Optional Practical Training Workshop for Students in F1 status

International Services
Division of Student Affairs
Off Campus Employment/Practical Training

Practical Training is:
• Part-time or full-time employment
• Directly relates to your major or program of study
• Is suitable for your degree level

For F-1 students engaging in off-campus employment, Practical Training is the primary option.

Two types of Practical Training:
• Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
• Optional Practical Training (OPT)
Optional Practical Training (OPT)

8.CFR. 214(f)(1)(ii)

• Temporary employment for practical training related to the student’s major area of study:
  • OPT - 12 months total per degree level
    • Pre-completion OPT
    • Post-completion OPT
  • STEM OPT Extension (24 months)
    • 24-month extension of post-completion OPT for certain STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) majors

Separate applications must be filed for each type of OPT, e.g. Pre-completion/Post-completion/STEM Extension
Pre-completion OPT

- Prior to degree completion
  - Part-time (20 hours per week or less) while engaged in coursework
  - Full-time (more than 20 hours per week) while engaged in thesis or dissertation (after all coursework and other degree requirements have been completed)

- Pre-completion OPT is deducted from the total OPT time
  - (2 months of part-time OPT is equal to 1 month of full-time OPT)

- Pre-completion OPT cannot exceed the completion date of your coursework/program
When Should Students Use Pre-completion OPT?

- To engage in practical experience related to the field of study when CPT is not an option
- To gain employment experience if planning to go immediately to the next degree level without taking a year off
- To gain employment experience if planning to return home immediately after graduation
Post-completion OPT

• **After** completion of course requirements
  • Students are eligible for the post-completion option only if all program requirements are met.
  • Graduate students who completed all program requirements except thesis or dissertation may apply for post completion OPT.

• Only one 12-month OPT period is granted per degree level - no additional OPT time for second bachelor’s, master’s etc.
OPT Recommendation Dates

• Student must select an OPT employment start date, which may be any day after program completion, within the 60 day grace period. This start date is the soonest you may begin working.

• Student has 90 days of unemployment beginning on the start date on the EAD (Employment Authorization Document) card. These 90 days can be used throughout the OPT.

• OPT must be completed within 14 months from program end date.
1. Student submits complete application packet to IS office.

2. DSO reviews packet and issues I-20 with OPT recommendation (5-7 business days processing time).

3. DSO prepares the packet for student to pickup and mail.

4. Student receives electronic verification from USCIS upon receipt of packet (Form G-1145). IS contacts the student when receipt notice arrives.

5. IS contacts the student via email when EAD arrives.
OPT Application Checklist

- Completed OPT Application Form (signed by student and academic advisor)
- OPT Online Quiz Score Confirmation Page (proof that you completed online workshop)
- Form I-765 with the following instruction for FAU:
  - Section 3: Use IS mailing address (FAU 777 Glades Road DP-49, Boca Raton, FL 33431-0991
  - Sections 11: Mark “yes” only if you previously received an EAD card issued by USCIS
  - Section 16: Use appropriate code as follows: *Pre-completion OPT: (C) (3) (A); **Post-Completion OPT (C) (3) (B)
- USCIS filing fee of $410. Money Order or Cashier’s Check payable to: “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”
- Two passport pictures with white background (print name and I-94 # on back of each photo)
- Copy/printout of most recent I-94 ([www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94))
- Copy of most recent F-1 visa page in passport (or change of status approval notice)
- Copy of passport biographical and expiry date pages
- Copy of any previous EAD cards (if applicable)

*Packet must reach USCIS no later than 30 days from the date on the I-20 issued.*
Processing Times

- USCIS processing times may vary during the year. During peak periods, processing may take as long as **90 business days**.

- There is **NO WAY** for IS to expedite USCIS approval of OPT applications. Therefore, students must plan ahead.

- You can check your status online using your receipt number ([https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do](https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do)).

- If your OPT application is pending 90 days or longer, you may contact USCIS.
  - National Customer Service Center (NCSC)
    1-800-375-5283
Canceling OPT applications

• OPT applications can only be cancelled if:
  1. The card has not yet been issued
  2. The card has been issued, but the start date is in the future
  3. The student is no longer eligible/out-of-status for the benefit

**In cases 1 and 2, students can re-apply for the benefit later**

• Application fees are non-refundable
Maintaining F-1 Status While on OPT

Students engaged in OPT must provide the International Services Office with the following information:

• Initial employment information – Complete the OPT Employment Update Form **within 90 days of OPT start date**

• Any changes in employment

• Change of address within 10 days of moving

• Change of status to another category

• Departure from the U.S. prior to OPT end date (not including vacation)

• Transfer to another school prior to OPT end date

• Plans to travel outside the U.S. (Vacation) – travel signature every 6 months while on OPT
Social Security Numbers (SSN)

If you do not have a SSN, you will be able to apply for the social security number after receiving your receipt of your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card.

Application requirements:
- Social Security Application Form (SS-5 form)
- Letter from employer
- EAD card
- I-20 with OPT endorsement (Take prior I-20 forms with you as well)
- Passport
- I-94
OPT and travel outside the U.S.

