

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)



Office of International Students and Scholars MS/074
120 Fitzgerald Student Services Bldg.
Reno, NV 89557-0144
(775) 784-6874
Fax: (775) 327-5845
EMAIL: oiss@unr.edu
<http://www.unr.edu/oiss>

OPT is defined as “temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major area of study”.

Eligibility:

- ✓ Student must have been in F-1 status for 9 months (one academic year)
- ✓ Employment must be in the field of study
- ✓ Student must apply no earlier than 90 days before program completion date and no later than 60 days after program completion date

How to apply for OPT (2 Options):

I. Mail-in Option

1. Obtain your academic advisor’s recommendation for OPT (see the attachment).
2. Schedule an appointment with OISS advisor. Please bring to the appointment:
 - A completed I-765 immigration form available from OISS or at <http://uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/i-765.htm> (indicate (c)(3)(B) in point 16)
 - Check for \$340.00 (personal check or money order) payable to USCIS
 - 2 passport style photos (write your name and I-94# on the back, put photos in an envelope)
 - Copies of the bio page from your passport, visa, I-94 card (front & back)
 - Copies of your I-20s
 - If changed status to F-1 within the U.S., also a copy of I-797 approval notice
3. OISS advisor will review your application and recommend OPT in SEVIS. You will then receive a new I-20 with OPT recommendation on page 3.
4. Mail all documents listed in point 2 and a copy of the new I-20 with OPT endorsement to:
USCIS California Service Center
P.O. Box 10765
Laguna Niguel, CA 92607-1076

Note: In two to four weeks you will receive a receipt notice confirming that the immigration service has received your OPT application. This receipt notice will have your case number printed in the upper left corner (WAC followed by numbers). You can find out the status of your application at <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp> by typing in your case number.

II. E-File/Mail-in Option (not available as of 9/26/08)

1. Obtain your academic advisor’s recommendation for OPT (see the attachment).
2. E-file I-765 form on line at <https://efiling.uscis.dhs.gov/efile/> and pay \$340.00 filing fee with your credit card or checking account. Please follow the instructions carefully and indicate (c)(3)(B) under eligibility category. Towards the end you will be prompted to print-out a copy of e-filed I-765 form along with the receipt and you will receive the confirmation/receipt number (WAC followed by numbers) immediately. If you need help with e-filing, please ask an OISS advisor for assistance.
3. Schedule an appointment with an OISS advisor. Please bring to the appointment:
 - Confirmation receipt of e-filing the I-765 form
 - Copies of the bio page from your passport, visa, I-94 card (front & back)
 - Copies of your I-20s

- ❑ If you changed status to F-1 within the U.S., also bring a copy of the I-797 approval notice
- 4. The OISS advisor will review your application and recommend OPT in SEVIS. You will receive a new I-20 with the OPT recommendation on page 3.
- 5. You should receive an appointment from the USCIS to have your digital picture taken at the local immigration office at 1351 Corporate Boulevard in Reno. Take with you a copy of the confirmation receipt of e-filing the I-765 form, your passport and I-20 with OPT recommendation. Please note that you do not have to wait for your appointment letter or the appointment before mailing in the documentation in step 6.
- 6. Mail all documents listed in point 3 AND a copy of the new I-20 with OPT endorsement to:

USCIS California Service Center
Attn. E-filed I-765
P.O. Box 10765
Laguna Niguel, CA 92607-0765

III. OPT 17-month extension for STEM field degrees

F-1 students with degrees in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) may apply for a 17 months extension for a total of 29 months of OPT provided they meet the following conditions:

1. STEM degree is indicated on this list <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm> and appears on the I-20 and the transcript/degree certificate. STEM field must be your major (minor does not qualify) and be the basis of your current OPT.
2. You must be employed in your field of study and your employer must participate in e-verify program. For more information on e-verify, please go to www.dhs.gov/E-verify

If you meet these conditions, please follow the application process described here:

http://www.unr.edu/oiss/forms/forms_2007/17-Month%20STEM%20OPT%20Extension.pdf .

Other issues:

- ❖ It may take anywhere from 2 to 4 months for OPT to be approved and to receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card. Employment cannot begin unless you receive EAD card.
- ❖ OPT start date must begin within 60 days after you complete all your graduation requirements
- ❖ Students are eligible for 12 months of OPT per each educational level
- ❖ Students are eligible for part-time OPT during the academic year and for full-time OPT: 1) during the summer; 2) at the thesis stage after completing all coursework; 3) after completing all graduation requirements
- ❖ International students are exempt from paying Social Security and Medicare taxes for the first 5 years (including OPT), but are required to pay all federal and state taxes.
- ❖ If you move you have to report your new mailing and physical address to OISS within 10 days of the move
- ❖ When you start a job in your field you have to report your employer name and address to the OISS via the OPT employer information form or by email to oiss@unr.edu. You are responsible for reporting to OISS any changes in employers and employer addresses throughout your OPT period
- ❖ Students approved for 17-month extension have additional reporting requirements. Contact OISS for more information.
- ❖ F-1 status during OPT is dependent upon employment. Students may accrue no more than 90 days of unemployment during post-completion OPT or up to 120 days with STEM extension.
- ❖ "Employment" during 12 month post-completion OPT can be defined in various ways, such as: full-time, part-time, internships, volunteering, self-employment, etc. If your employment is non-traditional employment (i.e. volunteering), it is important to have documentation about your employment situation to prove your employment status.

ADVISOR'S RECOMMENDATION FOR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING



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I. TO BE COMPLETED BY THE STUDENT

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Student R# or SSN _____ SEVIS ID _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Department _____ Degree sought _____

Date to begin OPT _____ Date to end OPT _____

Type of requested OPT: Post-Completion _____ Pre-Completion _____

Academic Program Completion Date (the anticipated date when you will complete all degree requirements): _____ (mo/yr)

II. TO BE COMPLETED BY THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR

Please verify that the student will in fact complete his/her graduation requirements by the date listed above. By signing this form you recommend the student for future employment in his/her field of study. At the time of applying for OPT the student does not need to have a job offer from a specific company. If you have any questions about this form or OPT in general, please contact OISS at 784-6874.

Name of Academic Advisor _____

Date _____ Signature _____