Optional Practical Training (OPT)
Off-Campus Employment Authorization
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)
  - Pre-Completion OPT
  - Post-Completion OPT (12 months)
  - STEM OPT Extension (24 months) — only for STEM OPT eligible majors — must be applied for during 12-month OPT
Employment/Practical Training
Online Workshops

https://www.fau.edu/international/
OPT APPLICATION DATES
WHEN TO APPLY BASED ON SEMESTER OF PROGRAM COMPLETION

I-20 program end date (on page 1) will be updated as needed when applying for OPT. This date is the official semester end date as per FAU academic calendar (not the date of commencement/graduation ceremony).

FAU Academic Calendar: https://www.fau.edu/registrar/registration/calendar.php

Check the ISS OPT webpage for the up-to-date chart on filing dates – when to apply, requested OPT dates, etc: https://www.fau.edu/global/international/current/opt/

After mailing your OPT - Use USCIS online tools and resources to manage your case:
• Check your case status
• Check processing times
• Change your address online

Can be found on USCIS website homepage: https://www.uscis.gov/

ISS does not have access to USCIS systems, so we cannot provide processing estimate beyond what is listed on USCIS website
OPT Important Reminders

▪ OPT is approved **once per degree level** and can only be approved in order of degree level;
 ▪ for example, if approved for OPT at the bachelor’s level you will need to next earn a master’s degree or higher to apply for OPT again.

▪ You can apply for OPT as early as **90 days before** the semester end date during the semester in which you are completing degree requirements / all core coursework.
 ▪ Graduate students at dissertation/thesis stage may apply for OPT before defending if all other coursework has been completed (I-20 will be shortened in this case to semester end date of OPT request).
 ▪ Do not file your I-765 with USCIS until **AFTER** you receive a new I-20 from ISS issued specifically for the OPT, with OPT requested on page 2 of the I-20. Any petitions filed (filing fee paid) before will be denied by USCIS and the USCIS filing fee is non-refundable.

▪ USCIS must receive OPT application **before** the end of your **60-day grace period** and within **30 days of when I-20 for OPT was issued**.

▪ **Post-OPT start date** must be requested within 60-day grace period

▪ If your OPT is not approved by your requested start date, USCIS will adjust your start date to a later date.

▪ 12-month OPT must end (at the latest) **14 months** after I-20 program end date or 12 months after OPT start date, **whichever is sooner**.

▪ If you decide to end your OPT early, then you cannot regain the time not used for that specific authorization period.
OPT Important Reminders...

- A **job offer is not required** to apply for OPT. It is **only** required for STEM OPT.

- **90 days unemployment time total,** which starts from the OPT start date on your employment card (EAD)

- Must work at least **20 hours per week** in a field related to major (may be less during COVID-19 F-1 regulations – subject to change any time, so check with ISS)

- After OPT approval, remember to complete **OPT Employment Update Form**

- You can have more than one employer

- Self-employment **is permitted** on regular OPT – it is **not permitted** during STEM OPT.

- After your OPT ends you will have a **60-day grace period**

- Please remember that ISS has no control over the OPT processing time – it depends entirely on USCIS

More information on OPT: [http://www.fau.edu/international/current/OPT.php](http://www.fau.edu/international/current/OPT.php)
OPT TIMELINE

Application Window
90 days before program end date – 60 days after

1. Apply up to 90 days before Graduation
2. Graduation Date and/or program end date in SEVIS I-20 Form

MANTAINING F1 STATUS IF APPROVED BY USCIS
- Work at least 20 hrs. per week in a job related to your field of study.
- Report Employment/Unemployment and Address updates
- Cannot accrue more than 90 days aggregate total of unemployment

12 months of OPT

3. If eligible, apply for 24-month STEM OPT EXTENSION 90 days before Post-Completion OPT ends.

GRACE PERIOD
- 60 Days grace period to: depart the U.S., transfer to another school, or change to another visa category
- If you are simply remaining the U.S. for the grace period, you cannot leave and re-enter the U.S.

Choose any day within 60 days after graduation for OPT start date***

You cannot choose a start date beyond 60 days after graduation

End date in EAD CARD. Last day to work unless granted extension

4. 60 Days

5. Depart the U.S.
OPT Application Checklist

Submit documents below to ISS first to receive new I-20 recommending OPT
Only submit your I-765 to USCIS after receiving new I-20 from ISS issued for OPT