• Always contact the IS office well in advance of traveling abroad for requirements.

• *IS does not recommended traveling before the EAD card is received and you have a job offer letter*; however, travel while still a student does not affect pending OPT application status.

• Travel documents needed during OPT:
  • OPT I-20 with DSO travel signature on page 2 – signature will be valid for six months only!
  • Valid passport
  • Valid visa
  • EAD Card
  • Proof of employment i.e. job offer letter
OPT and 60-day Grace Period

• You have a 60-day grace period at the end of OPT. During this period you may:
  1) Travel throughout the U.S.
  2) Prepare to return home
  3) Receive an I-20 to do another academic program
  4) Change status to another visa category
Other OPT Facts

• If you wish to begin a new academic program at another school and your OPT is still valid, you must stop working on the date your SEVIS record is released to the new institution.
  • If you wish to continue studying at FAU, you must stop working prior to the first day of classes.

• You may not be a degree seeking student while on OPT. Schools have their own policies for handling non-degree enrollment during OPT.
  • FAU policy: no more than 6 credits (non-degree) per semester
**OPT Timeline**

- **Apply up to 3 months before Graduation Date**
  - Application Window
  - 90 Days

- **OPT**
  - OPT employment of 12 months
    - *Cannot accrue more than 90 days aggregate total of unemployment during 12 months.
    - *If eligible, can file for STEM 17-month extension. Must file before expiration of EAD card.
  - Can choose any day within 60 day window after graduation for OPT start date.
    - *Cannot have start date MORE THAN 60 days after graduation date.

- **End date on 12 month EAD card. Last day to work unless granted extension by USCIS.**

- **Depart U.S.**
  - 60 Days

- **Grace period of 60 days to either leave U.S., transfer to another school, or change to another visa category**
  - *Please note - If you are simply remaining in U.S. for the grace period, you cannot leave and re-enter.
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OPT STEM Extension Eligibility Criteria

- Completed a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in a field on the DHS STEM Designated Degree Program List (Refer to FAU Stem Degrees list)

- Currently engaged in post-completion OPT, working for a U.S. employer in a job directly related to the student’s major area of study

- Be employed by or have a job offer from an E-Verify employer

- Have not accrued more than 90 days of unemployment during approved OPT period

- Have not applied more than twice for a 24-month OPT extension after earning a STEM degree;
  - you can apply for 24-month extension twice, however, the second time must be for a degree that is higher than the previous STEM degree that you received the first extension for.
What is E-Verify?

• E-Verify is an Internet based system

• Operated by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA)

• Allows participating employers to electronically verify the employment eligibility of their newly hired employees
STEM OPT Application Checklist

- Completed STEM OPT Application Form – found on fau.edu/isss
- Employer’s Letter (proof of employment with current e-verify employer or offer letter from a new e-verify employer)
- Form I-983 – to be completed with your employer
- Form I-765 with the following instruction for FAU:
  - Section 3: Use IS mailing address (FAU 777 Glades Road DP-49, Boca Raton, FL 33431-0991)
  - Section 16: Use appropriate code for STEM OPT as follows: (C) (3) (C)
- USCIS filing fee of $410. Money Order or Cashier’s Check payable to: “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”
- Two passport-sized photographs; print name and I-94 # on back of each photo
- Copy of degree awarded and major/field of study or a copy of academic transcripts
- Copy/printout of most recent I-94 (www.cbp.gov/i94)
- Copy of most recent F-1 visa page in passport (or change of status approval notice)
- Copy of passport biographical and expiry date pages
- Copy of any previous EAD cards (if applicable)

The STEM OPT application must be filed before the expiration date of the current post-completion OPT. USCIS recommends that student file within 90-120 days of expiration date of current OPT. Packet must reach USCIS no later than 30 days from the date on the I-20 issued.
What is the form I-983

- Employers should complete the Form I-983, Training Plan for STEM OPT Students

- The Form I-983 requires employers to answer four questions:
  - How are the student’s assignments with the employer related to the student’s STEM degree?
  - How will the assignments with the employer contribute to the student making progress toward professional goals and objectives?
  - How will the employer evaluate the student?
  - How will the employer supervise the student?
Reporting Responsibilities

• Students must immediately notify DSOs of:
  • Material changes to the Form I-983
  • Termination of practical training experience
  • Change in employer
  • Employer noncompliance

• Students check in with DSOs annually to complete self-evaluations

• Employer reporting requirements:
  • Employer must review and sign the student’s annual self-evaluation form
  • Employer must notify DSO if the student’s employment is terminated for any reason no later than five business days after the termination
This concludes the OPT Portion! – Any Questions?

Resources: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub
OPT Online Quiz

• As part of the OPT application you will be required to take an online OPT quiz to demonstrate your understanding of the workshop content.

• Please print out a confirmation page of your score once you achieve a score of 100/100 as shown here ➔
You made it to the end!

Please complete the online **OPT Quiz**

Any questions?

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