



OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

Optional Practical Training is an employment benefit available to students in valid F-1 status. OPT allows students to work in a temporary position that is directly related to their field of study, as indicated on the Form I-20, for up to 12 months. Applications for OPT are reviewed by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and take approximately 3-4 months to process. Students must attend an OPT informational meeting or workshop with the International Student Advisor before requesting a recommendation for OPT.

Eligibility for OPT

Students in valid F-1 status are generally eligible to apply for OPT if they meet the following requirements:

1. Have been enrolled full-time in a USCIS certified school in lawful non-immigrant status for 3 terms.
2. Are currently engaged in a degree seeking academic program, or a structured non-degree program that is part of an established EOU curriculum.

Students are limited to 12 months OPT per education level completed. Technology, engineering, math, and some science students may be eligible for an additional 17 months of employment authorization (see 17-month STEM Extension section below. Students approved for 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) are **NOT** eligible for OPT for the same degree level.

Pre and Post-Completion OPT

Students may choose to apply for OPT prior to the completion of their program of study or after completion of studies. While school is in session, students are limited to part-time OPT (20 hours or less per week) and must continue to enroll full-time.

When to Apply

Student may apply for post-completion OPT *no earlier* than 90 days prior to the completion of studies and *no later* than the end of the 60 day grace period following the final term of registration. The applications must be submitted to USCIS within 30 days of the signature date on the I-20 with the OPT recommendation.

Processing Time

USCIS takes approximately 3 to 4 months to process OPT application. You may not engage in any employment after the completion of your program, until you have received a valid Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Students with a pending job offer may submit a request for expedited processing with their OPT application.

OPT Authorization Dates

If your OPT application is approved, USCIS will authorize you for practical training during the 12month period following the completion of studies (2 months grace period + 12 months possible OPT). You may request that your OPT begin anytime between the completion of studies date and the end of your 60 day grace period.



Immigration Status during OPT

You may remain in the U.S. following the completion of your program while your OPT application is in process, provided you have submitted your application before the end of your 60 day grace period following your final term of registration. If your OPT application is approved, your F-1 status will be extended from the date your application is filed to the end of the 60 grace period following the completion of your OPT authorization period, as indicated by the end date on your EAD.

Unemployment

Students are prohibited from being unemployed for more than 90 days during the initial 12 month period of OPT. If unemployed for more than 90 days, a student is considered to be in violation of their status.

Students must report when they begin working for an employer AND when they stop working for that employer to the international student programs office. You must continue to notify the international student programs office via email at international@eou.edu of a change of address, legal name, or immigration status within 10 days. You must also notify the office when you begin, end, or change employment.

Travel

Students who have been approved for OPT are still in F-1 visa status, therefore require a valid travel signature and a valid F-1 visa in addition to their valid EAD to re-enter the U.S. The regulatory language states that students who have been approved for OPT are only eligible to re-enter to “resume” employment, and we have been told that students who travel before they have secured a job may be denied entry to the U.S. We urge students to be cautious if traveling before employment has been secured.



RECOMMENDATION REQUEST FORM - OPT

OPT is 12 months of employment authorization granted by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This allows international students to gain practical work experience in their fields of study, usually upon completion of their degree programs. Please note that you must still submit a complete OPT application to USCIS in order to receive employment authorization. The International student advisor recommends the work authorization but USCIS actually authorizes it.

The international student named below is applying for OPT. The international student advisor makes the recommendation for this type of work authorization but USCIS actually authorizes it. *Complete this form with your academic advisor and submit it to your International Student Advisor. Once approved, a new I-20 with an OPT recommendation will be issued.*

PART I (to be complete by the student)

Student's Name: _____

Student ID _____

Academic Program: Bachelor's Master's Major _____

Date of completion of academic requirements: ___/___/___ (month/day/year)

For post-completion OPT, you may request your OPT to begin anytime between the completion of studies date and the end of your 60 day grace period (actually date is determined by USCIS). Graduate students who have completed all required coursework may request pre-completion OPT to begin prior to completion of studies.

