

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Definition

Practical training is an opportunity for hands-on experience related to one's field of study. Optional practical training (OPT) may be authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) during the following times:

1. during your annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session, if you are currently enrolled, are eligible for registration and intend to register for the next semester;
2. while school is in session (not to exceed more than 20 hours per week);
3. after completion of degree requirements.

You may be eligible for optional practical training in your field of study if you have been maintaining F-1 status at the time of the request and you have been a full-time student for one academic year. This also includes students who, during their course of study were enrolled in a study abroad program, provided they were enrolled for one full academic term in the U.S. prior to studying abroad.

You may be authorized for up to twelve months of optional practical training. Additionally, you may become eligible for another twelve months of practical training when you change to a higher educational level. Students who transfer and complete a bachelor's, master's or Ph.D. in certain science, technology, engineering and math fields may be eligible for an additional twenty-four months of OPT.

Part-time optional practical training, 20 hours per week or less, will be deducted from the available twelve-month period at one-half the full-time rate. (i.e. six months of part-time practical training will equal three months deducted from the total twelve-month period.)

It is not necessary to have an offer of employment in order to apply for optional practical training. Immigration currently has no formal provision for revoking practical training authorization once it has been approved.

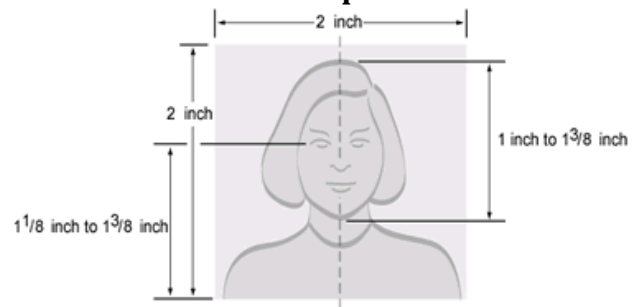
Application Procedures

If you plan to use optional practical training after completing your degree, you may apply up to 90 days before completion of your studies and no later than 60 days after your completion of studies. You must choose the dates you wish to be on OPT. You can choose any date between your date of completion, and 60 days after as your OPT start date. You may also apply for OPT prior to completing your studies.

STEP I. You must provide the International Center (IEC) with the following documents:

1. Complete the [Request for I-20 form](http://www.brookdalecc.edu/international) found on www.brookdalecc.edu/international
2. Completed and signed form I-765 from www.uscis.gov; we recommend that you save the I-765 form to your computer, then type and print form to reduce errors during processing
3. Your passport
4. Your I-94 arrival/departure record printed from www.cbp.gov/i-94 or I-797 approval notice for F-1 status
5. Two passport style photographs, with your name and SEVIS # written in **pencil** on the back

Photo is not drawn to scale. However, please ensure that it meets specified measurements



6. A personal check or money order for **\$410.00** made payable to **Department of Homeland Security**.

STEP II. An IEC staff member will:

1. Verify your eligibility to apply for optional practical training
2. If eligible, update the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and make the appropriate recommendation on the I-20;
3. Return to you form I-20 showing recommendation for OPT;
You must:
4. Put these materials into the following order for mailing:
 - a. Original signed I-765 form
 - b. Check or money order stapled halfway up the I-765 form
 - c. Two photos placed back-to-back in a small plastic bag, stapled to bottom left of the I-765 form
 - d. Photocopy of the OPT endorsed I-20 form, pages 1 and 2
 - e. Photocopy of all previous I-20 forms
 - f. Photocopy of any previous EAD cards
 - g. Photocopy of your I-94 form or I-797 approval notice showing F-1 status
 - h. Photocopy of the pages of your passport that have your photo and expiration date

STEP III. You should mail the application to the *UCIS Service Center* having jurisdiction over your place of residence if you reside in New Jersey, the application is mailed to:

For U.S. Postal Service deliveries (USPS):

**USCIS
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266**

For Express mail and courier service deliveries:

**USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121, Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067**

Keep a copy of these materials for yourself. You may send the application 1) via certified & return receipt mail, 2) via overnight U.S. Post express mail or 3) via regular mail. You may not accept employment until optional practical training has been authorized by the USCIS (you have received your EAD card).

Processing time varies from 2-4 months. You can check the status of your application on-line at www.uscis.gov.

Your Obligations During Optional Practical Training

You are required to immediately (within 10 days) report the name and address of your employer, any change of name, address and employer, or disruption of employment to the immigration service. You will be provided with access to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Portal.

SEVP will automatically email you with a unique link to create a Portal account when the status of your request for OPT in SEVIS changes to 'Approved' and is active. The email will be from do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov, with the subject line, "Optional Practical Training Approval - the next step. Create an SEVP Portal account." The only way to get to the Portal registration pages is to use the link in the email.

Please note that you may not be unemployed for an aggregate of 90 days or else you violate F-1 status.

IEC Obligations During Optional Practical Training

The IEC is responsible for advising you and helping you to comply with your reporting obligations while you are on OPT.

Travel Outside of and Re-entry to the U.S. During Optional Practical Training after Completing your Degree

Your I-20 must be signed for re-entry to the U.S. on page 2 by an IEC staff member. At the port of entry, you will be required to show your form I-20, your EAD card, a valid passport and visa, and proof of employment in the U.S. You will not be permitted entry unless you are entering to begin or continue OPT employment. Also, while engaged in optional practical training after completion of your degree, the re-entry signature is only valid for 6 months.