

## 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.

\*English Language Center Students are not eligible for Optional Practical Training.

### 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.

The following are needed to apply for OPT:

1. **Document Request Form** – fully completed and specifying Optional Practical Training;
2. **F-1 OPT Request Form** – completed and signed. Please note: Part 2 of this form **must** be completed by your academic advisor;
3. **Immigration Form I-765** – completed and signed;
4. **Two Color 2" x 2" passport-style photographs** on white background. Please see [http://travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/composition\\_checklist.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/composition_checklist.html) for more information about the requirements. Write your name and your I-94 number on the back of the photos in pencil. **DO NOT TRIM OR CUT THE PICTURES;**
5. **A personal check or money order for \$340.00** made payable to Department of Homeland Security (We strongly recommend using a personal check);

6. **Copies of your passport pages**, showing, name, photograph, date of birth and passport expiration date. If this information is on separate pages, please copy all of the necessary pages;
7. **Copy of your I-94 card, front and back** (it is normally stapled inside of your passport);
8. **Copy of your current entry visa**; if you have more than one entry visa, provide a copy of the most recent visa;
9. **Copies of current I-20 and any additional I-20s with employment authorization** that you have had at DU and at previous schools.

**Note:** Please do not leave your passport, I-94 card or original I-20(s) with the application.

### **Step 1**

Download the necessary forms and materials from the ISSS website. It is important to type as many of the forms and documents as possible to ensure legibility of the application. The immigration Form I-765 can be completed online and then printed out for submission.

- You **MUST** put “**c/o International House, 2200 S. Josephine St., Denver, CO 80208**” as your address on the form.
- Item 10 – please enter your I-94 number in this space.
- Item 11 – only mark yes if you have previously applied for OPT. This item is NOT referring to any CPT authorizations you have had.
- Item 13 – Place of last entry refers to the port where you went through U.S. customs. If you first flew into San Francisco before arriving in Denver then your place of last entry will be San Francisco.
- Item 16 – your eligibility code will be filled in by an international student advisor.
- Item 17 – you do not need to complete this section as it only applies to people who are applying for a STEM extension.

To complete the forms online, position your pointer over each space on the form. When you click in the space, the pointer will change to a text cursor and you can begin typing the information. Use the TAB key to move to the next box.

NOTE: It is possible to file your I-765 online through e-gov services. Please contact an international student advisor to discuss this option.

### **Step 2**

Submit your packet to the Front Desk at the International House. **If there are any missing items or needed corrections, you will be contacted at your DU e-mail address.**

### **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/jsps/index.jsp> 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.

### **7. 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 [iss@du.edu](mailto:iss@du.edu).**

### **8. 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.

### **9. 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.

### **10. 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 15<sup>th</sup>. Please see <http://www.du.edu/intl/iss/taxes.htm> 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 [iss@du.edu](mailto:iss@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 ([iss@du.edu](mailto:iss@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