



Optional Practical Training

F-1 Status

What is Optional Practical Training?

OPT (short for Optional Practical Training) is a type of employment opportunity which allows F-1 students to obtain work experience in areas related to their academic major. Total of 12 months of OPT available per education level (e.g. Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate). This is full time and may occur anywhere in the United States. In order to be on OPT you need to obtain an Employment Authorization Document (EAD card). While on Optional Practical Training, individuals are still considered F-1 students at Lewis University, even though they may be working elsewhere in the United States.

Am I Eligible for Optional Practical Training?

- You have valid F-1 visa.
- You have been enrolled in a full course of study for one academic year
- You have not exceeded 12 months of full time CPT.
- You do not need a job offer to apply for OPT.
- The employment must be directly related to your major field of study and it must be appropriate for someone having your level of education.

Types of Employment

- **Multiple employers:** You may work for more than one employer, but all jobs must be related to your field.
- **Work for hire:** Commonly referred to as 1099 or Independent Contractor Employment; keep evidence of the duration of contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.
- **Self-employed business owner:** You can start a business or be self-employed while on OPT. You should be able to prove that you have the proper business licenses and that it is related to your degree program.

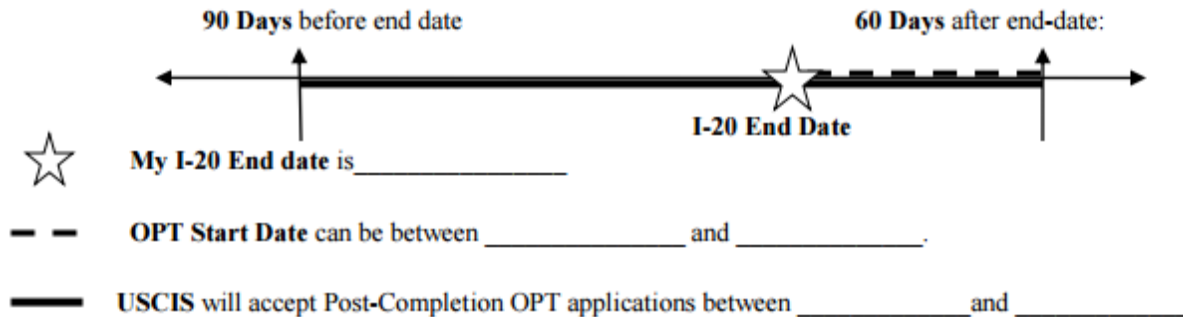
- Employment through an agency or consulting firm is also allowed.
- **Unpaid Employment:** You may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, where this practice does not violate any labor laws.

When can I apply for OPT?

Pre-Completion OPT: Apply 90 days before your requested job start date.

Post-Completion OPT: Apply 90 days before Graduation and 60 days after graduation. See the timing chart below.

Post-Completion OPT Timing Chart



How to apply for OPT?

Step 1: Prepare the following documents before coming to ISS.

- **Academic Advisor Recommendation Form.** Fill out the form with your academic advisor. Find the Form on page 7.
- **I-765 form.** Please fill out the form online or by handwriting in black pen within the box. Find the tips on page 8 to 11.
Download the form via: <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/i-765.pdf>
- **A copy of your ID page and visa page on your passport.** Both of these pages must be readable.
- **A copy of your previous I-20s.** A copy of all of the I-20s that you have ever had.
- **A copy of your I-94.** If your last entry is before April 2013, please make a copy of your I-94 that you have got when you entered the U.S. from Immigration. If your last entry is after April 2013. Please print your I-94 via: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>
- **A cashier's check or money order of \$410 and pay to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security."**

The filing fee for Form I-765 is \$410, effective 12 a.m. Eastern U.S. time, December 23, 2016. You must also pay an \$85 biometric services fee, for a total of \$495, if you are:

- Requesting consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA);
- A beneficiary of an approved employment-based immigrant petition and you are facing compelling circumstances; or
- A spouse or unmarried dependent child of a beneficiary of an employment-based immigrant petition who is facing compelling circumstances.

There is no biometric services fee for any other eligibility category.

- **Two passport style photos.** no older than 30 days.
- **(Additional) EAD card.** If you have an EAD card before, please includes a copy of your EAD card both front of back.
- **(Additional) G-1145 form.** Use this form to request an electronic notification when USCIS accepts your immigration application. Complete the information below and clip this form to the first page of your application package. Download the form via: <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/g-1145.pdf>

Step 2: Make an appointment with ISS.