- Completed **OPT Application E-Form** (student and academic advisor)
- OPT Online Quiz Score Confirmation Page (proof that you completed online workshop)
- Form I-765 – (use the form live on USCIS.gov; or export .pdf version from online I-765 filing)
- USCIS filing fee of $410
  - Mail filing applicants: Money Order or Cashier’s Check payable to: “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”;
  - Online applicants will pay on USCIS website; do not need to upload filing fee to e-form (this fee is not to be paid until AFTER OPT I-20 is sent to student following the approval of the OPT application e-form)
- Passport picture with white background – photo must meet requirements as shown on the following: [https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos/photo-examples.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos/photo-examples.html)
- Copy/printout of most recent I-94 (retrieved from [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) – **you can apply for OPT with expired visa**
- Copy of passport biographical and expiry date pages – **passport must be valid (not expired)**
- Copy of any previous EAD cards (if applicable; only for students who received EAD in past)

*E-form mentioned above can be found on the FAU ISS Forms page:*
[http://www.fau.edu/international/forms/index.php](http://www.fau.edu/international/forms/index.php)
OPT Application Form

E-form Link:

https://iss.fau.edu/istart/controllers/client/ClientEngine.cfm?serviceid=EFormOPTApplication0ServiceProvider&menuFlag=true
OPT Online I-765 Filing Option
Go to: https://www.uscis.gov/i-765
Welcome to your USCIS Account

Select what you want to do

Edit My Account Profile
Editing your profile includes making changes to your email, password, phone number, security questions, or the two-step verification method and backup code.

Login to a USCIS Service

myUSCIS
Apply for immigration benefits, find tools and resources to assist in preparation for naturalization, and search for doctors in your local community.

FIRST
Submit, manage and receive Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

myE-Verify
Confirm your records for employment eligibility, track E-Verify or Self-Check case status, and protect your identity by locking your Social Security Number (SSN).

Not sure what service you need? Start at USCIS.gov
File a Form

Select the form you want to file online. Once you start, we will automatically save your information for 30 days, or from the last time you worked on the form.

Select the form you want to file online.

I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

Use this form to request employment authorization and an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) if your immigration status allows you to work in the United States.

⚠️ Note: You may apply online if your eligibility category is:
- (a)(12) - Temporary Protected Status (You are submitting an initial Form I-821 or you have an approved Form I-821);
- (c)(3)(A) - F-1 student, pre-completion OPT;
- (c)(3)(B) - F-1 student, post-completion OPT;
- (c)(3)(C) - F-1 student, 24-month extension for STEM students (students holding a degree in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics); or
- (c)(3)(D) - Temporary Protected Status (You have a pending Form I-821).

All other applicants must submit a paper Form I-765.

Start form
What is your eligibility category?

You can file your request online only for certain eligibility categories.

If your eligibility category does not appear on the drop-down list, you must file a paper Form I-765. If you submit online and are not eligible for one of the listed categories, your application may be denied.

(c)(3)(B) Student Post-Completion OPT

Follow the left side menu and answer questions accordingly.

You will need new I-20 issued for OPT for this section; after ISS processes your OPT e-form is when you will receive this new I-20.

At the end you will have option to export questions as .pdf to upload to your e-form for ISS.
What is your current U.S. mailing address?

We will use your current mailing address to contact you throughout the application process. We may not be able to contact you if you do not provide a complete and valid address. Please provide a U.S. address only.

In care of name (if any)

Address line 1
777 GLADES RD DP-49

Street number and name

Address line 2

Apartment, suite, unit, or floor

City or town
BOCA RATON

State
Florida

ZIP code
33431-6424

Verify your address
We are unable to verify your address with the U.S. Postal Service. To avoid delays, please use the recommended address.

Original address:
777 GLADES RD DP-49,
BOCA RATON, FL, 33431-6424

Recommended address:
777 GLADES RD # DP-49,
BOCA RATON, FL, 33431-6424

Use selected address
Edit original address
Employment Authorization Document Or Government ID

Upload a copy of your last Employment Authorization document (EAD) (front and back). If you were not previously issued an EAD, you must upload a copy of a government-issued identity document (such as a passport) showing your picture, name, and date of birth; a birth certificate with photo ID; a visa issued by a foreign consulate; or a national ID document with photo and/or fingerprint. The identity document photocopy must clearly show your facial features and contain your biographical information.

File requirements

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator’s certification with each original document.
- Upload no more than five documents at a time
- Accepted file name characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file

Choose or drop files here to upload
What is your reason for applying?

- Initial permission to accept employment
- Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document or correction of my employment authorization document NOT DUE to US Citizenship and Immigration Services error
- Renewal of permission to accept employment

Have you previously filed Form I-765?

- Yes
- No

End here for now and wait to get new I-20 from ISS before proceeding
Proceed with completing your OPT Application E-form.

ISS will email you a copy of your new I-20 issued for OPT once approved and then you may continue with your online I-765 filing.
STEM OPT Reminders

- **STEM OPT can only be applied for during a period of valid OPT** and major must be STEM OPT eligible. Remember not all STEM majors are STEM OPT eligible.

- **List of FAU degrees that qualify for STEM OPT** (also on ISS website OPT page: https://www.fau.edu/global/international/current/opt/)

- **STEM OPT applicants** – can apply for extension **as early as 90 days before** current OPT ends.