The day after the completion of program date

On this specific date: ___/___/___ (month/day/year)

PART II (to be complete by the academic advisor)

The information requested below will be used to issue a recommendation to the student for OPT based on completion of the degree program, which will be the last day of the final term of registration. Please provide your best estimate of dates.

Estimated completion of program date: ___/___/___ (month/day/year)

Estimated final term of registration at EOU: Fall Winter Spring Summer 20___



AUTHORIZING SIGNATURES

Academic Advisor _____ Title _____
Phone _____ Email _____
Academic Advisor Signature _____ Date __/__/__

International Student Advising and Services use only

OPT Recommendation: Approved Denied Advisor Initials _____ Date entered in SEVIS __/__/__

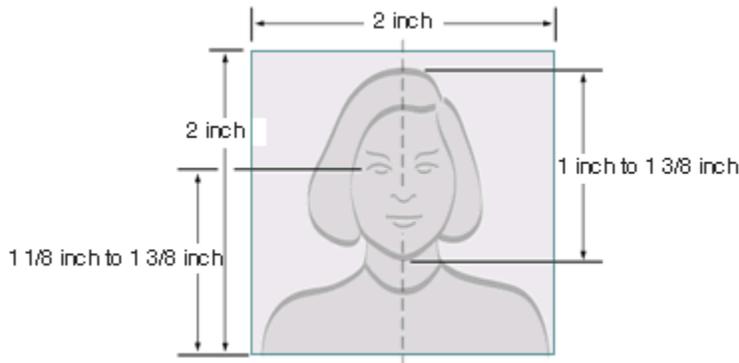


PHOTOGRAPH SPECIFICATIONS

You are required to submit two passport-style photos with the I-765 form. Photos should be in color with a white background and taken no later than 30 days before the application is submitted to USCIS. Lightly print your full legal name and your I-94 number on the back of each photo in pencil. Specifications are as follows:

- Make sure the photo presents the full head from the top of the hair to the bottom of the chin
- Center the head with the frame
- The person in the photo should have a neutral expression and be facing the camera
- Photo must be 2 inches by 2 inches
- The height of the head (top of hair to bottom of chin) should measure 1 inch to 1 3/8 inches (25 mm - 35 mm)
- Make sure the eye height is between 1 1/8 inches to 1 3/8 inches (28 mm – 35 mm) from the bottom of the photo

Paper Photo Head Size Template:



Well Composed Photo Composition Examples:



Taken from: http://travel.state.gov/visa/visaphotoreq/visaphotoreq_5334.html



OPT APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- USCIS Form I-765** (attached). Section 16, indicate (c)(3)(B) for post-completion OPT.
- USCIS Form G-1145** (attached and optional). You may submit this option form with your OPT application to receive electronic notification that your form has been accepted at the USCIS lockbox facility to which it was sent.
- \$380 check or money order made payable to "Department of Homeland Security"**. Write your name and I-94 number in the memo.
- 2 recent color passport-style photos**. Lightly print your full legal name and I-94 number in pencil on the back of each photo.
- Photocopy of Eastern Oregon University form I-20**, containing the OPT recommendation from the international student advisor.
- Photocopies of the following pages of your passport: identity pages and US visa**.
- Photocopies of both sides of your I-94 card**.
- Photocopies of any previously issued Employment Authorization Document (if applicable)**.

Mail all of the necessary documents to the USCIS Phoenix Lockbox:

**USCIS
P.O.Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036**

Keep copies of all documents sent and track your application by using certified mail with return receipt through the US Post Office and/or G-1145.

Submit a copy of your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) to ISAS. Report the receipt of your EAD and any changes of name, address, employment status, or immigration status to our office within 10 days.

**If you think there is any chance that you will move in the 3 months it will take USCIS to process your OPT application, please consider using the international programs office address. Your EAD is federal mail which will NOT be forwarded by the post office. If you move while your OPT application is being processed, your EAD may be returned to USCIS, which can significantly delay your receiving your work authorization.*