



OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) PACKET

- Step 1:** Register for an OPT Workshop on OIS' web site: www.ois.pitt.edu
- Step 2:** Print out this OPT packet and bring it to the OPT Workshop. **The Immigration Specialist presenting the Workshop must sign the List of Application Materials in this packet.**
- Step 2:** Complete all application materials (*see page 2 for List of Application Materials.*)
- Step 3:** Drop off the application materials at the OIS front desk. You do not need an appointment; simply come to OIS any time that we are open (8:00AM to 5:30PM, Monday through Friday when school is in session).
- Step 4:** Your new I-20 with an OPT recommendation will be ready within 5 business days. You will receive an email from your Immigration Specialist when it's time to pick up your application packet.
- Step 5:** **Mail entire packet to U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services.** (*See page 3 for Mailing Instructions.*)

Important Note: Plan on attending an OPT Workshop either in the same semester that you will apply for OPT or (if you will apply early in the semester), late in the preceding semester. Your OPT Recommendation Form must have a recent signature from an OIS Immigration Specialist showing that you have recently attended an OPT Workshop.



LIST OF APPLICATION MATERIALS

Please prepare the following materials and bring them to OIS:

1. The attached **OPT Recommendation Form**, with the top portion completed by your intended OPT dates, and the bottom portion completed by your Academic Advisor indicating the date that you will complete all requirements for your degree.
2. This **List of Application Materials**, signed and dated below by the OIS Immigration Specialist who presented your OPT Workshop.
3. Signed and dated **Mailing Instructions Form**, included in this packet.
4. Completed **Form I-765**: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf>
5. Copies of all previous I-20s (including those from former schools).
6. A copy of your passport identification page
7. A copy of your F-1 visa
8. A copy of the front and back of your I-94 card.
9. 2 US passport-style photographs. USCIS specifications for these photographs can be found at www.travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/index.html, and you may refer to "Businesses that Can Prepare EAD Photos" in this packet. **Lightly print your name and I-94 Number on the back of each photo with a pencil.** The photos should be placed in an envelope or plastic bag and stapled to the application so they are not lost. Be careful not to staple through the photographs themselves.
10. A check or money order for **\$340** payable to the **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**.
11. A complete set of photocopies of items 3-10 for your OIS file

Upon receipt of the above materials, an Immigration Specialist will review your application to ensure it is completed correctly. If everything is in order and the Immigration Specialist determines that you meet all eligibility requirements for OPT, he/she will issue you an updated SEVIS Form I-20 with an endorsement on page 3 recommending that USCIS approve your application.

For *post-completion* OPT, both the submission of the forms to OIS and to USCIS may be completed as early as 120 days prior to the completion of your degree requirements. **YOUR APPLICATION MUST BE RECEIVED BY USCIS NO LATER THAN 60 DAYS FROM THE DATE YOU COMPLETE YOUR STUDIES.** USCIS will **not** accept late applications. You should apply as early as 90 days prior to the anticipated start date of employment to ensure timely processing.

Internal Use Only – To Be Completed By OIS Immigration Specialist at OPT Workshop

This student attended an OPT Workshop on

_____ Date

_____ Initial



The University of Pittsburgh
Office of International Services

MAILING INSTRUCTIONS

All OPT application materials must be submitted to:

United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS)
Vermont Service Center
75 Lower Welden Street
St. Albans, VT 05479-0001
Phone: 800-375-5283

Tip #1: DO NOT mail any original I-20's to USCIS. Only mail *copies* of your original I-20's.

Tip #2: It is very strongly recommended that you mail your application materials via UPS, FedEx or some other express mail to ensure accurate and timely delivery. Be sure to obtain a tracking number for your mailing.

* * *

IMPORTANT! During your period of OPT work authorization, you are required to keep OIS informed of the following changes:

- Travel outside the United States (*OIS must still provide your travel signature*)
- Change of address
- Employer's Address and changes to employment status
- Change of phone number and/or e-mail
- Change of status (*i.e. H-1B, F-2, Lawful Permanent Resident*)

If you change your status you must submit a copy of the approval notice to OIS. Email OPTinfo@pitt.edu with any changes or updates.

