Optional Practical Training (OPT)

**Definition:** According to F-1 regulations, as an F-1 student you are eligible for 12 months of optional practical training (OPT) directly related to your field of study. To be eligible, you must have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for at least one full academic year and be maintaining good academic standing. OPT can be used in the following time periods:

- During summer vacation (full-time or part-time)
- While classes are in session (part-time)
- After completing a degree program (full-time)

**Note:** OPT is permitted for a maximum of 12 months. You can apply for less than 12 months of OPT, but the total of all OPT requests cannot exceed the 12-month maximum. Exception: When you have been authorized for part-time OPT one calendar month of part-time OPT equals 50% of a month from the 12.

*If you are unemployed for more than 90 days during post completion OPT, you will be out of F-1 status. You must inform your International Student Advisor when you are employed.* Employment may be full time or part time and paid or unpaid. The advisor will update your SEVIS record. Failure to do this will result in loss of F-1 status.

If you move into a new academic level (i.e. bachelor's, master's, PhD, etc.). USCIS permits one year of OPT at each degree level that is higher than the most recently completed program. However, unused OPT does not carry over to the next academic level. While, one year of OPT is the maximum at each level of education, ESL students are not eligible for OPT.

**Applying for Optional Practical Training**

*If you are completing your associate’s degree, you may apply to USCIS up to 90 days before you complete your degree requirement and no more than 60 days after completing the degree requirements.*

1. Permission to work under OPT requires an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS. To obtain the EAD you must have a recommendation from your International Student Advisor. To apply for the recommendation you need to bring the following documents to the international student advisor.

   - **OPT Request Form.** You need to explain whether you will be doing OPT in the summer, during classes or after you complete your program; full-time or part-time. USCIS will not accept a request that includes both part-time and full-time OPT. If the request is for post-completion (after your program), you need to state the date when you are expecting to complete your program. Provide a description of your proposed training and explain how it relates to your current major. **Note:** You do not need a job offer to apply for OPT.
   - **Completed form I-765**
   - Photocopies of both sides of any previously issued EAD card

After you have your recommendation for OPT, you need to send your application to USCIS.

Office of International Student Services
7630 Little River Turnpike, Suite 815 • Annandale, VA 22003 • Phone: 703-323-3423 • Fax: 703-813-1329
Email: oiss@nvcc.edu • www.nvcc.edu/international
**USCIS APPLICATION PROCESS FOR OPT**

The following documents will be returned to you:
- A new I-20 with the recommendation for optional practical training in your field of study on page 3. **Note: Please check to be sure the dates of the employment recommendation are correct.** (You may not begin work until you receive the EAD card)
- Original I-765

You need to mail the following documents to the USCIS:
- Completed form I-765 (original)
- $410.00 check/money order written to “Department of Homeland Security”. (do not abbreviate or shorten the name)
- Photocopy of pages 1 and 3 of the new I-20 (with the OPT recommendation)
- Photocopy of the most recent I-94 (both sides)
- Photocopy of the identification page of the passport that has your photo on it. If the expiration date of the passport is on another page, be sure you include a photocopy of that page as well.
- Two recent photos of you: the USCIS requires that the photos meet the requirements for the full frontal/passport type of photos and not be more than 30 days old when the application is filed.
- Photocopies of pages 1 & 3 for all I-20’s issued to you since you first received F-1 status:

**Your application must be received by USCIS no more than 30 days from the date the DSO recommended OPT.**

Send your completed application package to the USCIS at the address below. We recommend that you send the application by certified mail and get a return receipt. USCIS will send you a receipt in three to four weeks. Please keep this receipt in a safe place; you may need it at a later date. The Employment Authorization Document should arrive about 90-120 days later.

If sending by U.S. Postal Service: USCIS
P.O. Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

If sending by Express mail: USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121, Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

**Frequently Asked Questions**

What is the latest date that my EAD can begin/end? You are permitted 12 months of OPT within a 14 month period which begins when you complete your degree. Your EAD must begin no later than 61 days after your completion date and end no later than 14 months after you completed the degree.

Can I go home after I graduate and apply for OPT when I come back? No.

Can I travel outside the US after I complete my program and I am waiting for my EAD? No.

Can I travel with the EAD? Yes, but you will need to have your I-20 endorsed by the international student advisor and you will need an F-1 visa. A letter showing that you have an offer for training is advised.

Can I volunteer with a company before I get my EAD? No, you cannot provide a service for which an individual would generally be paid.

Updated 02/01/2017
OPT REQUEST FORM

Name: ___________________________ EMPLID#: ___________________________

Family Name: ___________________________ First Name: ___________________________

SEVIS Number: N____________________ Campus issuing I-20: ___________________________

E-mail Address: ___________________________ Phone: ___________________________

Please check one of the following options. I am requesting OPT:

□ After graduation (full-time)
□ While classes are in session (part-time)
□ During the summer:
  □ Full Time
  □ Part Time

*My major is ____________________________________________________________.

I expect to complete my degree on (Date)________________________.

* Description of proposed training: (How is the employment related to your major?):

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

I would like my training to begin on (date)________________________ and end on (date)________________________

Previous EAD information: if you have had an EAD issued prior to this request, please provide the following information:

Beginning and Ending Dates: ___________________________
Full-time _______ or part-time _______
Purpose and/or education level it was issued for: ___________________________

Applicants must read and sign the following statement:

I understand that I am required to report my initial place of employment and any changes that may occur during the period of my (OPT) employment authorization: to include change of employers, periods of unemployment, and changes in my address. I must report this information to the Office of International Student Services at oiss@nvcc.edu.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________