



## F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)

### CHECKLIST

- Complete the **OPT Status Responsibilities Form**.
- Have your Advisor complete the **OPT Confirmation of Program Completion Form (POST-COMPLETION OPT ONLY)**.
- Complete form **1-765** (available at [uscis.gov](http://uscis.gov)). (SEE SAMPLE I-765 – APPENDIX A)
- Contact the PDSO or DSO to arrange for an appointment. Please bring the above items to your appointment.
- The PDSO will print a new **I-20** for you which will include AUSB’s recommendation for your OPT. You will need to send a copy of the new **I-20** with your application.
- Mail the following documents to the USCIS at one of the addresses listed below. **For post-completion OPT, USCIS must receive your application no more than 60 days beyond your graduation day or 60 days beyond the end date of your I-20 (whichever is EARLIER). You must send your application within 30 days of receiving the new I-20 from the PDSO. Please keep copies of all documents mailed for your own records.**
  - Form **I-765** (available at [uscis.gov](http://uscis.gov) – SEE SAMPLE I-765 – APPENDIX A).
  - Copy of pages 1 & 2 of the **new I-20** confirming your OPT recommendation.
  - Copy of **ALL** previous I-20s issued to you (from AUSB and any prior institution).
  - Copy of your **I-94** (available online).
  - Copy of the photo page and expiration date page of your passport.
  - Copy of the F-1 visa page of your passport (even if expired).
  - Copy of previous OPT card or EAD card, if you have one.
  - Two passport-size photos. Print your name and I-94 card number lightly in pencil on the back of each photo. Place the photos in an envelope and attach it to the front of your **I-765**. **DO NOT CUT THE PHOTOS.**
  - **Payment of Fee.** See <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> for current fee amount. Checks may be made payable to the Department of Homeland Security. You may send a money order or a personal check from a U.S. bank. Attach the money order or check to the front of the **I-765** form. **DO NOT SEND CASH.**
  - Staple the documents together and send via certified mail with return receipt or via FedEx (to track your package). You will receive a notification of receipt from the USCIS (Form **I-797**).

For U.S. Postal Service deliveries including U.S.P.S. express mail  
USCIS  
PO Box 21281  
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For (non-USPS) courier service deliveries (FedEx, UPS, DHL etc)  
USCIS  
Attn: AOS  
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S, Suite 100  
Phoenix, AZ 85034

## FORM I-765 INSTRUCTIONS (SEE SAMPLE I-765 – APPENDIX A)

- Check first box “permission to accept employment” or “renewal” if you are applying for a 17 month extension; fill out lines 1 through 16 (17 if applicable); sign and date:**
- #3 Return 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.” If the card is sent to an address with a forwarding order, or if you cannot receive mail at the address you use, your card will be returned to the immigration service and destroyed. If you want to use a friend’s address, you need to make sure your name is on the mailbox. If you want your department to receive mail for you, check with your department first.
- #10 Alien Registration Number:** In most cases you will use your I-94 number found at the top of your I-94 that you retrieved online. It is usually an 11 digit number – sometimes the last two digits are separated by a space.
- #11 Previous employment authorization:** The answer is “no” unless you have previously applied for an OPT card at this or any other institution. It is “no” even if you have had CPT or an H1B visa.
- #16 Eligibility Categories:** For F-1 OPT, fill out as follows:
  - For summer OPT PRIOR to graduating: (c) (3) (A)**
  - For POST-Completion (after graduating) OPT: (c) (3) (B)**
- Certification:** Remember to sign and date the I-765

### REMINDERS: REGULATIONS WHILE YOU ARE ON "OPT"

**REQUIRED UPDATES (ADDRESS AND EMPLOYMENT).** Immigration regulations REQUIRE that while you are on OPT, you **MUST** notify the AUSB PDSO when you change your address AND/OR when you are NOT employed.

#### **TRAVELING ABROAD WHILE ON PRACTICAL TRAINING:**

In order to re-enter the U.S. while you are on Optional Practical Training, you must have a valid passport, current F-1 visa stamp, I-20 signed within the last six months, the EAD (OPT work card) or the receipt notice for you OPT application **AND your job offer letter.**

**NEVER ENTER the U.S. in any VISA STATUS OTHER THAN F-1** while on your OPT (it will invalidate your OPT!)

## OPT – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. What is F-1 Optional Practical Training?

Practical training is the opportunity to apply knowledge gained in your degree program to off-campus work in your major field (not your minor). OPT is authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This authorization can take 2 to 3 months to obtain. 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 17 month extension for those who qualify (see info on page 4). 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 up to 90 days before your graduation date and **the immigration service MUST RECEIVE your application NO LATER THAN 60 days beyond your graduation date or 60 days beyond the end date of your I-20 (WHICHEVER IS EARLIER)** or, if you are an advanced graduate student, **NO LATER THAN 60 days beyond the last day that you are registered as a student or the end date of your I-20 (WHICHEVER IS EARLIER)**. You **MUST** send your application within 30 days of getting the new I-20 from the PDSO.

