

## Optional Practical Training

OPT is employment authorization designed to provide you with an opportunity to gain practical experience in your field of study; complementing your academic work. While on OPT a student remains in F-1 status and need to comply with F-1 regulations. OPT is authorized by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). The USCIS issues the Employment Authorization Document (EAD), which is the official approval document of OPT.

### Eligibility

In order to be eligible for OPT, F-1 students must:

- currently be in valid F-1 status
- have completed two semesters of full-time enrollment prior to OPT start date

**A job offer is NOT required at the time of application.**

**Watch the OPT Basics PowerPoint here:**

[OPT Basics Video](#)

**Once you have watched the OPT basics video, take the OPT [Quiz](#). Here:**

<http://goo.gl/forms/6mlo88qG3k>

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### Types of Employment Allowed

**ALL** employment while on OPT must be directly related to student's field of study and appropriate for someone at student's degree level.

- Graduate: directly related to academic program
- Undergraduate: directly related to majors(s)

If you had a change in your degree level (e.g. Ph.D. to MS) or your current major(s) is not yet reflected on your I-20, this information must be updated prior to applying for OPT.

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### Length of OPT Available and Hours Per Week Limits

OPT is limited to 12 months total and can be used prior to or after completion of student's degree, or a combination of the two.

#### ***Pre-Completion***

During academic semesters

Limited to part-time (20 hours per week or fewer)

During semester breaks (i.e. summer or winter)

Part-time or full-time (more than 20 hours per week) allowed

*Ph.D candidates only: After completion of all required coursework*

Graduate students who have completed all course requirements and are engaged in thesis/dissertation research only are eligible to apply for full-time (more than 20 hours per week) OPT during the academic year only if the training constitutes an integral part of their thesis/dissertation research.

### **Post-Completion**

Any post-completion OPT authorization is automatically issued for full-time (more than 20 hours per week) employment.

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### **Applying for OPT**

To apply for OPT, first review the OPT Application Checklist for a list of the documents needed to apply and links to the required forms.

1. [OPT Application Checklist](#)

Download and watch the OPT Application Guide Tutorial, a narrated PowerPoint with detailed step-by-step instructions on completing forms and applying for OPT. To play the video, download and open the presentation, then click "Slide Show" and select "Play from Beginning".

2. [Optional Practical Training Tutorial: Application Guide](#)

### **Additional Resources:**

Click here to access:

1. [OPT Application Timeline Calculator](#) (make an [appointment](#) for help using this form)
  2. [Salve OPT Request Form](#)
  3. [Sample OPT Cover Letter](#)
  4. [Optional Practical Training Tutorial: Mailing your Application to USCIS](#)
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### **Post-Completion OPT and STEM OPT ONLY: Limit to Days of Unemployment**

Once approved for **Post-Completion OPT and STEM OPT**, F-1 status is dependent upon employment.

You **may NOT accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment during the initial period of OPT** authorized on the Employment Authorization Document (EAD). A legitimate volunteer position (in accordance with U.S. Department of Labor regulations) qualifies as a substitute for paid employment. Students on post-completion OPT are required to report employment, paid or unpaid, to OIP. Please note that USCIS will **automatically** terminate your OPT if you accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment.

Once approved for STEM OPT a student **may NOT accumulate more than 120 days of unemployment** during the **entire** (up to 29 months) period of employment authorization (post-completion OPT and STEM OPT).

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### **Reporting Responsibilities while on Post-Completion OPT**

All students on post-completion OPT must report to the Office of International Services their current residential addresses, and any future changes of address within 10 days of the change by using the online [Change of Address Form](#).

In addition, once OPT has been approved by USCIS, students are required to email a scanned copy of the front and back of the EAD card to [aida.neary@salve.edu](mailto:aida.neary@salve.edu) and complete the [OPT Employment Information Form](#).

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security requires all students in F-1 status who have been granted OPT employment authorization to report the location of the OPT experience, including name and address of their OPT employer or organization. Students must report their employer's name and address, and any interruption of employment or changes of employers (within 10 days) during of all periods of post-completion of OPT using the online [OPT Employment Information Form](#). If your OPT begins and you have not secured an OPT employer, then you still must report to the Office of International Services, then submit the online form again when you secure employment.

**If you do not report your employment, USCIS will consider you unemployed and once you reach 90 days of unemployment, your status will be automatically terminated by USCIS.**

[OPT Employment Information Form](#)

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### **Change Employers**

Students on OPT can have multiple employers at the same time and can change employers at any time provided each job is directly related to student's field of study and commensurate with student's level of education. Students are required to keep careful records of all employment while on OPT and to report any change or addition. [OPT Employment Information Form](#)

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### **Travel While on OPT**

Students can travel in and out of the U.S. while on OPT. If a student travels outside the U.S. after completion of studies, he/she must have an approved EAD card to enter, and **must re-enter in F-1 status; otherwise the OPT authorization will automatically end.**

Refer to the [Travel](#) page on this website for details about travel while on OPT.

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### **Change of Immigration Status, Permanent Departure of U.S. or Starting New Academic Program During Post-Completion OPT**

You ***MUST*** inform OIP as soon as possible of any changes in your status, so that the F-1 record can be appropriately updated.

- Change of immigration status: If approved for a change of immigration status (i.e. F-1 to H-1B) your F-1 status and OPT will end upon the start date of the new immigration status.
- Leave the U.S. permanently: If you decide to leave the U.S. for longer than 5 months, your post-completion OPT is no longer valid.
- Start new full-time academic program: If you are admitted into a new full-time academic program, your SEVIS record must be updated with the new program's information or transferred to your new school. Your OPT is officially ended when the SEVIS record is updated.