

NOTE: Certain science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) degree holders may be eligible for additional 17 months of OPT time in addition to the regular 12-month OPT. Please refer to the F-1 OPT Extension for STEM Degree Holders: Information and Request.

General Information

Optional Practical Training for F-1 students is intended to provide hands-on practical work experience complementary to the academic program. An F-1 student is eligible for a MAXIMUM OF 12 MONTHS. However, if a student begins a new academic program at a higher level (e.g., master's after bachelor's degree, or Ph.D. after master's), the student is eligible for another 12 months of OPT.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for Optional Practical Training, you must:

- have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year;
- currently be maintaining a full-time program of study and valid F-1 status; and
- work in a job directly related to your major field of study.

Please note that students in English language training programs are not eligible for practical training. If you are uncertain whether you meet the eligibility requirements, please meet with an ISSS (International Student and Scholar Services) adviser.

Types of OPT

OPT is available in the following cases:

- part time or full time during the student's annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session, if the student intends to register for the following semester
- part time while school is in session
- part time or full time after completion of graduate course work requirements excluding a thesis or dissertation
- full time after completion of the course of study

Reporting Requirements While on OPT

Students on OPT are required to report to ISSS any change of name or address, or any interruption of such employment within 10 days. Such reporting should be done using the [OPT Reporting form](#).

Limited Periods of Unemployment to Maintain Status

During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT carried out under the post-completion OPT authorization.

OPT Filing Window

A student will be able to file the OPT application up to 90 days before the degree completion date and up to 60 days after the degree completion date. However, the OPT application must be submitted to the USCIS within 30 days of the date on which ISSS issues an OPT I-20.

Selecting OPT Dates

Pre-Completion: List the dates you actually intend to work. Your start date should be the earliest date that you could possibly begin work. Your end date should be the latest day that you could possibly work.

Post-Completion: If you are applying for post-completion OPT, you are given a 60-day grace period following the completion date of your studies. Therefore, for post-completion OPT, the beginning date must be within the 60-day grace period. For Ph.D. Students: You may request your post-completion OPT to begin as early as your thesis submission/defense date or as late as your graduating semester end date.

Duration of employment authorization

Employment authorization will begin on the date requested or the date the employment authorization is adjudicated, whichever is later.

Application Process

Step One: Request an I-20 recommending OPT from ISSS. You may request an OPT I-20 by providing an ISSS adviser with the following items:

- OPT I-20 Request (completed by you)
- Copies of your current and previous I-20
- Copies of Passport pages (biographical data, photo and expiration date)
- Copy of your current I-94 card (front and back)
- Copy of any previous EAD(s)
- If you have been an F-1 student for less than one academic year, copies of documents indicating your previous status in the U.S.

After reviewing the material listed above, an ISSS adviser will prepare an I-20 recommending OPT on Page 3.

Step Two: Pick up the OPT I-20 at the ISSS office after three business days.

Step Three: Mail the following OPT application to the USCIS Service Center which has jurisdiction over the address listed on Form I-765:

- Completed Form I-765 (<http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf>)—*type or print legibly.*
- For pre-completion OPT, enter "c 3 A" under Item 16.
- For post-completion OPT, enter "c 3 B" under Item 16.
- I-765 Application Fee (<http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf>), payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- Photocopy of all previous and current I-20s, including a copy of the new OPT I-20
- Photocopy of Form I-94 (*front and back*)
- Photocopy of passport (biographical data, photo and expiration date)
- Two U.S. passport-style photos (*lightly print your name on the back of each photo with a pencil*)
- Copy of any previously issued EAD(s)

Check all documents for completeness and accuracy. Be sure to sign Forms I-20 and I-765. Make a complete copy of your application for your records. ISSS does not maintain copies of OPT applications.

The Texas Service Center has jurisdiction over the following states: *Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.* **If the state you put on form I-765 in item 3 is not in this list, refer to the I-765 instructions under the mailing instructions for F-1 OPT applications.**

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

**Texas Service Center
P.O. Box 851041
Mesquite, TX 75185-1041
Phone: (800) 375-5283**

We recommend that you mail your application by Federal Express Mail or by Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested, so you will have a record of its delivery.

