F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

OPT **INFORMATION & INSTRUCTIONS** OPT

Contact the International Student Services to learn more about Workshops each semester.

Definition

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an opportunity for F-1 international students to participate in professional, temporary employment that is directly related to their major area of study, but not a part of the academic curriculum.

Eligibility

F-1 students are eligible for Optional Practical Training after they have completed two, full-time semesters (fall and spring). Time spent on an approved full-time study abroad program may be counted toward the two-semester requirement as long as the student has completed one semester in the U.S. before studying abroad.

Students are **not** eligible for Optional Practical Training if they:

- are in violation of their F-1 status.
- will not have completed two full-time semesters of study by the requested employment start date.
- have already completed their degree.
- were previously authorized for 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training at the same degree level.
- were previously authorized for 12 months of Optional Practical Training at the same degree level.

Maximum Time Allowed

A **maximum period of twelve months (full-time) per degree level** can be granted. Students are eligible for an additional twelve months with each higher degree level. **Part-time OPT** is deducted from the total amount of available full-time OPT at one-half the full-time rate. (e.g., four months part-time = two months full-time) Students in STEM fields can apply for a 24-month extension.

When Eligible to Work Part Time or Full Time

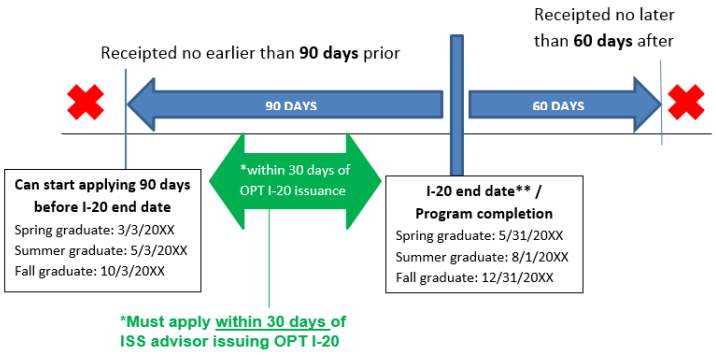
Optional Practical Training may be granted at four stages in a student's academic career. Timing dictates if it can be part-time or full-time. Full time means more than 20 hours of work per week and part-time means 20 hours or less per week. OPT may be used incrementally within or among all four potential periods of authorization, but a separate application must be submitted for each different period requested.

1) During summer or other vacation periods when school is not in session – OPT may be either full-time or part-time.
2) During the fall and spring semesters* – may only be part time, except as noted in #3 below.
3) After the completion of all course requirements for the degree, but before completion of the thesis, dissertation or equivalent* – may be either full-time or part-time.
4) After completion of the degree – may only be full-time.

Note*: Students in situations 2 or 3 **must continue to enroll in a full course of study while on OPT.

When To Apply

International Student Services (ISS) recommends you apply three months before your program completion date OR 60 days after program completion date. Post-completion OPT cannot be requested earlier than the beginning of a student's final semester. F-1 students cannot apply earlier than the 20th day of classes of their last semester.



How To Apply:

1) **Complete Section A of the "Academic Advisor/Academic Department Recommendation Form"**.

   Don't forget to complete the **Requested Dates** of Optional Practical Training and **the Type of Job** being sought. Be certain of the dates you are requesting. Attempts to change your application once it has been submitted to USCIS will result in processing delays and potential loss of your OPT.

2) Have your **academic advisor/academic department complete Section B** of the "**Academic Advisor/Academic Department Recommendation Form**." Note: All fields are required. If any item is left blank, International Student Services cannot provide a recommendation.

IMPORTANT! **The program completion date will be adjusted in SEVIS** to reflect the anticipated completion date indicated by the advisor on the recommendation form. The Optional Practical Training I-20 will show this adjusted completion date. **If you do not complete your degree by this time you must apply for a program extension prior to the expiration of your new OPT I-20.** Failure to do this will result in a status violation that will also invalidate your OPT authorization.

3) **Download and complete USCIS Form I-765 (http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf).The category code for line #16 on the I-765 is "(c) (3) (b)**"

NOTE REGARDING ADDRESS: The primary reason for failing to receive an OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD) is due to problems with the address used on the I-765.

