style photos; 2”x2”, white background, shoulders and up.
- Submit a copy (both sides) of Form I-94
- Copy of any previous EAD cards front and back. You would only have an EAD card if you applied for some type of employment authorization before (not CPT)
- Copy of your current registration (available through Owlnet) (not required for STEM extensions)
- Copy of your academic history at Temple (available through Owlnet) (not required for STEM extensions)
- Copy of Transcripts from ALL US schools that you have attended (originals are not required, print-out and copies are fine; not required for STEM extensions). If you’ve only attended Temple, then just submit the Owlnet academic history.
- Copy of your F-1 visas
- Copy of most recent entry stamp - the one matches the I-94 card
- Copy of your **unexpired** passport photo and passport validity page(s).
- Copy of ALL I-20s you were issued. The very first I-20 you were issued will be marked “initial attendance” or “initial attendance – change of status requested”. You must supply copies of I-20s issued from that date forward.

**For STEM extensions only:**

We do not need academic advisor’s form or transcripts. Instead of these two items, submit:

- A copy of your diploma
- 2-3 weeks of paystubs
- Letter from your employer regarding your employment status (title, length of employment, etc. This would be a standard employment verification letter). We do not have a template.
Student request for OPT Recommendation - **DO NOT STAPLE ANY OPT APPLICATION MATERIALS TOGETHER.**

**DO NOT FILL THIS IN UNLESS YOU HAVE READ THE HANDOUT TO WHICH THIS FORM IS ATTACHED!!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Name:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TU ID#:</td>
<td>Non temple email address</td>
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</table>

I am requesting

- [ ] Full Time
- [ ] Part Time
- [ ] **Pre-completion OPT**

**OR**

- [ ] Full Time **Post Completion OPT**

**Date to begin:** ___________________________ **Date to End:** ___________________________

List any dates of previously authorized CPT or OPT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Begin</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Level of study during or prior to employment</th>
<th>Full Time or Part Time</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

- [ ] Full Time
- [ ] Part Time

Remember: You are eligible for 12 months of OPT per academic level. This applies to certification programs, undergraduate degrees, professional level studies, etc.

**CHOOSING YOUR DATES**

If you feel that you will be able to find employment quickly upon completing your program, you should pick an early start date. If you feel that you are going to take some time to find employment, then pick a start date that is close to or at the end of your 60-day grace period.

After your Academic Advisor completes page 6 you must select the date you want the OPT to begin and end. Refer to the Specific Date of Completion your advisor listed on the form to determine your date preference.

You must select a requested beginning date and end date for OPT. It has to be a date: Month/Day/Year. “Sometime in June” or “early May” is not a date. **The I-20 you need to apply for the employment authorization document cannot be generated without a start and end date.**

If you are meeting degree requirements the start date must be within 60 days of the completion date indicated by your academic advisor on page 6.

You may only apply for a total of 12 months full time OPT (minus any time you’ve already used). For example, if you will meet degree requirements on May 9th, the OPT can begin any day from May 10, 200X through July 9th, 200X.

You can go to the following website to calculate your dates: [www.convertit.com/Go/ConvertIt/Calculators/Date_and_Time/Date_Time_Diff_Calc.ASP](http://www.convertit.com/Go/ConvertIt/Calculators/Date_and_Time/Date_Time_Diff_Calc.ASP). If this link doesn't work for you, does an internet search for “date calculators” and you'll find one that does.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>To Be Completed and Signed By Academic Advisor</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student’s Name:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TU ID#:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning Date of Current Degree:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Bachelor’s ☐ Master’s ☐ PhD ☐ Other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total # of Credits Needed to Receive Degree:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total # of Credits Accumulated to Date:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Has this student continuously completed a full course of study? ☐ Yes ☐ No If not, please explains why student has fallen below full-time status. Graduate students must complete 9 credits hours per Spring and Fall Semesters – Graduate Students with a Teaching / Research Assistantship may register for and complete a minimum of six (6) credits. Undergraduate students must complete a minimum of 12 credit hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPECIFIC DATE of Degree Completion</strong> [date by which student will meet program requirements (i.e. date of last class, defends dissertation, submits thesis, last exam) [NOT DATE OF GRADUATION CEREMONY]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advisor’s Name:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Advisor’s Signature:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Advisor’s Email:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Date:</strong></td>
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