Travel Information

It is prudent to consult an ISSS adviser prior to leaving the U.S. as immigration regulations can change at any time. Currently the following are required to return to the U.S.

• **Post-Completion OPT:**

- a valid passport
- a valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport (except Canadian and Bermudian citizens)
- your OPT I-20 endorsed for reentry by an ISSS adviser within the last six months
- your valid EAD for OPT
- evidence of employment such as a job offer or employment verification letter

If you do not have all of these documents listed above or plan to leave the U.S. while your OPT application is pending with USCIS, you should consult an ISSS adviser before traveling abroad. For more information, see: http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq_f2.htm.

Please note: Your EAD will have a notation, "not valid for reentry to U.S." This is printed on all EAD cards issued for OPT and simply means that the card alone is not sufficient for reentry to the U.S..

- **Pre-Completion OPT:** You can travel and return to the U.S. with a valid passport, valid F-1 visa stamp and your OPT I-20 endorsed by an ISSS adviser within the last six months. You do not need evidence of a job or a valid EAD issued by USCIS to return to the U.S.

H-1B Cap-Gap Extension of Duration of Status (D/S) and OPT Work Authorization until October 1

Duration of F-1 status and work authorization will be extended for a student on OPT who is the beneficiary of a timely filed, non-frivolous H-1B petition requesting an employment start date of October 1 of the following federal fiscal year (October through September). The extension of duration of status and work authorization would automatically terminate upon the rejection, denial or revocation of the H-1B petition filed on the student's behalf.

Special Notes

- We may shorten your program end date on your I-20 if deemed appropriate.
- If you later decide not to mail your OPT application (Form I-765 plus supporting documentation) to USCIS for any reason, you must notify an ISSS adviser immediately so that we may timely cancel your OPT recommendation in SEVIS. Failure to inform an ISSS adviser that you are not applying for OPT can cause problems in the future.
- Please e-mail (iss@fit.edu) or fax (321) 728-4570 a copy of your OPT card to ISSS immediately upon receipt.
- Please keep in mind that ISSS will not authorize CPT after post-completion OPT has been recommended. Thus, if there is any possibility for CPT in your last semester, please plan accordingly.
- While OPT is pending, we strongly advise you against changing the address listed on Form I-765 as USCIS has not been able to process change of address notifications properly. Changing your address while OPT is still pending may result in filing a new OPT application with a new fee. We suggest to use the address of someone who can receive mail on your behalf—remember to put "c/o," followed by the person's name and address, on Line 3 of Form I-765. The U.S. Postal Service will not forward USCIS mail.
- If you receive a Request for Evidence (RFE), please inform ISSS immediately.
- Your OPT will be automatically terminated when you begin study at another educational level or transfer to another school.
- If you find any errors by USCIS on your OPT/EAD card, please inform ISSS immediately.
- Immediately inform ISSS of any immigration status change.

Revised April 8, 2008

NOTE: STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) degree holders requesting a 17-month OPT extension should not use this form but use the F-1 OPT Extension Request for STEM Degree Holders.

REQUEST—TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT

I have thoroughly read the OPT information provided and am applying for:

Pre-completion OPT

Proposed OPT Start Date _____ OPT End Date _____

Part-time OPT (no more than 20 hours/week) Full-time OPT

Post-completion OPT

Proposed OPT Start Date _____ OPT End Date _____

All periods of previously authorized practical training (attach a separate sheet if needed):

Curricular Practical Training	Optional Practical Training (include degree level)
<i>Example: full-time CPT 1/23/2002 – 5/31/2002</i>	<i>Example: part-time OPT 6/1/2002 – 12/31/2002, Bachelor's</i>

E-mail _____ Phone _____

Statement of Understanding:

- I have maintained valid F-1 status since I began my study at Florida Institute of Technology.
- I understand that I must report to ISSS (via iss@fit.edu) any change to my name or address, or any interruption of OPT employment within 10 days.
- I understand that accruing an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during my post-completion OPT will result in a violation of the requirements for remaining in valid F-1 status.

Signature of Student _____ Date _____