

SEVIS F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL Guidelines

F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) allows F-1 students to accept paid, off-campus employment that is directly related to their field of studies and commensurate with the level of education being sought. OPT can be used both pre- and post-completion of degree requirements according to the following guidelines:

Pre-completion

1. A student who still has coursework remaining to complete his or her educational objective or degree program may apply for Pre Completion OPT while school is in session - limited to 20 hours of work per week.
2. Part-time OPT is deducted from the 12 month limit at 50%. Thus, 2 months of part-time OPT would count as 1 month deduction from the available 12 months.
3. During the annual vacation period – full or part time
4. Full-time employment can be requested for pre-completion OPT for students who have completed all requirements for their degree except for thesis or dissertation. Students must be registered each semester for thesis or dissertation status.

Post-completion

1. After completion of all degree requirements – full time
2. Standard OPT entitles you up to 12 months of OPT per educational level.
3. OPT authorization begins on the employment start date shown on your EAD card.
4. If you begin a new academic program at a higher level, you are eligible for another 12 months of OPT.
5. Prior use of full-time Curricular Practical Training at the same educational level for one year or more eliminates eligibility for Optional Practical Training.
6. Cannot accrue more than 90 days total unemployment

In order to be eligible for OPT a student must meet the following criteria:

1. A full time student at Texas Southern University for at least one academic year before engaging in OPT.
2. Currently in F-1 status.
3. Have not been authorized for more than 12 months of full time Curricular Practical Training at your current degree level.

You do not need to have a job offer to apply, although once you are approved for OPT time is deducted from your 12 months regardless of whether or not you actually work.

Application Timeline

1. You may apply for OPT I-20 recommendation from The Office of International Student Affairs up to 120 days prior to your date of graduation but:
2. You may apply to USCIS for OPT up to **90 days** before date of completion and up to 60 days after your completion date. **You must mail off OPT Package within 30 days of the printed date of OPT I-20**
3. You must specify a start date for post-completion OPT up to 60 days after you complete your degree and an end date of no later than 12 months after start date
4. USCIS may take 60-90 days to process an application for OPT, so please plan accordingly.
5. If you do not graduate you must contact our office immediately

Application Procedure Check List

Complete the package as indicated below:

- Have your department complete the Department portion of OPT package
- Fill out by **typing** the *Form I-765* (<http://www.immigration.gov>)
- Include a transcript (unofficial) showing continuous full time enrollment
- Include photocopy of your passport page (must be valid for the coming 6 months).
- Include photocopy of your F-1 visa
- Include a photocopy of your I-94 (front and back if you have the old card)
- Include photocopies of the front and back of all previous I-20s
- Include a check or money order for \$410.00 (payable to Department of Homeland Security)
- Include Two (2) immigration type photos (Not older than 1 year. The photographs must meet very specific requirements) (see USCIS form M-378 for color photo specifications).
Add your name and date of birth on the back of pictures.

○ Before mailing:

- Sign the OPT I-20's before sending it off. Keep one (1) I-20 for you. It must be mailed within 30 days of the print date on the OPT I-20
- Put both Immigration pictures in an envelope
- **Mail within 30 days of print date of I-20**
- **Sign both new I-20(s)** - Keep 1 for your records

Your OPT application should be mailed to:

(Certified mail with a return receipt)

USCIS Texas Service Center
P.O. Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

(Express Mail and Courier Deliveries)

USCIS
Attn: NFB AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business
Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

If your OPT application is approved, you will receive an EAD card from the USCIS granting you permission to work. You must immediately **send a copy of the EAD card to The Office of International Student Affairs**. Do not begin employment until you receive your EAD and until the start date that is indicated on the card. Send a copy of your job offer letter to the International Student Affairs Office (ISA) so your employment can be added to your I-20. While engaged in OPT, you are expected to engage in employment in your field of study. You may switch employers multiple times while on OPT. You **must report all changes of address and employment information to the ISA office**. You must end your employment by the expiration date on the EAD card. Once this date has past you have a 60 day grace period to remain in the U.S. to prepare for your departure, transfer to another university or begin a new program of study. Your EAD becomes invalid as of the date you complete the transfer or begin a new program.

Notification Requirements

While on OPT, you are still considered an F-1 student under Texas Southern University's sponsorship. You must notify ISA immediately of intention to terminate your OPT for any reason.

Travel Information

You must obtain a travel signature from The Office of International Student Affairs on your I-20 while on OPT. If you will be traveling abroad, you must carry your I-20, passport, valid U.S. visa, I-94 card, EAD card, and a letter from your employer.

If your U.S. visa has expired, there are risk involved in applying for a renewal.

All travel is RISKY!