I understand that it is my responsibility to mail all appropriate OPT application materials directly to U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Service at the above address.

Signature

Date



The University of Pittsburgh
Office of International Services

BUSINESSES THAT CAN PREPARE YOUR EAD PHOTOS

The following businesses in and around Oakland have indicated that they can prepare EAD photographs according to USCIS specifications (see www.travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/index.html). This list is not exhaustive. There may be other businesses that provide this service as well. Prices may vary from location to location.

- FedEx Kinkos (Oakland)
3710 Forbes Avenue
412.687.2752
- Mailboxes, Etc. (Oakland)
414 South Craig Street
412.687.6100
- Macy's (Downtown)
Fifth Avenue and Smithfield Street
9th Floor (behind Pearle Vision)
412.232.2387

Disclaimer: The Office of International Services (OIS) is providing this list of businesses solely as a courtesy. This does not constitute an endorsement of any of the businesses listed or their business practices. OIS does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of information or services obtained from these businesses. Please make sure to check the photographs to ensure they meet USCIS specifications.



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GENERAL INFORMATION

Optional Practical Training is defined as “temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major area of study.” An F-1 student who has maintained lawful F-1 visa status for at least one academic year may be eligible to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). OPT may be granted before or after completion of their program, however limitations apply. Students may apply for full-time pre-completion OPT provided all coursework has been completed and they are working full-time on a thesis or dissertation; otherwise, students may only apply for part-time OPT (20 hours or less) at that time (except during normal school breaks when pre-completion OPT may be authorized for full-time). Students applying for post-completion OPT must apply for full-time only. Employment must be directly related to the field of study.

The maximum amount of time for which OPT may be granted is 12 months* full-time per degree level. That means that if you previously completed a Bachelor’s degree and did 12 months of OPT and subsequently went on to complete a Master’s degree, you will receive another 12 months of OPT. If you completed two Master’s degrees you will only receive one 12-month period of OPT. **Student in Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics fields may apply for a 17 month OPT extension if certain criteria apply. Please refer to the STEM OPT Extension Packet for further details.*

Part-time OPT counts towards ½ of the 12 month total. For example, if a student engages in 6 months of part-time OPT prior to degree completion, they will have 9 months of full-time OPT remaining. Please be aware, however, that if an F-1 student has engaged in 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT), he/she is ineligible for OPT.

Students applying for post-completion OPT must apply NO LATER THAN 60 days after the completion of all degree requirements. Once a student has completed all degree requirements, regardless of whether the date of graduation is weeks or months later, that student is considered to have finished their program. OPT applications must be received by USCIS no later than 60 days from this date.

Post-completion OPT may begin at any time up to 60 days after completion of all degree requirements. For example, if you will finish all degree requirements by April 15th, then the last day that you may request to start your period of OPT will be June 15th. The date that you request as the start date does not necessarily mean that is the start date that will be approved. Therefore, please note: You must have the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) in your possession and the start date on the EAD must be reached before you may engage in employment. Also, once you have completed all degree requirements you may not continue to work in any capacity until you have received your EAD. This includes on-campus employment.

During your period of Post-Completion OPT, you are still considered to be in F-1 student status. Therefore, you must keep OIS informed of any changes in your name, address, employer address and employment status as well as any other pertinent information about your stay in the United States. If you travel outside the U.S., you must obtain a travel signature from an OIS advisor. **[IMPORTANT NOTE:** Regulations only permit you to re-enter the U.S. to *resume* OPT. It is not advisable to travel if you have not secured employment for your OPT.] If you change your status you must submit a copy of the Approval Notice (Form I-797) to OIS. This is a requirement of federal law. Your failure to keep OIS informed may jeopardize your legal status in the United States. OIS has an email account dedicated to students on OPT for ease of reporting these requirements: OPTInfo@pitt.edu

You will have a 60 grace period after the expiration date on your EAD. You may leave the U.S., change your status, or transfer to a new degree program during that time, but you may not continue to work under OPT.

