

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is the opportunity to apply knowledge gained in your degree program to off-campus work in your major field. OPT is authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This authorization can take 2 to 3 months to receive the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card. The maximum amount of time granted to work on F-1 OPT status is 12 months per degree level plus a possible H1B cap gap extension OR a 24 month extension for those whose STEM majors are listed on the official OPT Stem list. You may use some or all of the available 12 months of practical training during your course of study or save the full twelve months to use after you graduate. You may apply for POST-graduation OPT no earlier than 90 days before your graduation date and the immigration service MUST RECEIVE your application NO LATER THAN 60 days beyond your program end date.

To be eligible to apply for OPT, you must: (1) have been in full time student status for at least one academic year by the requested start date of your OPT, and (2) been maintaining valid F-1 status at the time of the application.

In the following cases, you may apply for OPT.

- During your annual vacation period or when school is not in session\*
- During the fall or spring semesters, for a maximum cumulative employment total of 20 hours per week\*
- After completion of graduate course work or program of study

\*You must be registered, or intend to register, in the same program after your OPT experience.

**Step One:** Email the following documents to [llick@eiu.edu](mailto:llick@eiu.edu) as pdf attachments. **DO NOT submit to OISS more than 90 days prior to your program end date! USCIS will deny your application.**

- Completed Form I-765. Instructions and form are available for download from the USCIS website at <http://www.uscis.gov> (Under the Forms tab)
- Certification of Academic Department Official for OPT form signed by your academic advisor/graduate coordinator.
- OPT Student Acknowledgement – make sure you **initial each statement** and sign

If determined you are eligible for OPT, the DSO will enter a recommendation for OPT into SEVIS and create a new I-20 for you. Your I-20 will be sent to you electronically. Allow at least 7 business days for processing, **expedites are not available.**

**Step Two:** Apply online at <https://www.uscis.gov/file-online/forms-available-to-file-online> or mail your application to one of the addresses below. **USCIS must receive your request within 30 days of the DSO signature on your I-20.**

### USCIS Chicago Lockbox

#### U.S. Postal Service (USPS)

Attn: I-765 C03  
P.O. Box 805373  
Chicago, IL 60680-5374

#### FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:

#### USCIS

Attn: I-765 C03 (Box 805373)  
131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor  
Chicago, IL 60603-5517

- Personal check, cashier's check, or money order made out to Department of Homeland Security. To find current amount go to <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>.
- Two photographs with your name on the back, in pencil. (place photos in a clear ziploc bag)
- Original form I-765. Don't forget to sign it!
- Photocopy of SEVIS I-20 recommending OPT, and photocopies of ALL prior I-20(s) or other immigration documents showing another nonimmigrant status, including I-20's from other institutions.
- Photocopy of I-94
- Photocopy of identity page and US entry visa page from your passport, including passport expiration date
- Photocopy of your last Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and I-797 Notice of Action (if applicable)
- Form G-1145 (suggested, but not required) Use this form to request a text message and/or email when USCIS accepts your application.

**WHEN FILLING OUT FORM I-765**

**Reason for Applying:**

- Check “initial permission to accept employment” if applying for initial OPT
- Check “renewal” if applying for STEM extension

**Your US Mailing Address:** This must be an address at which you can receive mail for at least the next 3 ½ months. You cannot put in a forwarding order on this address, the immigration service’s envelopes state “Do Not Forward”; your card will be returned to the immigration service and destroyed. If you want to use a friend’s address, make sure your name is on the mailbox.

**Eligibility Categories:**

- For initial post-completion OPT fill out as (C) (3) (B)
- For STEM extension fill out as (C) (3) (C)

**REMINDERS: REGULATIONS WHILE YOU ARE ON OPT**

**Required updates (Address/Phone/Email and Employment).** Immigration regulations REQUIRE that while you are on OPT, you **MUST** notify OISS within 10 days when:

- You start a new job
- You change your address, phone, or email
- You are NOT employed

Updates are to be made by submitting the OPT/STEM Report Form on our website at: <http://www.eiu.edu/internl/machform/view.php?id=7ON>

**TRAVELING ABROAD WHILE ON OPT:**

In order to re-enter the U.S. while you are on OPT, you must have a valid passport, current F-1 visa stamp, I-20 signed within the last six months, the EAD or the receipt notice for your OPT application, and your job offer letter. **We strongly advise against traveling abroad while your OPT is pending.**

**NEVER enter the U.S. in any visa status other than F-1 while on OPT (it will invalidate your OPT!)**

This form provides OISS with information when a student in F-1 student status is seeking a period of employment authorization for Optional Practical Training (OPT). Please complete this form and return it to the student. F-1 regulations permit a student to apply for OPT during one of the following times: while school is in session for up to 20 hours per week; during vacation periods, after completion of graduate course work but before deposit of thesis or dissertation; or after completion of studies.

**Student Information:**

Family (Last) Name _____	First Name _____	Middle Name _____
Program (Major) of Study _____	EIU E-Number _____	SEVIS ID # (Upper Left Corner of I-20) _____
Email Address _____	US Phone Number _____	

Name of Academic Advisor/Graduate Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please complete the appropriate section (A or B):**

**A. Complete this section if the student is applying for work permission to begin prior to completion of studies:**

This student has completed all required course work for a graduate program, and is working on thesis: (Yes) \_\_\_\_\_ (NO). The student will complete all degree requirements by the following date: \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Complete this section if the student is applying for work permission to begin after completion of studies:**

The student has completed/ will complete all degree requirements by the following date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Important: Students may not work on campus after the date of completion of studies noted on the practical training application form. Those with assistantships may use the final day of their appointment as a completion date for studies.**

I certify the above information to be true and correct.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Academic Advisor/Graduate Coordinator Signature Month/Day/Year

**OPT Start Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

By signing this document I am confirming that I agree to comply with all immigration regulations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Month/Day/Year