At this time, please think about what date you would like to set for your **OPT start date**. OPT start date should be within 60 days after your graduation. Please Note: Once you confirm the date during the appointment, you cannot change any more. Please think about it carefully.

Step 3: During the appointment, we will:

- Ask you for your OPT start Date.
- DOS's Recommendation Letter.
- Issue you a new I-20.

Step 4: Mail all of the documents to USCIS by the applicant.

Mail all the document that requested above **within 30 days** by Certified Mail and Courier Service with return receipt requested to:

US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
Attn: AOS
1 820 E. Skyharbor Circle S.
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034

In about 2-3 weeks, you should receive a receipt notice (I-797) in the mail.

Note: If your mailing address on your I-765 form (Question#3) is not in Illinois, please find your filing address via: <https://www.uscis.gov/forms/forms-information/uscis-phoenix-and-dallas-lockbox-facilities>

Step 5: Report to the ISS when you get your EAD card and job Offer.

It's very important and your responsibility to report to our office, especially when you get a job offer, in order to maintain your SEVIS status. Please remember you are still a F-1 student even though you are doing OPT. If you don't report to our office within 90 days after OPT is approved, your status will be terminated. Please note: If you cannot find a job within 90 days (exceed 90 days unemployment), you are able to stay in the U.S only for 60 days.

What can I do after one-year OPT period?

After you finish your OPT, If you:

- Have STEM degree, you can apply for OPT extension. To know if you are eligible for OPT extension, check your CIP on your I-20 if it matches on this website: <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf>
Check OPT Extension document on our website for more details.
- Do not have STEM Degree, you can check the company that you are working at and apply for H-1 visa. Otherwise, you have to leave the U.S within 60 days.

Additional Information – Traveling outside of the U.S.

While OPT is pending, it is **not advisable** to travel outside the U.S. prior to receiving your EAD card and securing employment. You may travel outside of the U.S. However, There will be a risk that you may not be able to re-entering the U.S. without EAD card.

Once OPT is approved and you have a job offer: please prepare following documents for re-entry:

- Valid passport and visa.
- Valid I-20 with travel signature.
- Valid EAD card
- Job offer letter or letter of employment verification from your current employer.

Please Note:

- Without your EAD card and proof of employment/job offer, you assume a risk in re-entering the U.S. while on OPT.
- You can remain in the U.S. if your F-1 visa has expired. If you travel in and out of the US while on OPT, you must have a **valid F-1 visa**. If your F-1 visa expires before you re-enter to the United State, you must apply for a new visa at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy abroad PRIOR to your return.

F-2 Dependents - Travel Outside the U.S.: In addition to their own Form I-20 --- with updated travel signature, passport and valid F-2 visa, F-2 dependents should keep copies of the F-1 documents listed above.

Additional Information – Legal unemployment

Unemployment during OPT is allowed for a limited amount of days by the law. Taken from the USCIS website:

If you received...	You may be unemployed for...	For a total of ... <i>(during the OPT period)</i>
Initial post-completion OPT only	Up to 90 days	90 days

Please note: If you cannot find a job within 90 days (exceed 90 days unemployment), you are able to stay in the U.S only for 60 days.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the difference between Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

CPT is employment that is an integral part of your major curriculum and allows you to participate in an internship, practicum or cooperative education program. CPT must be required or, if not required, you must receive course credit. CPT is employer specific and must be done before you graduate. OPT is optional for any student who meets the eligibility requirements and you do not need to earn credit. OPT is not employer specific and may be done before or after you graduate. Please refer to our handout regarding the differences.

Does CPT usage affect OPT eligibility?

You may use as much CPT as is required for your degree program. However, if you use a total of 12 months or more of full-time CPT, you are not eligible for OPT. Part-time CPT does not affect OPT in any way.

Can I apply for OPT if I am part-time student in my last semester?

Yes, as long as you have petitioned OISS to become a part-time student.

Can I request OPT if my I-20 is not current?

No

Do I need a Social Security number?

Yes, you will need a Social Security number in order to receive payment from your employer.

Will I be required to pay Social Security and other taxes?

