F-1 Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training

International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO)

Agenda

What is OPT?  OPT Application Process  Tips and Reminders
What is OPT?

- Work in your field of study, off-campus
- Benefit of F-1 Status
- Not new visa
- In form of Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
- Authorization from the USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services)
What are some examples of OPT?

- **Paid**
- **Multiple employers** (short and long-term)
- **Self-Employed Business Owner** (full-time)
- **Unpaid** (volunteer/internship)
- **Work for hire** (1099 Employment)
- **Agency Employment** (at least 20hrs/week)

How long can I be on OPT?

12 months max / degree level
How do I qualify for OPT?

In lawful status

2 semesters

When can I apply for OPT?

OPT can be used before graduation
(Pre-Completion)
and after graduation
(Post-Completion)
How much can I work?

- Summer: part or full time work
- Academic Year: part-time work (up to 20 hours/week)

Optional Practical Training

Time authorized for OPT is deducted from 12 month total
Optional Practical Training

Part-time OPT is counted at $\frac{1}{2}$ the rate

(Example: 4 months of part-time OPT would deduct 2 months)

Do I need a Job Offer to Apply?

No job offer required to apply

BUT the authorized time is deducted from 12 months even if you don’t work!
Earliest Date I Can Apply

90 days before requested start date

- Do not email ISSO your OPT application before this date!

Before You Apply: Plan Early

ISSO: 10 business days
USCIS: 2-3 Months
OPT Application Process

Step 1. Submit OPT application

Step 2. Receive I-20 with OPT Recommendation

Step 3. Mail to USCIS
Step 1: Submit Application to ISSO

Item A: Complete OPT Request Form
Item A: Complete OPT Request Form

PRE-COMPLETION OPT (before completion of degree requirements)

X Full-Time OPT 520 hrs/wk.
  a) During the summer or (b) during the academic year.

X Part-Time OPT 520 hrs/wk.
  a) During vacation period.
  b) During the academic year for students who have completed all degree requirements except a required thesis or dissertation. You also must submit a complete OPT Academic Advisor Form on p. 2.

POST-COMPLETION OPT

You also must submit a complete OPT Academic Advisor Form on p. 2.

Example:
1. I would like to work from January 15th, 2016 to August 31st, 2016.
2. You must submit it at least 30 days prior to the OPT start date.
3. For post-completion OPT requests, the start date must be within the 60-day period following completion of the program.
4. If your completion date is May 31st, the OPT start date could be between May 1st and July 15th.

Name and Address of Employer, If Employed. If not, leave blank.

Student's Signature Date

Office: Director Address: 222 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10012
Mail Address: Dept of 2500 Broadway, New York, NY 10017

Item B: Complete I-765 Form
Item C: I-94 Record

Electronic I-94 admission record
https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov  OR
Copy of both sides of white I-94 card
Send One PDF

isson-opt@columbia.edu

A. Completed OPT Request Form
B. Completed I-765
C. Copy of electronic I-94 or white I-94 card
D. Previous EAD cards (if any)

Step 2: Receive new I-20 with OPT Recommendation
Pick Up Tips

- Ready within 10 business days
- Check Columbia email
- Read ALL mailing instructions

Review the OPT I-20
Review the OPT I-20

Step 3: Mail Application to USCIS
When must USCIS receive my application?

Within 30 days of OPT recommendation date on I-20

USCIS Mailing Tips

Use Courier Service  Sign and Date  Contact Us if Not Using NY/NJ Address
USCIS Application Checklist

- [x] G-1145 form
- [x] I-765 form
- [x] Fee $380
- [x] Copies of all pages of all previously issued I-20s
- [x] Copy of your passport ID page
- [x] Copy of F-1 entry visa
- [x] Print out of I-94 information OR copy of both sides of I-94 card
- [x] Copy of both sides of any previously issued EAD cards
- [x] Two U.S. passport style photos

Writing a Check

[Image of a check]

Student Name
U.S. Address

Department of Homeland Security

Three Hundred and Eighty

USCIS I-765

Signature
After Approval: Receive and Review EAD Card

Employment Authorization Document

You MUST have EAD in hand before beginning any employment!
You Will Receive 3 Pieces of Mail

1. Receipt Notice
2. Approval Notice
3. EAD

Track Your Case Status

http://www.uscis.gov/
Approved OPT Dates

Tips and Reminders
Students graduating with a degree in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM), may be eligible for an additional 17 months of OPT.
H-1B & Cap Gap Extension

- Once you graduate you can apply for remaining OPT
- Generally H-1B work visa petitions can be filed as early as April 1\textsuperscript{st} every year, with H-1B status starting October 1\textsuperscript{st}
- If OPT ends before the employer can file H-1B, the student cannot continue to work until the new visa begins
- \textit{Example}: If you only have 270 days (>9 months) of OPT left to use after graduation, your Post-Completion OPT dates could be June 1, 2017 to March 28, 2018 – since the OPT ends before April 1\textsuperscript{st} the student cannot work before H-1B starts

Social Security Number

Once you have EAD in hand and once OPT has started

Further Information

Be sure to read your ISSOnews e-mail for information on regulations, workshops and deadline reminders!

Pre-Completion OPT instructions: www.tinyurl.com/ISSOpreOPT

Thank You!

Contact Information
International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO)
524 Riverside Drive in International House North
(between 122nd Street and Tiemann Place)
(212) 854-3587
isse@columbia.edu
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/issso/

Walk-in Hours:
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
10:30 – 4:00 pm.
Closed on Wednesday.

Phone Advising:
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
1 – 4 p.m.