- Use an address where you can receive mail for the **next four months**: a receipt is usually sent within 2-4 weeks and the EAD can take up to four months.
- We recommend using the International Student Services Office.
- When using someone else's address or the International Student Services Office-
  - make sure your name is on his/her mailbox/P.O. Box **OR**
  - include the International Student Services Office ***OR*** other person's name in the address (item #3) using "c/o" (in care of)
    - "c/o" is not valid with PO Boxes
    - "c/o" International Student Services, 601 Park St., MU 014
    - "c/o" proper format: c/o Friend's Name, Friend's Address
- The post office is not required to forward EADs through a mail-forwarding request.
- If your address changes while your application is pending (is still being processed by USCIS):
  - Change your address **online** with USCIS at***:*** https://www.uscis.gov/addresschange

4) **Make an appointment at International Student Services** to meet with an international student advisor. Bring or have available for review the following completed information.

CHECKLIST FOR APPOINTMENT:

- ❑ Academic Advisor/Academic Department Recommendation form - *ALL fields must be completed.*
- ❑ I-765
- ❑ Current and all previously issued I-20's
- ❑ Official Transcript
- ❑ Visa used for your most recent entry
- ❑ Passport
- ❑ I-94
- ❑ Previously issued EADs (if any)
- ❑ $410 until 3/31/2024 **after 4/01/2024 $555** – Credit or Debit card can be used to pay.
- ❑ 2 passport style photographs – Refer to Photo Guidelines on page 4

5) The **International Student Services advisor will verify your F-1 status** during your appointment. *Recommendations for students to engage in Optional Practical Training cannot be made for those who are out of status.*

If everything is okay, the advisor will electronically request a new I-20 with the recommendation for Optional Practical Training. Also, if applicable, the advisor will shorten your program end date in SEVIS. When the new I-20 is ready, you will receive an e-mail (usually within 2-3 business days) to come pick it up at the International Student Services Office.

6) **Pick up your new I-20** with an OPT recommendation from International Student Services. Sign the I-20 in Section #11. Be sure to ask the receptionist to make a copy. Keep the original with you.

7) **Gather the following documents:**
   a. Digital 2x2 color passport photo that meets USCIS specifications
   b. A scan of your passport photograph page
   c. A scan of the front and back of any previous EAD cards (if applicable)
   d. A scan of any previous I-20s with CPT or OPT information (if available)
   e. A credit or debit card with which you can pay the filing fee

8) **Create your online USCIS account: https://myaccount.uscis.gov/**
   a. A digital copy of your I-20 with an OPT recommendation
      i. Must be issued within the last 30 days for post-completion OPT and within the last 60 days for STEM extension OPT. You MUST consult with ISS to receive a new I-20 before filing for your OPT online.
      ii. The I-20 must be signed by an International Student Services advisor and by you. You can use a digital or handwritten signature.
   b. Your most recent form I-94.
      i. **https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home**
      ii. Select "Get Most Recent Form I-94"

9) **File the form online**

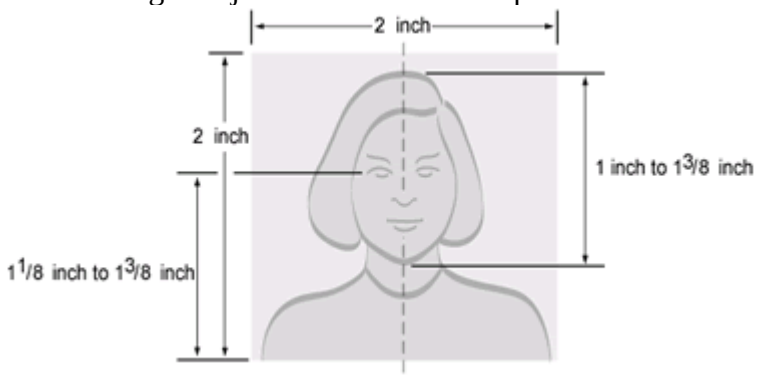
Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)

Provide a copy of all documents sent and received from USCIS to the International Student Services Office as well as keeping a copy for yourself.

