UNIVERSITY OF DENVER
Internationalization
International Student and Scholar Services

International Student and Scholar Services
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POST-COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING INSTRUCTIONS

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is employment authorization before or after completion of study in the student's major area of study. **This document provides instructions for OPT after completion of study. Students interested in OPT before completion of study should consult an International Student Advisor.**

Eligibility

To apply for post-completion OPT you must have been a full-time student for at least one academic year.* In addition, you:

1. Must currently be in valid F-1 status.
2. Must complete **ALL** degree requirements in the academic program and be eligible to receive degree; **If you have finished your course requirements but **not** your dissertation/thesis and are interested in applying for OPT, please see an International Student Advisor about your options.
3. Must not have previously been approved for OPT at current degree level.

Procedures

The application must be received by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) **no more than 90 days before or 60 days after the completion date**. Please note that the completion date refers to the date that degree requirements are completed (as verified by your academic advisor) and you are cleared by your department to graduate, not necessarily the graduation ceremony date. We recommend that you apply for OPT **at least 90 days** before your requested start date to ensure there is ample time for USCIS to process your application.

To apply for OPT, collect the following forms and documents and submit them to ISSS:

1. **Document Request Form**

2. **OPT Request Form**

3. **Academic Advisor Approval Form**

4. **Form I-765 –** see instructions on next page for completing this form.

5. **Form G-1145** – complete this form if you would like to be notified electronically by USCIS when your OPT application has been received.

6. **Two color passport-style photographs** – Must be 2” x 2” on white background in accordance with Department of State requirements (http://travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotoreq/pptphotoreq_5333.html). Write your name and your I-94 number on the back of the photos lightly in pencil. Do not cut, trim, or otherwise alter the photographs.

7. **Personal check or money order for $380** – Make payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Personal check is strongly recommended.

8. **Photocopy of your passport ID page and any renewal or extension pages -** Must show your full legal name, your date of birth, your photograph, and the expiration date of your passport.

9. **Photocopy of your current I-94 card –** Include copies of the front and back.

10. **Photocopy of your current U.S. entry visa or change of status approval notice**

11. **Photocopy of your current I-20**

12. **Photocopies of any past I-20's with Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorizations or Optional Practical Training (OPT) recommendations –** Include I-20's issued by DU and/or any previous schools.

13. **Photocopies of any previously issued Employment Authorization Documents (EADs)**

Step 1
Complete the application forms included in this packet. We strongly recommend filling out these forms on your computer and printing them to ensure the legibility of your application. Errors dues to misreading your handwriting may delay processing of your application.

Special Instructions for Form I-765:

- Mark "Permission to accept employment" as the reason for completing the form.
- Question 10 Enter the complete number found in the upper left corner of your I-94 card.
- Question 11 Mark "Yes" only if you have previously been issued an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS. Otherwise, mark "No".
- Question 13 Enter the city and state where you last passed through U.S. Customs.
- Question 17 Leave this section blank unless you are applying for a STEM extension.

Form I-765 may also be filed online through USCIS's E-Filing service. E-Filing is recommended only for applications submitted very close to the filing deadline. For more information, please speak to an international student advisor

Step 2
Submit your complete OPT application packet, including all required forms and supplemental documentation, to the Front Desk at the International House. We will send an email to you DU email account if any items or missing or need to be corrected.

Step 3
If you meet all the requirements and are eligible, an ISSS advisor will issue a new I-20 that shows that OPT after completion of studies is **recommended** and includes the beginning and ending dates of OPT. Please note that ISSS only RECOMMENDS that the application be approved; the final decision is made by USCIS. Please note, if the program end date on your current I-20 doesn't match your expected completion date, we will shorten the program at the same time as requesting the OPT.

Step 4
When your new OPT I-20 is ready, ISSS will contact you to come to the I-House and sign your new OPT I-20. **We cannot submit your OPT application until you come in and sign your I-20 and your application is complete.**

Once signed, an advisor will mail your application to the Nebraska Service Center for adjudication.

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT IMMIGRATION SERVICE PROCESSING MAY TAKE 3-4 MONTHS

What Happens Next

1. Mailing the Application:

Once an ISSS advisor has prepared your application and you have signed the new OPT I-20, it is sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the USCIS. It takes about 14 days for ISSS to receive the delivery confirmation from USPS. This is the first indicator that your application has made it safely to the Nebraska Service Center.

2. Status of Your OPT Application

Within 2 to 4 weeks after your OPT application has been received by USCIS, a receipt notice will be sent to the International House. You will be contacted through DU email to pick up the notice. From that point on, you may visit the USCIS website at https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard.do to inquire about the status of your application using the receipt number (LIN #) listed in the upper left corner of your receipt notice.

3. What YOU Can Do If Things Go Wrong

If 30 days after submitting your application to ISSS you have not heard from us to collect your receipt notice, check with your bank to see if your check has cleared. If mail records show that USCIS received the application, but the check has not been cashed and no receipt notice has been sent, then it is very possible that the application has been lost. You will need to resubmit the application. Please discuss options with an International Student Advisor during ISSS walk-in hours.

4. Approval and Receipt of Employment Authorization Document

If all goes well, in approximately 90 days, your OPT employment authorization document (EAD) will be sent to the International House by USCIS. At that point, someone from ISSS will contact you through DU email. You may then collect the EAD from the International House or ask that it be mailed to your physical address (note: the EAD is express mailed at your expense).