### 2. What are the Eligibility Requirements for F-1 Optional Practical Training?

To be eligible to apply for optional practical training, you must: have been a full time enrolled student in the U.S. for at least one academic year by the requested start date of your OPT and be in F-1 status when you apply.

### 3. If I complete one degree program, take 12 months of practical training, and then begin a second course of study, am I eligible for an additional 12 months of practical training?

Yes, you are eligible to apply for another 12 month period of Optional Practical Training after changing to a **higher degree level**. This does not apply to a second master's degree.

### 4. How can I use optional practical training while I am still in my program?

You may use OPT while you are still in your degree program as follows: (1) part-time while school is in session, (2) full-time during annual vacation periods, and/or (3) full-time after you completed all course requirements for the degree and have a thesis requirement remaining. These periods of OPT used before you graduate will be deducted from the total allowable period of 12 months. Part-time OPT will be deducted at one-half the full-time rate.

### 5. How long does it take to get authorization for OPT and when should I apply?

Authorization for OPT is granted by USCIS and can take 2 - 3 months to obtain. Therefore it is important that you apply long before the date you wish to start working. For post-completion OPT, you may apply up to 90 days before your graduation date and **NO LATER THAN 60 days beyond your graduation date, end date of your I-20 or last day that you are registered if you are an advanced graduate student**. You also can NOT apply MORE than 120 days before the start date that you choose. You **MUST** send your application within 30 days of getting to new I-20 from the PDSO.

### 6. Do I need to have a job to apply for optional practical training?

You do **NOT need to have a job offer** before applying for the first 12 months of optional practical training.

### 7. Do I need to have a job while I am on optional practical training?

Yes. The new regulation requires that you do have employment while on your POST-graduation OPT period. You are only allowed to have a total of 90 days of unemployment in your 12 month period of OPT. While on POST-completion OPT, you **MUST** update your employment information with the PDSO.

### 8. Does the job I have while on OPT have to be paid employment, or can it be unpaid?

For the first 12 month period of post-completion OPT, the employment does NOT have to be paid employment. Therefore, a student who is self-employed (including performance majors with regular “gigs”), interning or volunteering in a position directly related to the academic field would be considered “employed” for the purposes of OPT employment.

**9. Can I begin working before I receive the Employment Authorization Document?**

You may NOT begin employment before you receive your EAD from USCIS; working before practical training has been authorized by the USCIS constitutes illegal employment that will jeopardize your legal status in the U.S.

**10. Do I have to do anything with the PDSO while I am on OPT?**

Yes! Immigration regulations REQUIRE that while you are on POST-completion OPT, you **MUST** report your employment and address information to the AUSB PDSO.

**11. Can I extend my OPT after the 12 months?**

There are two types of extensions available: 1) a 17 month extension for those in certain fields (not applicable at AUSB) and 2) an “H1B Cap Gap Extension” which extends your work authorization through to the start of your cap subject H1B visa if your OPT ends after your cap subject company has applied for a H1B for you but before the H1B starts on the following October 1st. This cap gap extension is available to all F-1 students using OPT in any field, as long as you have a pending or approved “cap subject” H1B application and the employer applied for in with a request for change of status as part of the application. The extension is automatic, you do not have to do anything at all to get the extension. “Cap Subject” refers to any H1B application that must be counted against the quota on H1B applications.

**TRAVEL and OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING**

**12. Now that I’ve turned in my application, can I travel outside the U.S. while I wait for the card to come?**

**After you graduate**, in order to re-enter the U.S. you must have the following: OPT card (or receipt notice for the OPT application), your valid passport, a **current F-1 visa stamp**, I-20 signed within the last six months, **AND your job offer letter or proof of employment. Before you graduate**, you should be able to get back in to the U.S. without the OPT card as long as it is still long enough in advance of your graduation (at least one month). If you have to travel, talk to the PDSO before you leave.

**13. I want to leave the U.S. for a short time while my OPT application is in process, but I need to return before the card will arrive. I have a tourist visa (B2) that is valid for 10 years. Can’t I just enter the U.S. on my tourist visa while I’m waiting to get the EAD card, then start work with the card once I get it?**

No. If you intend to continue working on your OPT, **NEVER** enter in any other immigration status except F-1. If you leave the U.S. and re-enter with a B status, and you will have lost your F-1 status and your OPT will be **invalid!**

**14. What documents do I need to re-enter the U.S. while on OPT?**

You will need your I-20 that has been endorsed on the travel line by the PDSO within the last 6 months; the OPT card from the USCIS (or the receipt notice for your OPT application), your valid passport, a **current F-1 visa stamp, AND your job offer letter or proof of employment.**

**15. The visa stamp in my passport has expired, but I need to travel outside the U.S. while on OPT. Do I need to get a new visa stamp at an embassy?**

If you are going to Canada or Mexico, and staying for less than 30 days, you could re-enter the U.S. on your expired F-1 visa stamp, with your I-94 card, a valid passport, your EAD card (or receipt notice), an I-20 that has

been signed by the PDSO within the last 6 months, **AND your job offer letter or proof of employment** as long as: 1) you do not apply for a visa while in Canada and 2) you are NOT a national of Iran, Syria, Sudan, Cuba or North Korea. **If you are traveling elsewhere**, you will need to go to a U.S. embassy or consulate and seek a new visa stamp. **Please come in to the PDSO** to discuss your visa application with an advisor as the consulates often change the requirements for visa applications for students on OPT.

