International Student Services

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application and Approval Process

Optional Practical Training (OPT) OPT is work authorization granted by USCIS to allow F-1 students to gain experience directly related to their major area of study. Students may apply for OPT authorization during their academic program, after program completion, or a combination of both. Students are eligible for 12 months of full-time OPT per academic level and do not need a job offer to apply for OPT authorization.

When on OPT, students are required to be working or volunteering in a field <u>directly related</u> to their program of study.

Eligibility Requirements
- Student is currently in F-1 status.
- Student has been enrolled in a full course of study for one academic year (two semesters).
- Student has not exceeded 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorization.
- Student has not already used OPT at the current academic program level or at a higher program level.

Types of OPT
- Post-Completion OPT – (C) (3) (B)
  OPT authorization that begins after completion of the academic program is called "post-completion OPT". This is the most common type of OPT. Post-completion OPT is full-time and it begins after you complete your degree program.

- Pre-Completion OPT – (C) (3) (A)
  OPT used while you are still enrolled in your course of study is called "pre-completion OPT". Students will be authorized for part-time employment (20 hours/week or less) while enrolled in a full course of study. Students who do not have academic internships/practical experiences available in their program of study and cannot use CPT may want to consider this option. Pre-completion OPT is deducted from the 12 months of OPT eligibility, so most students prefer to save OPT for after program completion.

When to Apply
Apply early! You do not need a job offer to apply for OPT. OPT is recommended by a Designated School Official (DSO) in International Student Services (ISS) but final approval is granted by USCIS. Processing times may vary.

- Earliest day to apply for post-completion OPT is 90 days before the program end-date on the Form I-20.
- Latest day to apply for post-completion OPT is 60 days after the program end-date on the Form I-20 (completed application must be received by USCIS by day 60)

Application Process

① Attend an OPT Information Session provided by ISS
- If you still have questions, schedule an appointment with ISS in Starfish.

② Fill out part 1 of the OPT Request Form (available at www.century.edu/iss)

③ Meet with your Academic Advisor DSO
- Complete a graduation check or academic plan
- Apply for graduation (if applying for post-completion OPT)
- Have your advisor complete part 2 of the OPT Request Form

Updated 10/18/2021

④ Follow the Filing Form I-765 Online instructions to create a USCIS online account, gather copies of all documents required in the application, and begin your application. **Save** your application, do **not** submit it yet.

⚠️ *WAIT- DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR I-765 APPLICATION YET!* ⚠️

⑤ Schedule an appointment with the International Student Services Coordinator via Starfish. Submit the OPT Request Form and supporting documents for review to international@century.edu or bring the documents to your appointment.
- At your appointment, you will login to your USCIS account and review your draft I-765 online application.
- ISS will recommend OPT in SEVIS and issue you an updated Form I-20 (with OPT recommendation on page 2).

⑥ After reviewing your online OPT application with International Student Services:
   a. upload your NEW Form I-20 (with OPT recommendation on page 2)
   b. digitally sign and submit your I-765 application
   c. pay the filing fee to completely submit your I-765 application.
   See Filing Form I-765 Online for complete instructions.

After You Are Approved for OPT

Review Your EAD Card
- Verify that your name is spelled correctly and all of your personal information is correct.
- Review the employment dates and remember, those are the only dates during which you can work. *You may not start working until after you have received your EAD card and you have reached your start date on the EAD card.*
- Send a copy of your EAD Card to your DSO to save to your student record: international@century.edu

Required Reporting: SEVP Portal Account
- Use the SEVP Portal Account to report any changes to your address or employer within 10 days! Events to report include: employment start date, end date, new work location, change to your address.
- You will receive an email from SEVP detailing how to set up your SEVP Portal Account. If you do not receive your notification:
   o Check your email junk/spam folders
   o Confirm with your DSO that the correct email address is in your SEVIS record
- SEVP Portal Account Resources
   o Create a SEVP Portal Account: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/create-an-sevp-portal-account
   o SEVP Portal Videos: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevp-portal-videos
   o SEVP Portal Guide: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/assets/sevp_portal_student_user_guide.pdf

Unemployment
- Failure to report employer information in the SEVP Portal will be recorded as unemployment time! If you are struggling to enter information in the Portal, contact your DSO as soon as possible.
- After 90 days of unemployment your record will be auto-terminated, and you will start accruing unlawful presence in the United States.
- It is acceptable to work more than one job to meet the required numbers of hours per week for your OPT.
- If you are approaching 90 days of unemployment, know that you can volunteer over 20 hours per week (in a position directly related to your field of study) to maintain your status.
- Volunteer positions should be reported in SEVP Portal Account like other employment information. Record that it is a volunteer position
- Career Services at Century College can assist you in preparing for your job search: www.century.edu/careerservices

Remember, while on OPT your employment must be directly related to your program of study (major).