



Post Completion - Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment authorization that gives F-1 students an opportunity to apply knowledge gained in the classroom to a practical work experience off campus. Authorization for optional practical training is granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) – formerly known as the Immigration and Naturalization Service or INS - and can take at least 90 days and frequently up to 120 days to obtain. It is important that you apply for the authorization at the earliest possible date.

To be eligible to apply for optional practical training, you must:

OPT must relate to your major or course of study.

You can apply for 12 months of OPT at each education level, (i.e., you may have 12 months of OPT at the bachelor's level and another 12 months of OPT at the master's level).

Your DSO will provide you with a new Form I-20 that shows the DSO recommendation for this employment.

You must apply for work authorization by filing an online [Form I-765, "Application for Employment Authorization,"](#) with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and paying a filing fee. USCIS will send you a Form I-766, "Employment Authorization Document," (EAD) upon approving your Form I-765.

Wait to start work until after you receive your EAD.

Once you receive a recommendation for post-completion OPT from your Designated School Official (DSO) to pursue OPT, you must apply for an employment authorization document (EAD) with USCIS within 30 days. Additionally, you may file up to 90 days prior to your program end-date and not later than 60 days after your program end date. Schedule an appointment with the Center for Global Engagement to ensure your OPT request is completed correctly.

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If you will submit your USCIS I-765 OPT application online: You need to create a USCIS account. DO NOT pay for your application. NOTI are ready

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No. 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 and may jeopardize your legal status in the U.S.

F-1 students are responsible for reporting their current address, their employer's name and address and any period of unemployment while on OPT to the DSO in the Center for Global Engagement.

During your OPT period you continue to hold F-1 status sponsored by Hope College. As such, you must follow certain Homeland Security (DHS) regulations. Your F-1 record remains in the government database, SEVIS. Any changes listed below must be reported to the Center for Global Engagement so that your SEVIS record is updated.

Your current address (where you physically reside) within ten days of a change (report the change to the Center for Global Engagement directly by sending an email to:

Changes in your name or your dependent's name(s)

Intention of transferring from your OPT to another F-1 program in the U.S.

Change of visa status (e.g., F to H, F to J, etc.)

No special permission is required to change employers or terminate your employment.

However, you must notify Hope College Center for Global Engagement of your unemployment and/or new employer's information with a complete address and employer's name.

OPT can only be extended beyond 12 months (for up to 17 months), if you meet the following two conditions:

You are currently authorized for OPT and working in a job related to your field of study

Your OPT is based on a US Bachelor's in a Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM) degree at the time of application for the extension (STEM majors at Hope College)

The time spent without a qualifying job during post-completion OPT. Each day the student is not employed in a qualifying job is counted toward the limit on unemployment time. The limit is 90 days for students on post-completion OPT, including those with a cap-gap extension, except that

students with a STEM OPT extension are given an additional 30 days of unemployment time for a maximum of 120 days.

The 60-day period of time given to F-1 Visa students after the completion of a program of study or an authorized period of post-completion OPT allowing the student time to prepare for departure from the United States, apply for a transfer to another SEVP-certified school, request a change of level to continue at the current school, or take steps to otherwise maintain legal status.