

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Definition of Optional Practical Training (OPT)

- Temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student's major area of study and **commensurate** with degree level.
- Allows a maximum of 12 months of practical experience.
- Students do **not** need to secure employment before applying for OPT.
- Requires USCIS approval

Preconditions For OPT

- Students may engage in OPT after being enrolled for at least one full academic year.
- OPT is available before and after completion of the educational objective, but different rules apply to pre- and post –completion OPT
- Passport must be valid for at least 6 months into the future.
- Prior use of full-time CPT for one year or more makes you ineligible for OPT.

Pre-completion OPT

- 20 hours/week limit while school is in session and the student still has coursework to complete
- Over 20 during official school breaks as long as student is currently enrolled, **and** intends to register for next term (full-time)
- Only graduate students can apply for pre-completion OPT

Post-completion OPT

- Over 20 hours after student has completed all course requirements for the degree while completing a thesis or dissertation.
- Only full-time OPT can be requested
- Undergraduate students can request OPT only after completion of the course of study
- Graduate students can apply for OPT after completion of the course of study while completing the thesis, dissertation or equivalent work.

Application Deadline For OPT After Completion Of Studies

- Start the application process 90 days before you complete the course of study.
- **USCIS takes approximately 60-90 days to process OPT** and there is no way to expedite it.
- If your application has not been adjudicated within 90 days of USCIS receipt, you may request from the USCIS local office that they grant you an interim 240-day Employment Authorization Document (EAD).
- ***Must make your request (1) prior to the completion of the course of study; or (2) prior to the completion of all course requirements for the degree (graduation).***

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OPT DOCUMENTS

URI Process

1. Letter from academic advisor specifying graduation date or photocopy of nomination for graduation form signed by department chair or program director.
2. Reduced Course Load Form approved from the Graduate School (ONLY if currently part-time).
3. Updated Bank Letter (in not employed on campus during the application period)

USCIS Process

1. Complete form I-765.
2. Complete form I-538 (Section A only).
3. Provide two photographs of yourself. Must meet the USCIS specification (see attached).
4. Check payable for \$340.00 to **US Department of Homeland Security** (fee subject to change).
5. Submit photocopies of:
 - a. I-94 card (both sides)
 - b. Biographical pages of your passport
 - c. Current visa page
 - d. New endorsed form I-20**
 - e. All previous form I-20
 - f. Previous EAD card (if any)

II. Mailing Instructions

After you have meeting with an OISS staff, using a return receipt requested service (approximately \$6.00), mail the application documents to the address listed below:

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Vermont Service Center
75 Lower Welden St.
Saint Albans, Vermont 05479

III. US Post Office

- Post office return receipt

If you have any doubts or questions, contact the Office of International Students & Scholars:

issof@etal.uri.edu or call 401-874-2395.

IV. The Vermont Service Center:

- After filing your application and paying your fees, you will receive a Notice of Action from USCIS, where acknowledging the receipt of your money and the I-765 (OPT) application (10-30 days).
- **For applications filed at the Vermont Service Center**, your receipt may look like this: **EAC 99 001 50001**.
- These receipt numbers are very important. Please use these numbers when requesting information about your case.
- You **might** receive a request from USCIS to submit additional evidence to process your OPT application. Let us know if you receive this blue form (30-60 days).
- EAD card (60-90 days)

Finding the Status of your Applications at a Service Center

Online: You can find the status of your case through [Case Status Service](#) Online, also available [en Español](#). This site provides around the clock and immediate access to this case status information.

Calling: You may obtain case status by calling 1 (800) 375-5283, and following the automated instructions. Please have your receipt number ready.

Writing: While calling can be more convenient, you may instead choose to request an update by writing the Service or Benefits Center where your case is pending. Specific information about the centers can be found under [USCIS Field Offices](#).

If you write, please provide the following in your letter:

- Your current name and address, and, if different, your name as it appears on your application;
- Any A-number, which is an 8 or 9 digit number following the letter "A", assigned to you or to your application
- Your date of birth;
- The date and place where your application was filed;
- Any receipt number from any receipt notice issued by INS or USCIS for your application;
- A copy of the most recent notice sent to you by INS or USCIS on your case, if you have received one; and
- The date and office where you were fingerprinted and where you were interviewed, if this has been done.
 - Sign your request, or, if you are preparing the request for the applicant, have him or her sign the request.
 - Please mark your envelope: ATTN: Status Inquiry. Please send your inquiry to the address listed in the "About Us" section of the USCIS Field Office pages.

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V. OPT CHECK LIST

Please include the following documents (original and copies) in your OPT packet and bring them to the OISS for review:

- Original I-538 form (sing with **blue** ink)
- Original I-765 form (sing with **blue** ink)
- Photocopy of new I-20**
- Photocopy of all previous I-20's
- Two photographs of yourself (passport style) (**Do not glue or staple!**)
- Check for \$340.00 USD to U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- Photocopy of both sides of I-94 card (front & back)
- Photocopy of passport page
- Photocopy of visa page
- Photocopy of your change of status adjudication results (if applicable)
- Top portion of EAD card receipt, which has the EAC # (if applicable)
- Photocopy of previous EAD card (if applicable)

DO NOT MAIL THE NEW ORIGINAL I-20!

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MOST COMMON QUESTIONS

If my visa has expired, do I need a new visa to reenter the United States?

Yes, you must obtain a new visa from a US embassy/consulate.

If my visa has expired but I do not plan to leave the country, do I need a new visa?

No, if you do not plan to exit the United States, you do not need a new visa. You may remain in the United States with an expired visa as long as the I-94 and passport (visa page) have the notation D/S and the I-20 is current.

Can I reenter [the U.S.] if my request for OPT is pending?

Yes, you may reenter to search for employment.

Can I reenter [the U.S.] if I left while on OPT?

Yes, you may reenter while on OPT. However, If your OPT has been approved for three months or more and you have not secured a job (paid or volunteer), your OPT ends and you may not reenter.

If you have a job, you may travel and reenter to resume work at the same job.

Does a departure from the U.S. while the OPT I-765 is pending constitute an abandonment of that application?

No. An F-1 student who has timely applied for OPT may travel outside of the United States while the OPT application is pending.

If a new visa is require for reentry, will the immigration inspectors at the port of entry require the student to show an unexpired EAD?

The consular officers will expect that the student show one of two items: unexpired EAD card or the I-765 receipt notice (form I-797) as proof of eligibility for the visa.

Must the student have a job or job offer before leaving and reentering?

Not necessarily. However, if the student has been on OPT for three months or more, s/he must show proof of a paid job or a structured volunteer job in his/her field of study. If the student cannot show proof of either, the Port of Entry Officer may deny him/her entry.

- It is always best that you assume caution when traveling, thus bring proof of employment or volunteer job if OPT has been approved for 3 months or more.
- Departing the country while the OPT application is pending is always risky.