

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 International Center, 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

STEP ONE: First, apply for graduation through [Graduation Services](#). Then, complete page 3 below. Do not forget to have your Academic Advisor (not your Immigration Advisor) complete the box at the bottom of the form. Email your OPT form and Application for Graduation Evaluation Summary to your Immigration Advisor. Your Immigration Advisor will then email the following documents to you, which you will upload to your online application in step 2:

1. SEVIS event history print out
2. I-20 with OPT recommendation
 - You will sign and date it.
 - **You will send a copy of the I-20 and keep the original.**

STEP TWO: Follow the [Filing I-765 Online](#) instructions to create a USCIS online account and begin your application.



DO NOT SUBMIT your application without reviewing your application with your Kearney International Center Advisor!

STEP THREE: Before submitting your I-765, you will need to meet with your Kearney International Center Advisor to review your application. Schedule a Zoom meeting with your Immigration Advisor via [MavConnect](#). During the meeting, you will share your screen with your advisor so that you advisor can confirm your application has been completed correctly.

STEP FOUR: After reviewing your online OPT application with your immigration advisor, digitally sign and submit your application. Next, pay the filing fee (\$410) using a credit card, debit card, or withdrawal from a checking or savings account. See Steps 6, 7, and 8 in the [Filing I-765 Form Online](#) for complete instructions.

STEP FIVE: Read through "After Applying for OPT" and "Once You Are Approved for OPT" for more information on the next steps.

Resources to Check Out:

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

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

-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/>