In general, as an F-1 student you will be exempt from Social Security (FICA) taxes for your first five years in the U.S. as long as you continue to declare nonresident status for tax purposes.

Unless you qualify under a tax treaty between the U.S. and your home government, your earnings as an F-1 student will be subject to applicable federal, state and local taxes, and employers are required to withhold those taxes from your paychecks. For more information on taxes, consult the Internal Revenue Service.



ACADEMIC ADVISOR'S RECOMMENDATION FORM

FOR F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

This form provides the information required by the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (formerly the INS) for the granting of employment for practical training to an international student. The student's academic adviser must complete and sign this entire form. Questions can be directed to the ISS Assistant Director. Thank you for your assistance.

Part I to be completed by the student

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ Middle Initial: _____
ID Number: _____ DOB (mm/dd/yyyy): _____

Part II to be completed by the Academic Advisor

Advisor's Name: _____ Title: _____
Department: _____ College/School: _____
E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

1. When do you anticipate this student completing his or her studies at Lewis University?

(Please fill in the date and check on of the following)

_____ / _____ / _____

- Graduation/Conferral of Degree Date
- Completion of semester/last day as registered student
- Other: _____

Please Note: An international student must be registered full time to maintain legal F-1 visa status.

2. It is required that the adviser describe the type of employment the student is seeking.

3. To the best of your Knowledge, is this type of employment experience related to the student's field of study and appropriate to the student's educational level?

- Yes
- No

4. Advisor's signature, Date.

_____ / _____ / _____

Return to: Michael Fekete, Director of International Student Services Office, Lewis University Parkway, Unit #280, Romeoville, IL 60446-2200



Tips for Filling Out the Form I-765



Application For Employment Authorization

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USCIS
Form I-765
OMB No. 1615-0040
Expires 02/28/2018

For USCIS Use Only	Fee Stamp	Action Block	Initial Receipt	Resubmitted
			Relocated	
	Received		Sent	
	Completed		Approved	Denied
<input type="checkbox"/> Application Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Authorization/Extension Valid From _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Authorization/Extension Valid To _____ Subject to the following conditions: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Application Denied - Failed to establish: <input type="checkbox"/> Eligibility under 8 CFR 274a.12 (a) or (c) <input type="checkbox"/> Economic necessity under 8 CFR 274a.12(c)(14), (18) and 8 CFR 214.2(f)		A#
			<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant is filing under section 274a.12 _____	

▶ **START HERE - Type or print in black ink.**

I am applying for:

- Permission to accept employment.
- Replacement (of lost employment authorization document).
- Renewal of my permission to accept employment (attach a copy of your previous employment authorization document).

1. Full Name

Family Name	First Name	Middle Name
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

2. Other Names Used (include Maiden Name)

Family Name	First Name	Middle Name
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

3. U.S. Mailing Address

Street Number and Name	Apt. Number	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
Town or City	State	ZIP Code
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

4. Country of Citizenship or Nationality

5. Place of Birth

Town or City	State/Province	Country
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

6. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

I am applying for: Check the box of "Permission to accept employment"

Q1: Write your last name in capital letters. Your first and middle names must be capitalized

Q3: If using a friend's or relative's address, write c/o followed by their name



Application For Employment Authorization

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USCIS
Form I-765
OMB No. 1615-0040
Expires 02/28/2018

For USCIS Use Only	Fee Stamp	Action Block	Initial Receipt	Resubmitted
			Relocated	
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<input type="checkbox"/> Application Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Authorization/Extension Valid From _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Authorization/Extension Valid To _____ Subject to the following conditions: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Application Denied - Failed to establish: <input type="checkbox"/> Eligibility under 8 CFR 274a.12 (a) or (c) <input type="checkbox"/> Economic necessity under 8 CFR 274a.12(c)(14), (18) and 8 CFR 214.2(f)		Approved Denied A# _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Applicant is filing under section 274a.12 _____

Q9: Check "No" if you do not have Social Security Number. If you have SSN, check "Yes" to Q9.a. and write down your SSN to Q9.b.

You don't need a social security number when you apply for Opt but you will need one before you start employment.

Q10-13: Fill out the information if you check "No" to Q9.a. Skip these parts if you already have SSN.