#### **16. In what ways is my application to the embassy for a new visa stamp affected by being on Optional Practical Training?**

The risk of denial of an application for a renewed visa stamp for Optional Practical Training is somewhat higher than while you are in your active student program. The F-1 student visa requires that the applicant must intend to return to the home country at the end of the program, and if the embassy official is not convinced of your intention to return home, the visa application will be denied. It is possible and many students on OPT get their F-1 visa stamps renewed. You do have to be careful to demonstrate non-immigrant intent.

#### **17. What documents do I need to show at the embassy for a new visa stamp under OPT?**

You need to take a valid passport, the EAD card or receipt notice for your application, an I-20 created by the PDSO for your OPT application, **AND your job offer letter or proof of employment**. The official job offer letter should say temporary and not permanent. You should also be prepared to discuss how this job experience will apply to the job market in your home country, and how you intend to apply it there.

#### **18. Do I still need to get the travel line on my I-20 signed by the PDSO during the year of OPT?**

Yes, during the OPT year, if you travel outside the U.S., you need to have the travel line signed every six months. If you are not located in Santa Barbara, mail the original I-20 to the PDSO for endorsement, leaving plenty of time for mailing delays both ways.

## **Choosing your Start Date**

You are allowed to pick a start date any time within the 60 days following your graduation date or your last day of registration (whichever is earlier). There is some leeway if you finish your coursework and need an earlier start date. There are many overlapping time constraints which affect your OPT application. When choosing the start date for your OPT card, the most important priorities to weigh are:

- 1. Choose the earliest day that you might want to start working (you cannot begin working BEFORE the start date on the OPT card).**
- 2. If you want the latest possible day to start your work authorization**, the latest day you may choose as your start date for the OPT card is 60 days after your graduation or last day of registration (whichever is earlier).

**REMEMBER: You may not change these dates after you apply for OPT.**

# APPENDIX A

OMB No. 1615-0040, Expires 04/30/2016  
**I-765, Application For  
 Employment Authorization**

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

**Do not write in this block.**

Remarks	Action Block	Fee Stamp
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**1. Family Name should be capital letters**

**This box must be marked**

**2. If using a friend's address, write "c/o FRIEND'S NAME" in line 2**

**3. Address must be in the U.S. and be valid 3 months in the future**

**10. Use 11 digit I-94 number**

**12. Should be from most recent I-94 record**

**16. Pre-completion: (c)(3)(A)  
 Post-completion: (c)(3)(B)**

Employment authorization under 8 CFR 274a.12 (a) or (c) until \_\_\_\_\_ (Date).  
 Employment authorization under 8 CFR 274a.12 (c)(14), (18) and 8 CFR 274a.12 (a) or (c) until \_\_\_\_\_ (Date).

Failed to establish economic necessity under 8 CFR 274a.12(c)(14), (18) and 8 CFR 274a.12 (a) or (c).

I am applying for:  Permission to accept employment.  
 Replacement (of lost employment authorization document).  
 Renewal of my permission to accept employment (attach previous employment authorization document).

1. Name (Family Name in CAPS) (First) (Middle) (Last) Which USCIS Office? \_\_\_\_\_

**FAMILY NAME**      **Given Name**

2. Other Names Used (include Maiden Name) \_\_\_\_\_

3. U.S. Mailing Address (Street Number and Name) (Apt. Number) \_\_\_\_\_

(Town or City) (State/Country) (ZIP Code)

4. Country of Citizenship/Nationality \_\_\_\_\_

5. Place of Birth (Town or City) (State/Province) (Country) \_\_\_\_\_

6. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy) \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Gender  Male  Female

8. Marital Status  Married  Single  Widowed  Divorced

9. Social Security Number (include all numbers you have ever used, if any) \_\_\_\_\_

10. Alien Registration Number (A-Number) or I-94 Number (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

11. Have you ever before applied for employment authorization from USCIS?  
 Yes (Complete the following questions)       No (Proceed to Question 12.)

Results (Granted or Denied - attach all documentation) \_\_\_\_\_

12. Date of Last Entry into the U.S., on or about: (mm/dd/yyyy) \_\_\_\_\_

13. Place of Last Entry into the U.S. \_\_\_\_\_

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

15. Current Immigration Status (Visitor, Student, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

16. 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)(ii), etc.)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ( ) ( ) ( )

17. If you entered the eligibility category, (c)(3)(C), in Question 16 above, list your degree, your employer's name as listed in E-Verify, and your employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number in the space below.  
 Degree: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Employer's Name as listed in E-Verify: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Certification**

**Your Certification:** I certify, under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, 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 **Question 16**.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Person Preparing Form, If Other Than Above:** I declare that this document was prepared by me at the request of the applicant and \_\_\_\_\_ of which I have any knowledge.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks	Initial Receipt	Resubmitted	Relocated		Completed		
			Received	Sent	Approved	Denied	Returned