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POST-COMPLETION (STANDARD) OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

What is OPT? Optional Practical Training is one year of full-time work permission in a student's field of study after completion of studies at each degree level. OPT should be viewed as a BENEFIT of maintaining your F-1 status, rather than a RIGHT.

Field of Study: The work **MUST BE** directly related to the field of study on your I-20.

Completion of Studies: Students can now apply for OPT 90 days prior to or 60 days after their program completion date. We strongly recommend that you apply before your program completion date because filing later will cause delays in processing your OPT card.

How do I choose my OPT start date? Start date on OPT must be within the 60 days after program completion date. However, USCIS may change this date based on the time it is approved. You can choose any date after the last day of the **final exams** up to 60 days from this date. If you have any question about choosing the correct date, please contact the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (OISSS) for guidance.

Employment on OPT: During post-completion OPT; F-1 status is dependent upon employment. If student accrues an aggregate of 90 days of unemployment on post-completion standard "initial" OPT, the student loses his/her F-1 status. Volunteer work counts as "employment" for standard OPT so long as it does not violate any labor laws and it is still related to *your field of study*.

Students must report to DSO at OISSS within 10 days of any changes of:

- Student's legal name
- Student's Residential Address
- Employer's name
- Employer's address
- Student's Loss of employment

After OPT: OPT must still be completed within a period of 14 months after program completion date. However, if employer files for an H1B for the student in a timely manner for the next fiscal year, the student is granted an automatic extension of Duration of Status and Employment Authorization until the H1B is approved, denied, rejected or revoked.

If the H1B is denied, the student will have the standard 60-day period (from notification of the denial or rejection of the petition) before they have to leave the U.S. (or change status to B-2 or begin a new F-1 program of study).

OPT APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Submit the OPT Request Form and all OPT application required documents to Whitlock Building, Room 455.
2. You will be issued a new I-20 indicating your OPT dates on Page 2.
3. You will receive an email to come and sign the new I-20 so a copy can be submitted with your application.
4. OISSS will mail your packet to the USCIS (U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services) Service Center in Texas.
5. You will receive a receipt notice approximately 3-6 weeks after you apply. You may use this notice to check your case status on-line at (<https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>).
6. You will receive your Employment Authorization Document EAD card in approximately 3 months from application.

Time Line for OPT approval:

Visit this web-site for current processing time: <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/processTimesDisplayInit.do>.
You will check time for the Texas Service Center.

You are not eligible to work in the United States until you have received your EAD card AND the start date on the EAD card has arrived.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- You are in F-1 status for the entire duration of your OPT period.
- Your I-20 will appear to be expired because you have a new end date/graduation date. The “extension” for OPT will be printed on page 3 of your I-20.
- You can renew your KY driver’s license on OPT. If you move to another state, they may have different requirements. Please contact your new local Driver’s License office when you move there!
- When you see your tracking number on the USCIS site, please print the tracking/delivery information.

Travel and OPT

Travel while on OPT is a complicated issue! First ask, “Is my visa valid?” It is extremely difficult for a student on OPT to convince the Dept. of State to extend or renew an F-1 visa. Our office suggests that students with expired visas **DO NOT** travel outside the U.S. while on OPT.

There are 3 scenarios in which a student might travel. Two of these scenarios are advisable and one is not! Please read on:



Travel BEFORE graduation and BEFORE OPT is approved: Travel prior to graduation while the I-765 is pending doesn’t cancel the OPT application. It is reasonable that a student would be allowed to re-enter the U.S. prior to the end date on their I-20 to complete their course work. In order to re-enter the U.S. in this scenario, a student will need:

- Valid passport.
- Valid visa stamp.
- I-797 (SRC Receipt Notice) to show proof that you have filed for OPT.
- Valid I-20 (that has been signed less than six months prior to the day you plan to re-enter the U.S.).
- Proof of enrollment at ECU.



Travel outside the U.S. AFTER graduation and AFTER OPT has been approved and AFTER EAD card has been received (Most Advisable**):** In order to re-enter the U.S. in this scenario, a student will need:

- Valid passport.
- Valid visa stamp.
- EAD/OPT card
- Valid I-20 (that has been signed less than six months prior to the day you plan to enter the U.S.)
- Proof of employment in the U.S. (job offer letter from employer, pay stub, etc.)



Travel outside the U.S. AFTER graduation but BEFORE OPT has been approved: While this scenario is allowable under the law, it is not advisable! Check out travel information from http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq_f2.htm.



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OPT REQUEST FORM

TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT

Student Name: _____
Last Name First name

EKU ID Number: _____

Current Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Major: _____ Degree Level: Bachelor's Master's Doctorate

Expected Degree Completion Term: _____

Proposed OPT Start Date _____ OPT End Date _____
Start date can be any day after the official final exam end date up to the 59th day.

OPT APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Please submit the following items at once to apply for OPT:

- Completed Form I-765** typed or handwritten in blue pen. Make sure the code: **(c) (3) (B)** is entered on item #16. You may download Form I-765 from the USCIS web-site: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf>.
- Completed Form G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance.** Download Form G-1145 from the USCIS web-site: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf>.
- Photocopies of all previously issued Form I-20s**, including I-20s from other schools
- Photocopies of any previous Employment Authorization Documents** (front and back) if applicable.
- Copy of electronic Form I-94** or copy of the paper I-94 (front and back)
- Photocopy of the passport ID pages** with expiration date. If you have had a passport extension, please include copies of any pages that show the new expiration date.
- Photocopy** of your visa page
- A \$410 check or money order** made payable to “*U.S. Department of Homeland Security*”
- Two identical passport-style photos** taken **within 30 days** (Using a pencil or a pen lightly print your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo).
- Academic Advisor’s Recommendation form



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ACADEMIC ADVISOR'S OPT RECOMMENDATION FORM

This form provides the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (OISSS) with the information required by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for the approval of optional practical training (OPT) employment authorization for this international student. Please note, OPT, must be in the student's major field of study and based on his or her educational level.

The purpose of this form is to obtain the academic advisor's confirmation that this student will be completing his/her program at the time stated below.

If you have any questions pertaining to this form, please contact us at international@eku.edu or at 859-622-1478. Thank you so much for your assistance.

Student's Name: _____

i. Student's Major: _____

ii. Student's Educational Level: _____

To the best of my knowledge, this student will complete all degree requirements in:

January _____ May _____ August _____ December _____
Year Year Year Year

Advisor's Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Advisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____