7. Gender Male Female
8. Marital Status
 Single Married Divorced Widowed
- 9.a. Has the Social Security Administration (SSA) ever officially issued a Social Security card to you?
 Yes No

NOTE: If you answered "Yes" to Item Number 9.a., provide the information requested in Item Number 9.b.

- 9.b. Provide your Social Security number (SSN) (if known)
 ▶
10. Do you want the SSA to issue you a Social Security card? (You must also answer "Yes" to Item Number 11., Consent for Disclosure, to receive a card.)
 Yes No

NOTE: If you answered "No" to Item Number 10., skip to Item Number 14. If you answered "Yes" to Item Number 10., you must also answer "Yes" to Item Number 11.

11. Consent for Disclosure: I authorize disclosure of information from this application to the SSA as required for the purpose of assigning me an SSN and issuing me a Social Security card.
 Yes No

NOTE: If you answered "Yes" to Item Numbers 10. - 11., provide the information requested in Item Numbers 12.a. - 13.b.

Father's Name

12.a. Family Name (Last Name)

12.b. Given Name (First Name)

Mother's Name (Provide your mother's birth name.)

13.a. Family Name (Last Name)

13.b. Given Name (First Name)

14. Alien Registration Number (A-Number) or Form I-94 Number (if any)

15. Have you ever before applied for employment authorization from USCIS?

Yes (Complete the following questions.)

Which USCIS Office?	Dates
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Results (Granted or Denied - attach all documentation)

No (Proceed to Item Number 16.)

16. Date of Your Last Arrival or Entry Into the U.S., On or About (mm/dd/yyyy)

17. Place of Your Last Arrival or Entry Into the U.S.

18. Status at Last Entry (B-2 Visitor, F-1 Student, No Lawful Status, etc.)

19. Current Immigration Status (Visitor, Student, etc.)

20. Eligibility Category. Go to the Who May File Form I-765? section of the Instructions. In the space below, place the letter and number of the eligibility category you selected from the instructions. For example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii), etc.
() () ()

21. (c)(3)(C) Eligibility Category. If you entered the eligibility category (c)(3)(C) in Item Number 20. above, list your degree, your employer's name as listed in E-Verify, and your employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number in the space below.

Degree	Employer's Name as listed in E-Verify
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a Valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number

Q14: Your Alien Registration number can be found online on your I-94

Q15: If you have not previously applied for OPT before (don't have EAD card), mark "no"

Q16 & 17: can be answered with the information found on your latest I-94

Q18: If you were a student on your last entry, write down "F-1 Student" for question 14

Q19: write down your current Immigration Status. If you are a student or graduating student write down "F-1 Student"

Q20: The category code for post – completion Training (OPT) is (c) (3) (B)

Q21-23: Since the eligibility category code is (c)(3)(B), there is no need to write anything in sections 21,22, and 23.

Q21-23: Since the eligibility category code is (c)(3)(B), there is no need to write anything in sections 21,22, and 23.

Do not forget to sign your form I-765. Try to sign within the box since they will use this signature for your EAD card.

Make sure to double check all the information you write on this form as a small mistake can cause serious delays and monetary penalties.

22. (c)(26) Eligibility Category. If you entered the eligibility category (c)(26) in Item Number 20. above, please provide the receipt number of your H-1B principal spouse's most recent Form I-797 Notice of Approval for Form I-129.

23. (c)(35) and (c)(36) Eligibility Category

a. If you entered the eligibility category (c)(35) or (c)(36) in Item Number 20. above, please provide the receipt number of the Form I-140 beneficiary's Form I-797 Notice of Approval for Form I-140.

b. Have you EVER been arrested for and/or convicted of any crime? Yes No

NOTE: If you answered "Yes" to Item Number 23.b., refer to Item Number 5., Item H. or Item I. in the Who May File Form I-765 section of these Instructions for information about providing court dispositions.

Certification

I certify, under penalty of perjury, that the foregoing is true and correct. Furthermore, I authorize the release of any information that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services needs to determine eligibility for the benefit I am seeking. I have read the Who May File Form I-765 section of the Instructions and have identified the appropriate eligibility category in Item Number 20.

Applicant's Signature

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy)

Telephone Number

Signature of Person Preparing Form, If Other Than Applicant

I declare that this document was prepared by me at the request of the applicant and is based on all information of which I have any knowledge.

Preparer's Signature

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy)

Printed Name

Address