

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

OPT is work authorization granted by Immigration/USCIS to allow F-1 students to gain experience directly related to their major area of study. You may apply for OPT authorization during your academic program, after your program completion, or a combination of both. You are eligible for 12 months of full-time OPT per academic level and you do not need a job offer to apply for OPT authorization.

Eligibility Requirements

- You are currently in F-1 status.
- You have been enrolled in a full course of study for one academic year (two semesters) or will complete one academic year by the date the OPT approval begins.
- You have not exceeded 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorization.
- You have not already used OPT at your current academic level.

Types of OPT

- Post-Completion OPT – (C) (3) (B)
 - OPT authorization that begins after completion of your academic program is called “post-completion OPT”. This is the most common type of OPT. Post-completion OPT is full-time and it can begin:
 - After you complete your degree program
 - After you complete all course requirements for your degree excluding thesis or equivalent
- Pre-Completion OPT – (C) (3) (A)
 - OPT used while you are still enrolled in your course of study is called “pre-completion OPT”. Students who do not have academic internships available in their program of study and cannot use CPT may consider this option. Pre-completion OPT is deducted from the 12 months of OPT eligibility, so most students prefer to save OPT for after program completion.
 - Full-time (21 hours/week or more) or part-time (20 hours/week or less) during summer or breaks
 - Part-time (20 hours/week or less) while enrolled in a full course of study
- [STEM OPT Extension](#) – (C) (3) (C)
 - Students in their 12-month OPT authorization period with a qualifying STEM approved degree and working for an E-verify registered employer, may apply for a 24-month extension of their OPT.

When to Apply

Apply early! You do not need a job offer to apply for OPT. We suggest you apply **three months** from the predicted date you wish to start working. OPT is recommended by advisers (known as Designated School Officials or DSOs) within the Kearney Center for International Student Services, but final approval is granted by USCIS. USCIS issues the approved OPT with an Employment Authorization Document/Card (EAD) which typically takes approximately 90 days to process.

Deadlines to consider:

- 9 months = Been enrolled and in F-1 status prior to applying
- 90 days before completion date = Earliest to apply for post-completion OPT
- 60 days after completion date = Latest to apply for post-completion OPT
- 30 days = Between receiving OPT recommendation from the Designated School Official (DSO) with signature on the I-20 and sending to and be received by USCIS.
- 90 days = Typical processing time of OPT approval (EAD) by USCIS

The Application Procedures

Information and the OPT forms are on Kearney Center for International Student Services website:

<https://mankato.mnsu.edu/academics/global-education/centers-of-global-education/international-student-services/employment/f-1-students/optional-practical-training/>

Complete the Forms and gather the items in the list below:

	Optional Practical Training FORM
	Application for Graduation Evaluation Summary — This is an email you will receive after applying for Graduation with the MSU Registrar’s Office. Go here to get started on your MSU Graduation Application: https://www.mnsu.edu/graduation/prepare/apply.html
	Form G-1145
	Form I-765 – For help filling out this form, check out our Form I-765 information sheet: https://www.mnsu.edu/international/form_i-765_faq.pdf
	Filing Fee payable to US Department of Homeland Security
	2 new passport style photographs, in color, with I-94 and full name written on back
	Copy of valid passport page
	Copy of visa
	Copy of I-94 record (https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home)
	Job offer letter (if expediting)
	Copy of ANY I-20’s with CPT authorization (if applicable)

Once you completed the above, you may either drop off the forms, scan, or send them to Kearney Center for International Student Services, CSU 250. You will receive the below documents if everything looks good to go.

	Copy of SEVIS event history form (KCISS will provide this)
	Copy of I-20 with OPT recommendation (KCISS will provide this) **sign this, make a copy to send, and keep the original

Resources to Check Out:

-Follow the Kearney Center on LinkedIn! We will have OPT specific posts:

<https://www.linkedin.com/school/kcissmnsu>

-After Applying for Post-Completion OPT : <https://mankato.mnsu.edu/academics/global-education/centers-of-global-education/international-student-services/employment/f-1-students/optional-practical-training/after-applying-for-opt/>

-Once you are Approved for Post-Completion OPT: <https://mankato.mnsu.edu/academics/global-education/centers-of-global-education/international-student-services/employment/f-1-students/optional-practical-training/once-you-are-approved-for-opt/>

