

# Optional Practical Training

Workshop for F-1 Students  
2007-2008

## Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment authorized for a maximum of 12 months and must be directly related to a student's major.

## OPT Timing

- After the completion of a degree.
- After completion of [ALL](#) coursework requirements
- Graduate students may apply for OPT when working on remaining thesis, project or dissertation research only.
- You can submit your application to the ISSS office 90 days before your anticipated start date or up to 2 weeks before your program completion date, **NOT AFTER**.

## OPT Eligibility Requirements

- sufficient GPA
  - 2.0 for undergrads
  - 3.0 for grads
- maintained F-1 status
- completed the two previous semesters in full-time enrollment or received approval for RCL for each fall and spring semester that you were enrolled with a reduced course load
- valid passport

## Application Checklist

- A complete application includes the following (**Please don't staple or paperclip anything**):
  - Request for OPT form
  - I-765 form (**MUST** be filled out online then printed)
  - [Photocopies](#) of **all** I-20s ever issued to you (I-20 info page should not be copied)
  - two [passport](#)-style photos
  - check for \$340 to "US Department of Homeland Security"
  - copies of ID & expiration date pages in passport, most recent visa and BOTH SIDES of your I-94
  - [Photocopies](#) of any previous EAD's

## Requested Start Date

- We recommend you request a start date immediately after the end of the semester. Your OPT **must** be completed within 14 months of graduation.
- **OPT can only be requested for a maximum of 12 months. No extensions are possible at this time.**
- Remember: **You may not work** until you have received your Employment Authorization Document (EAD), even if your requested start date has passed.
- If you still don't have your EAD card and it's been 90 days since **the date of receipt of your application from immigration**, please e-mail ISSS at [intlstu@odu.edu](mailto:intlstu@odu.edu) or make an appointment with an ISSS advisor.
- If you are out the country and your OPT request has been approved, you need your EAD card and a job in order to return to the US.

## The Application Process

- OPT applications take about [5-7 business days](#) to be processed by ISSS; this is subject to change at busier times of the year.
- After your application has been processed, you will receive an e-mail (at your ODU student account).
- You will need to sign your newly issued I-20 before your application can be sent to Immigration.
- Please use **BLUE** ink when filling out paperwork.
- Your EAD card and any other correspondence from Immigration will be sent to ISSS. You will be notified via your ODU student e-mail address when it arrives.
- If you designate someone to pick-up your EAD card or any correspondence from immigration you need to e-mail [intlstu@odu.edu](mailto:intlstu@odu.edu).

## Second OPT

- Students can reapply for a second OPT if they have a second degree at a higher level (e.g. from BA to MA or MA to PhD).
- Students will **NOT** be eligible for a second OPT if they continue a lower or on the same level.

## OPT Termination

- If you are issued an I-20 to start a new degree program, your OPT will be terminated.
- If you don't complete all coursework, your OPT will be terminated. We have seen this problem come up when students change from the thesis to the project option in some degree programs.
- If you wish to cancel your OPT, please make an appointment with an ISSS advisor.

## Travel and Re-Entry on OPT

- It is recommended that you not leave the U.S. while Immigration is processing your request. Departure from the U.S. could jeopardize or delay the approval of your application.
- Students who have their EAD cards, but have not found employment cannot re-enter the US.
- If you have a job or will be starting a job upon re-entry, you need proof of employment (i.e. a letter from your employer and/or pay stubs).
- You need a signature from ISSS to re-enter the country. The signature must be less than six months old at the time of re-entry.
- **Remember:** Travel signatures take up to 3 business days to process.

## General Information

- Your I-20 will expire, but the OPT I-20 is still valid with the EAD card.
- Students on OPT can change employers and can work for more than one employer, BUT it is very crucial that your practical training be related to your [major](#).
- Even if you are not working, you must be able to prove that you are continuing your job search.
- You can register for one or two classes per semester for recreational reasons (but **not** as a degree-seeking student).
- Graduate students **MUST** complete their thesis/project/dissertation before the completion date of OPT.
- Immigration now requires students on OPT to update their employment information with their school. ISSS has an [OPT Employment Update Form](#) on the OPT page to assist you with compliance.

## General Information

- To renew your driver's license, you will need your OPT I-20, and EAD card **OR** if you have not received your EAD card, request a DMV letter online at the ISSS website.
- You have 3 addresses which need to be kept up to date.
  - SEVIS Non-U.S. Address, inform ISSS of changes
  - SEVIS U.S. Address, inform ISSS of changes
  - Permanent Address, update on LeoOnline
- Any time you change your address, you must notify ISSS of your new address [within 5 days](#). This can be done on our web site.

## General Information

- Unlike CPT, OPT does not require you to have health insurance [after graduation](#). HOWEVER, we **STRONGLY** recommend you continue with insurance, as past experience has dictated to our office that this is important.
- Keep all prior I-20s in a safe place. You will need to submit them again if you request another type of immigration benefit or a change of status in the future.
- Make sure that your passport is valid at least [6 months into the future](#).

# Questions?