Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Policy

Optional practical training (OPT) is defined in the regulations as "temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major area of study." Students in F-1 status are eligible to apply for this benefit as long as they have been lawfully enrolled full-time for one academic year. An academic year would include fall and spring terms only. Like Curricular Practical Training (CPT), the training MUST be directly related to the area of study and not just serve as an opportunity to work. Students may engage in OPT for any employer in any location for the duration of OPT authorization, as long as the employment qualifies under OPT standards.

Timing

- Post-completion OPT is authorized to be worked after the student's program end date.
- Graduate students who have completed all coursework and have only their thesis or dissertation to complete would qualify for post-completion OPT. (Note: If a thesis/dissertation student who selected the post-completion OPT option does not finish his or her degree by the end of the post-completion OPT, he or she will not be eligible for a program extension.)
- In special circumstances where a student has an opportunity to pursue post-completion OPT but needs to begin earlier than the end of his or her program, the DSO may shorten the student’s program in SEVIS. The student must have a compelling reason to shorten the program such as unexpectedly completing all courses early and having a job opportunity already available.

Additional Links

- Initial I-20
- Replace or Update I-20 Request
- Immigration Check-In
- Curricular Practical Training
- Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training
- STEM OPT Extension
- Cap-Gap Extension
- Leave of Absence
- Letter Requests
- On-Campus Employment
- Reduced Course Load
- Change of Level
- Reinstatement of Status
- Suspension & Expulsion
- Transfer (In & Out)
- Travel Authorization
- Dependents
- Extend Or Shorten Your Program
- Termination of SEVIS Record
- Document Management
- Academic Program Completion
A student cannot begin OPT employment until the start date indicated on the EAD issued by USCIS. The effective date of the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) issued by USCIS for standard post-completion OPT will be either the start date requested by the DSO when the recommendation was done in SEVIS, or the date USCIS approves the application for work authorization, whichever occurs later. For standard post-completion OPT, "a student may not request a start date that is more than 60 days after the student's program end date."

- **Travel outside the U.S. during the OPT application process is at the student's own risk. In some cases, students have been denied re-entry to the United States even with proper documentation.**

### Duration

Post-Completion Optional Practical Training has a limit of 12 months per educational level. Those with STEM degree designations may qualify for a 24 month extension (see STEM Extension Policy and Procedure for more information). Note that previous use of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for one year or more eliminates eligibility for Optional Practical Training.

### Employment

A job offer is not required in order to apply for Post-Completion OPT; however, a student is limited to an aggregate of 90 days of unemployment during post-completion OPT and any time of unemployment counts as part of the 12 month limit. Once the student has gained employment, it is his or her responsibility to submit this information to the Baylor ISSS Office.

### Applying

Before the student can apply for OPT, he or she MUST attend one of the OPT Workshops. An OPT application will not be processed until the workshop is completed. The student is responsible for the application process for OPT. This includes submitting a request to the Baylor ISSS Office. The student must also submit Form I-765 with USCIS up to 90 days before the program end date and up to 60 days after the program end-date, provided that it is filed within 30 days of the date the DSO enters the OPT recommendation into SEVIS. For those graduating in May 2019, we recommend submitting your materials to USCIS AFTER February 22, 2019 but before July 12, 2019. The exact dates depend on your program end date listed on YOUR I-20, but these dates are a good guide. Be sure to count up your days based on your program end date from YOUR I-20, so you don't submit too soon or too late. Be aware that submitting your application within the 60 day grace period following your Program End Date could mean you wouldn't get approved for all 12 months of OPT. In addition, you may be accumulating days of unemployment during that time which will count against the 90 days of allowed unemployment during OPT.

### Travel on OPT

#### Documents to Carry

- **Unexpired Passport** valid for at least 6 months into the future
- **Valid F-1 Visa**
- **OPT I-20** with Current Travel Signature and current employer's information
  - Travel Signatures on OPT are **valid for 6 months**, NOT 1 year
- Most Recent Employment Authorization Document (EAD or OPT Card)
- SEVIS Fee Receipt
  - Proof that you paid the SEVIS fee
- Employment Letter
  - This letter from your employer should include your job title, job description, start and end dates, and should verify that your employer knows you are traveling and expects you to return to complete your job.

**Remember:** When you return to the U.S. at the Port of Entry, **DO NOT** tell the CBP officer that you are on a work permit. Instead, you must state that you are a student on OPT and be prepared to show your supporting documentation from the list above.

*Travel outside the U.S. while your OPT application is pending is at your own risk. In some cases, students have been denied re-entry to the U.S. even with proper documentation.*

**Process**

1. The student attends an OPT Workshop in their last semester. Dates and a registration link are below.
2. Within 2 days after attending the OPT Workshop, the link to begin the OPT application is emailed to the student.
3. The student completes the OPT application in Global Bears.
4. After determining eligibility, the DSO updates SEVIS with an OPT recommendation.
5. The DSO prepares a new Form I-20.
6. The student files documents within OPT filing deadlines and within 30 days of the Baylor DSO recommendation. Documents sent to USCIS should include:
   - Photocopy all prior Forms I-20
   - Photocopy any previous employment authorization documents (EAD)
   - Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, marked with the proper code at item 16:(c)(3) (B) for standard post-completion OPT
   - Check or obtain a money order for the Form I-765 filing fee (currently $410 but check the DHS website), made payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security."
   - Two identical immigration-style photos, taken within 30 days of filing Form I-765 (see 16.9 Photo guidelines for visas and immigration benefits and see 16.9.2 USICS applications requiring photos)
   - Photocopy of Form I-94 (both sides on cardstock I-94 or copy of electronic Form I-94 printout)
7. USCIS reviews and approves or denies OPT request.
8. If approved, USCIS will send the I-797 Receipt within 2 weeks and an EAD (Employment Authorization Document) within 90 days to the address that the student provides on the Form I-765.
9. Upon receipt of the EAD, the student will verify that the information on the card is correct, and then upload a copy of both sides of the card in Global Bears.
10. The student will receive an email from the SEVP Helpdesk with a link to enroll in the SEVP Portal where they will update employer information. More guidance can be found HERE.
11. The student must update changes in address, email, and phone number in Global Bears.

**Optional Practical Training Workshops**

*Please note that you are required to attend an OPT workshop during your last semester before graduation in order to be eligible to apply for OPT. You may attend a workshop earlier than this time, but only attendance at a workshop in your last semester will count for this requirement.*
All workshops will be held in the Center for Global Engagement, Hankamer 260, at 4:30pm. To register for a workshop, please go to the workshops webpage HERE

Remember that you must attend an OPT Workshop during your last semester at Baylor. If you attend an OPT Workshop before your last semester, you will not be sent the OPT Application link and you will have to attend a second OPT Workshop.