

Optional Practical Training

International students who have been enrolled on a full-time basis for a full academic year are eligible for optional practical training (OPT), defined as temporary employment in their field of study for purposes of gaining practical experience. Students are eligible for a maximum of twelve months optional practical training for each higher degree earned. Students may apply for authorization for OPT directly related to their major area of study and equal with their educational level using either pre-completion or post-completion. Pre-completion OPT would be applied for and used before you finish your degree program. Post-completion OPT is used after you complete your degree program. Any time used during pre-completion OPT will be deducted from the 12 months available for post-completion OPT.

Here are some options for when you can use **pre-completion OPT**:

- During the student's annual vacation as long as the student intends to register for the next semester
- While school is in session, provided that practical training does not exceed twenty hours a week

Information on **post-completion OPT** is available at [Study in the States](#) or at the ISS office. Below is a summary of key points:

- Students may apply as early as 90 days prior to, and as late as 60 days after the completion of degree program
- Students are required to update a change of address to the ISS office within 10 days of moving
- Students on OPT can have no more than an aggregate of 90 days of unemployment to maintain their F-1 status. (If you receive the 24-month extension period the aggregate increases to 120 days of unemployment.)
- Students with a Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) degree are eligible to apply for an additional 24 months of post-completion OPT, which totals to 36 months of OPT. Only certain majors and employers are eligible for this extension. To see if you are eligible, please discuss your options with the ISS office.
- H1-B Cap-Gap Relief: If you have maintained your status on post-completion OPT and your application for change of status to H1-B is pending, your work authorization will be covered between the end date of your OPT and October 1 of the H1-B fiscal year. If the H1-B application is subsequently denied, you will have 60 days to leave the country.

Application Procedure

For better understanding of OPT, or to begin the application, please schedule an advising meeting with ISS Staff.

To apply, you need the following items:

1. **Confirmation of your graduation date:** work with your program coordinator to confirm the date you will meet all requirements for graduation
2. **Completed [I-765 form](#).** It is now possible to file online. Read the instructions carefully, you can complete the form with an ISS staff person.
3. **Two (2) passport photos.** The photos must meet the specifications indicated in the "Required Documentation" section of the [I-765 instructions](#).
4. **\$410.00 check or money order** made payable to: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
5. Your **passport, I-20**, and a copy of your **[most recent I-94](#)**.
6. A **[USCIS account](#)**, if filing online.

At the advising appointment, ISS will make a new I-20 with an employment recommendation on page 2, through the SEVIS system. ISS will also make copies of everything before we submit your application to USCIS.

Because the post office does not forward USCIS mail, be sure the address used on the I-765 will be valid for at least 90 days. We strongly recommend that you use our office address as follows:

**c/o International Student Services
5000 N. Willamette Blvd, MSC 178
Portland, OR 97203**

Travel

If you plan to travel before you receive your Employment Authorization Document (OPT card), please consult ISS before making travel arrangements.