Photo Guidelines

Seven Steps to Successful Photos

1. Frame subject with full face, front view, eyes open
2. Make sure photo presents full head from top of hair to bottom of chin; height of head should measure 1 inch to 1 3/8 inch (25 mm to 35mm)
3. Center head within frame (see Figure below)
4. Make sure eye level is between 1 1/8 inch to 1 3/8 inch (28 mm and 35 mm) from bottom of photo
5. Photograph subject against a plain white or off-white background
6. Position subject and lighting so that there are no distracting shadows on the face or background
7. Encourage subject to have natural expression



Current Processing Times and Online Status Check

While filing Form I-765 online allows for immediate filing and receipt of your application, ***the overall processing time for the I-765 application is the same regardless of paper vs. online filing***. See the USCIS website for current processing times

Authorization

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) has the final authority to grant Optional Practical Training. Authorization is issued in the form of a card referred to as an EAD (Employment authorization Document). Employment may not begin until the student receives a valid EAD.

During Optional Practical Training

While on Optional Practical Training, any change in name, change in address, or early termination of OPT **MUST** be reported to International Student Services – international@fhsu.edu You will receive an email from SEVP (Student Exchange Visitor Program) with information to set-up your "portal" account. This portal will be used to update your employment information, so you do not accrue and exceed the "unemployment" days.

Transferring to another school or beginning study at another educational level automatically terminates OPT. During your appointment, the International Student Services advisor will give you a handout entitled "F-1 Optional Practical Training Post-Recommendation Guideline" with specific details on issues of concern while you have an application pending and while you are participating in OPT. Be sure to read and comply with this. If you don't receive this handout, please inform International Student Services.

Thank you for choosing Fort Hays State University and we wish you the best with practical training endeavors!

Reference: 8 CFR 214.2 (f) (10) (ii) – (13)

F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

ACADEMIC ADVISOR/ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION FORM

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING is a type of temporary employment authorization available to international students in F-1 status that provides them an opportunity to gain practical experience in their field of study. **This form must be entirely completed** by the student and the academic advisor/academic department before International Student Services can process the recommendation. Please read the separate Optional Practical Training Instructions handout for specific eligibility details and application procedures.

SECTION A: To be completed by Student

Name Exactly as in Passport: _____
(Surname/Family name) (Given name) (middle or other name if applicable)

_____ _____ _____
E-mail Address **Phone # and Type** **Alternate Phone # and Type**

Dependents: (Spouse and/or minor children who are currently in the U.S. as your F-2 dependents):
Surname/Family name, Given name Surname/Family name, Given name
1. _____ 2. _____

Previously authorized periods of practical training:
❑ CPT ❑ OPT ❑ Full Time ❑ Part Time Dates Authorized _____to_____
❑ CPT ❑ OPT ❑ Full Time ❑ Part Time Dates Authorized _____to_____

Requested Period of OPT: Beginning (mm/dd/yy) ___/___/___ Ending (mm/dd/yy) ___/___/___
This *may "not"* be the actual date you receive on your Employment Authorization Document

Type of Position or Job Title Sought:_____

SECTION B: Recommendation to be completed by Academic Advisor/Academic Department

IMPORTANT!!! ACADEMIC ADVISOR/ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT MUST COMPLETE ALL SIX (#1-6) ITEMS BELOW:

#1 **Educational Level:** [ ] Bachelor [ ] Master **#2** **Major:**_____

#3 **Term** in which **ALL** degree requirements are anticipated to be completed:

[ ] Fall 20____ [ ] Spring 20____ [ ] Summer 20____

[ ] Within the initial week(s) of _____ term 20____ before enrollment is required

#4 Mark the **one** statement that **will be** applicable **during** the **"Requested Period of OPT"** indicated above:

____ All **DEGREE** requirements have been/will be completed BEFORE the start of OPT.

____ All **COURSE** requirements have been/will be completed **EXCEPT FOR THESIS, OR EQUIVALENT**. The student will continue to pursue a full course of study during the training period.

____ The training will occur only during a summer vacation or other period when school is officially not in session and the student will resume a full course of study following the period of training.

____ The training will occur during a regular fall or spring term and will not exceed 20 hours per week. The student will continue to pursue a full course of study during the training period.

#5 Briefly explain **how/why** the type of position or job title sought (noted above) is relative to student's degree:

_____

_____

#6 ***I have reviewed the student's academic record and verify the above to be true and correct. I recommend the student be permitted to engage in Optional Practical Training for the requested period of training as described above.***

Academic Advisor's Signature:_____ Date:_____

E-Mail: _____ Phone:_____

Academic Department's Signature:_____ Date:_____

E-Mail: _____ Phone:_____