- **The dates on your EAD are your dates of employment. You may NOT work before or after the dates indicated on your EAD.**
- It is your responsibility to confirm that you do not have incompletes or classes you must retake, and that you have met all degree requirements as expected.
- You may begin to search for employment prior to receiving OPT authorization, but you may not begin working until you both receive your EAD and the start date on the card has arrived.
- Your employment must be directly related to your major area of study. If you receive a new I-20 for any academic program, either at DU or another higher education institution, the period you have remaining on your OPT EAD will be cancelled.
- It is very important that you have current contact information on MyWeb (http://myweb.du.edu) so we can contact you when the EAD arrives, or if there is a problem with your application.

5. Canceling the Authorization Process for Optional Practical Training

Once you have been authorized for OPT, the authorization cannot be canceled, rescinded, revoked, or changed. And even if you do not actually work, USCIS counts all authorized OPT time against your total allowable time. This is particularly important for post-completion OPT. If you are authorized and then do not complete your studies on time, you must continue to be enrolled full-time, and delay the start of your employment until you finish degree requirements. However, you will not be given additional OPT to compensate for the work time you lost.

6. Unemployment on OPT
Under USCIS regulations you are only allowed to have a total of 90 days of unemployment while in the U.S. in valid F-1 OPT status. **All periods of unemployment and employment periods, along with employer's contact information, must be reported to isss@du.edu.**

7. OPT Cap Gap Extensions
You are eligible for a cap gap extension of your OPT if your employer has filed an H-1B petition on your behalf. Under USCIS regulations, you can be granted an extension of your OPT status to bridge the gap between the end date of your OPT authorization and the start date of your H-1B status. ISSS will issue an I-20 after you report that your employer has filed an H-1B petition and the application is either pending or has been approved.

8. Travel Before Approval of EAD
If you leave the U.S. anytime after you complete your studies and before you receive the EAD, you must have the following in your possession to reenter the U.S.:

- Your official receipt notice for your OPT application from USCIS;
- A OPT I-20 with a valid travel signature;
- A valid F-1 entry visa;
- A valid passport.

9. Travel After Approval of EAD
You may travel outside the United States and re-enter in F-1 status on OPT once you have received your EAD. When you travel you must have the following in your possession to reenter the U.S.:

- A valid F-1 entry visa;
- A OPT I-20 with a travel signature within the 6 months before reentry;
- A valid passport
- EAD; and
- Letter from your employer confirming employment.

NOTE: If you leave the U.S. after your OPT is approved and you do not have a job, you could have a difficult time re-entering the U.S. If you are applying to renew your F-1 entry visa while on OPT, proof of employment is **required** at the U.S. embassy.

10. Social Security and Other Taxes
In general, as an F-1 student, you will be exempt from Social Security (F.I.C.A.) taxes for your first five years in the United States, as long as you continue to declare non-resident status for tax purposes. Income earned in the United States, including assistantships, is usually subject to any federal, state, or local income regulations that apply. Unless you qualify under a tax treaty between the United States and your home government, employers are required by law to withhold those taxes from your paychecks. Annual filing of tax returns is mandated each year by April 15th. Please see http://www.du.edu/intl/isss/taxes.html for more information. **ISSS staff are not authorized to provide tax assistance or advice.**

Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) Request Form

To Be Completed By Student

Family (Last) Name:_____ DU ID #: _____

Given (First) Name:_____

DU Email: _____ Phone#: _____

Expected Date of Completion of Academic Program:_____

Requested OPT Start Date: _____

I am applying for Post-Completion OPT based on the following academic information:

Degree Level: ☐Bachelor's ☐Master's ☐PhD ☐Other (please describe):_____

Primary Major:_____ Secondary Major: _____

Please verify that you understand and accept the following items:

___ I have not engaged in more than 12 months of **full-time** CPT at this degree level

___I have not engaged in more than 12 months of OPT at this degree level

___I understand that if I do not complete all requirements for the degree as determined by my advisor I must immediately notify an International Student Advisor. I am also aware that a delay in completion will require an extension of my Form I-20 and may impact my Post-Completion OPT Application.

___I understand that if I accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment while engaged in Post-Completion OPT, I will be out of status.

___I understand that while I am engaged in the Post-Completion OPT period I must report the following to isss@du.edu:

- Employer name and address
- Local U.S. address
- Any Changes in residential local U.S. address (including telephone number and email)
- Any Changes in employment (including unemployment, change of employers, etc.)

I hereby confirm that the information I have provided in this application is accurate. I have read and understand the requirements that are part of the Post-Completion OPT period.

_____ _____ _____

Printed Name Signature Date

Advisor Approval on next page

Academic Advisor Approval

To be completed by academic advisor

Immigration regulations require that Optional Practical Training be used by students for employment related to the student's field of study. Please return the completed form to the student. Any questions can be directed to the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (isss@du.edu or 303-871-4912). Thank you for your assistance.

Academic Advisor's Name (Printed):_____

Position or Title: _____

Department: _____

Student's Name: _____ DU ID #: _____

Degree Expected:_____ Major or field of study:_____

Expected date of completion*:_____

The above date represents: ☐ Completion of all requirements for degree

☐ Submission of Dissertation/Thesis

As the student's academic advisor I verify the above stated academic information is accurate.

_____	_____	_____
Advisor's Signature	Date	Phone Number