Three Types of Optional Practical Training (OPT)

- **Pre-Completion OPT**: Applicable to students who intend to do a paid practical training while they are pursuing degree.
  - Employment must be directly related to your major field of study.
  - F-1 students may be authorized to participate in pre-completion OPT after they have been enrolled for one full academic year.
  - 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 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 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.
  - Post-completion OPT can only be authorized full-time.
  - Employment must be directly related to your major field of study.
  - Students can file for post-completion OPT up to 90 days before meeting degree requirements.
  - Students may file the application for post completion OPT no more than 60 days after they have met degree requirement.
  - The application for post completion opt must be received by the USCIS and keyed into their system. If the USCIS receives your post completion OPT application it on the 60th day after you meet degree requirements, but don’t key it into their system until the 61st or 62nd day, it could be rejected.
  - You must apply for post completion OPT before departing the U.S. You cannot meet degree requirements, 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 to be enrolled in the E-verify program.
  - See [http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm](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.

All students 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.”

1. 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.


12. All of jobs you take up have to relate to major field of study.

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.
- OPT 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.
- The OPT packet must be submitted to the USCIS within 30 days of the OPT recommendation.
- 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”.
Part-time vs full-time 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](http://www.temple.edu/ois/home/h1b1j1/Volunteering.htm) for Department of Labor regulations regarding volunteering.
What the student must do

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).

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.

The materials you submit will be reviewed by the ISSS. You will be informed of any missing materials. You will receive an e-mail from the ISSS to your @temple.edu email account when the packet is ready. You will have to pick up the packet, review it, and mail the application to the USCIS. Please do not bring in the application during walk –in hours to be reviewed prior to submission. We review it entirely before we make the OPT recommendation.

1. **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!!

Your Name: 

TU ID#: Non temple email address

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

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<th>Begin</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Level of study during or prior to employment</th>
<th>Full Time or Part Time</th>
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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. If this link doesn’t work for you, does an internet search for “date calculators” and you’ll find one that does.
To Be Completed and Signed By Academic Advisor

**This form is not to be completed by the student or by the staff of International Student and Scholar Services**

Student’s Name: 

TU ID#: 

Field of Study: 

Beginning Date of Current Degree: 

- [ ] Bachelor’s  - [ ] Master’s  - [ ] PhD  - [ ] Other  

Total # of Credits Needed to Receive Degree: 

Total # of Credits Accumulated to Date: 

Has this student continuously completed a full course of study?  - [ ] Yes  - [ ] No  

If not, please explain 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.

**SPECIFIC DATE of Degree Completion** (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]  

Month/Day/Year – please don’t just fill in the semester  

Advisor’s Name: 

Advisor’s Signature: 

Advisor’s Email: 

Date: 