- STEM extension application **must** be received by USCIS **before** current OPT ends. It is not possible to apply for STEM OPT extension after current OPT has ended, so plan ahead!

- A student can apply for a maximum of 2 STEM OPT Extensions during their entire F-1 duration across all degree levels. Cannot apply for second extension right after first STEM extension as you will need to be within a period of 12-month OPT again to apply.

- Unlike regular 12-month OPT, you will need to have employment and submit a job offer letter in order to apply for STEM OPT.

- The employer **must** be enrolled in e-verify at the time of applying for STEM OPT extension.

- As long as you file for STEM OPT in a timely manner **and** have received your receipt notice from USCIS, you can continue working for **180 days** following your 12-month OPT end date.

- Additional 60 days unemployment time during the 24-month extension period

- You **cannot** be self-employed during the STEM OPT authorization.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>CIP Title</th>
<th>FAU Degree Name</th>
<th>SEVIS Equivalent / DHS STEM list Name</th>
<th>CIP DHS</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Fully online degrees do not meet F-1 visa regulation requirements*
STEM OPT Application Checklist
Submit documents below to ISS first to receive new I-20 recommending STEM OPT

❑ Completed STEM OPT E-Form – for ISS office use only not for USCIS

❑ Form I-765 – important you must provide employer e-verify number to be eligible for STEM OPT.

❑ Job Offer letter

❑ Form I-983 Training Plan (pages 1-4) – to be completed with your employer/supervisor

❑ Copy of awarded STEM OPT eligible degree and/or academic transcripts

❑ USCIS filing fee of $410. (not uploaded to e-form, but is paid at the very end AFTER you receive I-20 from ISS issued specifically for STEM OPT on page 2 of the I-20)

❑ Passport picture with white background – photo must meet requirements as shown on the following: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos/photo-examples.html

❑ 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 card(s)

*Form mentioned above is on found on the FAU IS Forms page: http://www.fau.edu/international/forms/index.php*
STEM OPT Form I-983 Training Plan

- Training plan I-983 is not sent to USCIS, however, ISS office, the student and the employer are required to have a copy on file as per Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

- Only pages 1 through 4 of the form I-983 needs to be completed at the time of applying for STEM OPT.

- The employer official that signs the I-983 should be the supervisor that directly oversees your employment progress and training goals.

- Page 5 of the training plan I-983 is to be completed only after your STEM OPT has been approved by USCIS as follows:
  - First evaluation is to be completed within first year of STEM OPT.
  - Final evaluation is to be completed during the final year of STEM OPT and must be submitted no later than 10 days following STEM OPT end date.

- If you change employers during STEM OPT you will need to complete a new I-983 training plan and submit to the ISS office within 10 days of employment start date.

- How to complete I-983 Training Plan with your employer:
What is E-verify?

- E-Verify is a web-based system that allows enrolled employers to confirm the eligibility of their employees to work in the United States.
- E-verify database interfaces with Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) records to ensure employment eligibility.
- It is **required** for **STEM OPT students** to be employed by an employer that is enrolled in e-verify.
- It is of **no cost** to the employer to enroll in e-verify. Enrollment is completed online by the employer.
- E-verify number is **4 to 7 digits long** (this number is different from EIN)

Employers and employees can learn more about e-verify and steps to enroll by visiting the following website:

[https://www.e-verify.gov](https://www.e-verify.gov)
Obtaining a Social Security Number (SSN)

F-1 visa holders are eligible to obtain an SSN only after receiving proper employment authorization from ISS and/or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

**OPT:**
1. Student can request SSN when completing the form I-765 for USCIS
2. SSA office issues Social Security number
3. Student receives Social Security number card in the mail around the same time as they receive OPT approval notice

Your Social Security number does not change and needs to be kept somewhere safe and confidential.

If you already have a social security number, you will be using the same number throughout your stay in the U.S.
Travel While OPT is Pending?

- You can travel while the OPT is pending, however, not recommended due to delayed inspection at US port of entry.

- If traveling, you will need the following:
  - I-20 signed for travel (signature valid for 6 months during OPT),
  - Valid passport (valid 6 months into the future),
  - Valid F-1 visa (must not be expired for re-entry to US), and
  - Copy of receipt notice if OPT is pending, or
  - EAD card if approved for OPT & job offer letter (recommended)

- Do not be outside the US for more than 5 months at a time to maintain F-1 status
- You can apply for F-1 visa renewal during approved OPT
Questions?

Please email us at isss@fau.edu or give us a call at 561-297-3049

ISS office has virtual (Webex) advising hours

Tuesdays – 10am until 12pm
Wednesdays – 2pm until 4pm
Thursdays – 2pm until 4pm

Links to Webex advising found on ISS Canvas page: https://canvas.fau.edu/courses/80282