F-1 Post-Completion Optional Practical Training

International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO)

Agenda

- What is OPT?
- OPT Application Process
- Traveling Abroad on OPT
- Unemployment
- Reporting Requirement on OPT
- Tips and Reminders
What is OPT?

- Work in your field of study
- 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 constitutes “work”? 

At least 20 hours/week in your field of study

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
Do I need a Job Offer to Apply?

No Job Offer Required to Apply!

When can I apply for OPT?
Earliest Date I Can Apply

Feb 19, 2016

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

ISSO *Preferred* Deadline

April 1, 2016

- USCIS must receive your application no later than 60 days after the completion of your program.
- The earlier you apply, the fewer potential complications.
- You cannot apply after the completion date if you leave the U.S.
Before You Apply: Plan Early

ISSO: 10 business days
USCIS: 2-3 Months

OPT Application Process
OPT Application Process

Step 1: Submit Application to ISSO

Step 2: Receive I-20 with OPT Recommendation

Step 3: Mail to USCIS
Item A: Complete OPT Recommendation Request Form

(Page 1)
Item A: Complete OPT Recommendation Request Form
(Page 1)
Item A: Complete OPT Recommendation Request Form

This is to confirm that:

Student Name: ____________________________

1. is expected to complete requirements for the following degree: _____ bachelor's _____ master's _____ doctoral _____ certificate

by ____________________________ (DATE: mm/dd/yyyy)

Note: For terms other than spring, this is not the degree conferred date, but the end of the term in which degree requirements are met.

For PhD students: projected defense date ____________________________

Please check any box that is applicable to student:

2. [ ] has completed all coursework, is at the "all but thesis / all but dissertation"(A-B) stage and has received MPhil (if applicable).

3. [ ] has received a grade for any course-related Curricular Practical Training previously authorized (if applicable).

Faculty/Advisor Name (please print): ____________________________

Title and Department: ____________________________

Email: ____________________________ Phone: ____________________________

Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Item B: Complete I-765 Application

[Image of the I-765 Application form with filled out fields]
Item B: Complete I-765 Application
Item B: Complete I-765 Application

9. Social Security Number (include all numbers you have ever used, if any)

10. Alien Registration Number (A-Number) or Form I-94 Number (if any)

11. Have you ever before applied for employment authorization from USCIS?
   Yes (Complete the following questions.)
   [Which A-Number (if any)]
   Have you ever applied for OPT before?
   Results (Denied or Denied - attach all documentation)
   No (Proceed to Question 13.)

12. Date of Last Entry into the U.S., on or about (mm/dd/yyyy)

13. Place of Last Entry into the U.S.

14. Status at Last Entry (B-2 Visitor, F-1 Student, No Lawful Status, etc.)

Mailing Address (Valid for 3-4 months from mail date)

Using an address that is not your own:

c/o John Smith, 405 W. 119th St. Apt. 2P,
New York, NY 10027

If name is too long, first initial with last name is fine:

c/o J. Smith, 405 W. 119th St. Apt. 2P,
New York, NY 10027

- Do not forward mail (government mail not forwarded)
- Do not use a P.O. Box
Item C: Copy I-94 Arrival Record

[Image]

Trainee Fee: Pay $120 Trainee Administrative Fee

[Image]
Send One PDF

**A. Completed OPT Request Form (2 pages)**

**B. Completed I-765**

**C. Copy of electronic I-94 or white I-94 card**

**D. Previous EAD cards (if any)**

*izzo-opt@columbia.edu*

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 I-20

[Image of an I-20 form]
Review I-20

**Completion Date**
Review I-20

Review OPT Recommendation
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

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

After Approval: Receive and Review EAD Card
You Will Receive 3 Pieces of Mail

1. Receipt Notice  
2. Approval Notice  
3. EAD

Track Your Case Status

http://www.uscis.gov/
**Review EAD Card**

• Contact the ISSO if there is an error on your receipt notice or EAD or if you receive a Request for Further Evidence (RFE) for your application.

• You MUST have the EAD in hand before beginning any employment.

**OPT Approval Dates**

OPT Approval Dates

Means not valid for re-entry on its own

**60-Day Grace Period after End Date on EAD**

No Work

No International Travel
Travel Abroad on OPT

OPT Travel Documents

1. Unexpired Passport, valid 6 months into the future (some countries are exempt from the 6-month rule).
2. Unexpired F-1 entry visa, valid for further entries (except Canadians)
3. An I-20 with a valid travel signature in the last 6 months
4 A. Receipt notice (pending OPT application, before EAD is issued)
4 B. EAD and a letter from an employer (once OPT approved, after EAD is issued)

www.ice.gov/sevis/travel
Entry Visa Reminder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Entries</th>
<th>Visa Type</th>
<th>Expiration Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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- Eligibility to enter the U.S. as an F-1 student
- Does NOT determine how long you may remain in the U.S.
- NOT guaranteed an entry visa (from a U.S. Consulate) simply because you have been granted OPT (by the USCIS).
- You always need to establish non-immigrant intent to qualify for an F-1 visa.
- We recommend to have EAD card and proof of employment before applying.
- Canadian citizens exempt from requirement.

Unemployment
Unemployment

• Allowed to accrue maximum of 90 days unemployment throughout year

• 20 hours / week = employment

Travel Abroad While Not Working

Travel abroad while unemployed:

Travel abroad while employed during a period of authorized leave or as part of employment:

Counted toward 90 day limit.

Not included in the 90 day limit.
Reporting Requirements on OPT

Report any change within 10 Days

- Name or address
- Name and address of any (new) employer
- Period(s) of unemployment
- Decision not to use OPT and depart the U.S. to return home or to another country
- Change to another nonimmigrant status in the U.S

www.tinyurl.com/iosoOPTreporting
Tips and Reminders

Keep Employment Record

- On letterhead
- Position held
- Proof of job duration
- Job title
- Supervisor contact
- Job description
- Pay Stubs
When can I Apply for Social Security Number?

You can apply for a social security number as of this date.


Cap-Gap Extension

Year OPT  H1-B  Cap Gap

OCT 1
Read ISSO News and Sign Up for Alumni Email

http://cuit.columbia.edu/email-alumni

Helpful URLs

OPT forms and detailed instructions: http://www.tinyurl.com/iosoOPT

Track your case with USCIS: http://www.uscis.gov
Contact Information
International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO)
524 Riverside Drive in International House North
(between 122nd Street and Tiemann Place)
(212) 854-3587
issonycolumbia.edu
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isson/

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

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