If you choose to begin a new degree program full-time, whether at Pitt or at another institution, during your authorized period of OPT, you will lose any OPT time remaining on your EAD. You will be required to cease employment upon release of your SEVIS record from Pitt to the new institution or upon issuance of a new Form I-20 for a different program.

Please note that only students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematical fields may extend OPT. For students in other fields, when the 12 months have been completed, the student must seek another visa status if he/she wishes to remain in the United States to continue employment. **Also, once OPT has been granted you cannot cancel it. You have to use it or lose it.**



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OPT RECOMMENDATION FORM

TOP SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

Name: _____ E-mail: _____
(first) (middle) (last)

Requested OPT Beginning Date: _____ Ending Date: _____ Number of hours per week: _____

I am requesting the following:

- Pre-completion OPT** (OPT will take place prior to completion of all of my degree requirements) Please indicate (c)(3)(A) in #16 of form I-765.
- Post-Completion OPT** (OPT will take place after I have completed all of my degree requirements). Please indicate (c)(3)(B) in #16 of form I-765

TO: Academic Advisors

The student referenced above is applying for permission to engage in Optional Practical Training (OPT), an employment authorization provided by the regulations of the United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS). OPT is employment in a job related to the student's major field of study and is intended to enhance and supplement the formal classroom education. Such employment must be officially recommended by a Designated School Official, duly recognized by USCIS, in the Office of International Services (OIS).

Before this authorization can be granted, OIS must have a statement from the student's Academic Advisor indicating the date of completion of the student's degree requirements. **Please note that the date of completion is not necessarily the end of the term or the graduation date, but is the date on which all requirements for the degree have been fulfilled.**

Please complete the form below and return it to OIS so that we may process this student's request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact an OIS Immigration Specialist at 412.624.7120

**THE INFORMATION BELOW MUST BE COMPLETED IN ITS ENTIRITY BY THE FACULTY
ADVISOR, NOT THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT.**

This is to certify that the above named student will complete all requirements for the _____
(Bachelor's, Master's, Ph.D., etc.)

degree in the field or major of _____ on _____
(date)

(NOTE: If, after submitting the post-completion OPT application, you discover that you will not be able to complete all requirements for the degree by the date indicated above, please notify your OIS advisor immediately as this may negatively affect you OPT application)

Advisor's Name (print): _____	Advisor's Signature: _____
Telephone: _____	E-mail: _____
	Date: _____ <i>mm/dd/yyyy</i>



COMPLETING FORM I-765

Form I-765 is the USCIS application form that you will use to apply for OPT. You can find this form on the USCIS web site at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf>

Warning: Do not use any I-765 other than the one on the USCIS web site. There are many older versions available on the web, and using an old version may cause a significant delay in your OPT application.

Some tips for completing in the I-765

- Be sure to check on of the boxes at the top of the form that says “I am applying for”
- *Item #3:* Please be aware that mail from the USCIS will not be forwarded. If you may be moving in the months after you submit the OPT application, consider using OIS’ address:

c/o OIS, 708 William Pitt Union
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

We will notify you if we receive any mail related to your OPT application.

- *Item #10:* Your I-94 number appears on the upper left-hand corner of the front of your I-94 card.
- *Item #11:* Say “Yes” **only** if you have used Form I-765 to receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from the USCIS in the past. Reasons that you would have an EAD include previous authorization for OPT or J-2 work authorization. Other work authorization that doesn’t require an EAD, such as H-1B status or CPT, do not count for this question.

ment (attach previous employment authorization document).

Which USCIS Office?	Date(s)
Results (Granted or Denied - attach all documentation)	

Also, the questions at the top of the second column of this form (pictured to the left) are a continuation of question 11. If you checked “No,” you can leave these blank.

- *Items #12, 13, and 14:* Your date, place, and manner of last entry should all match your current I-94 card.
- *Item #15:* Your current visa status is either “F-1” or “Student” (either of these is fine)
- *Item #16:* Fill in (C)(3)(A) for pre-completion OPT, (C)(3)(B) for post-completion OPT, and (C)(3)(C) for a STEM extension of OPT
- *Item #17:* Leave this blank unless you are applying for a STEM extension of OPT
- Don’t forget to sign the form!