F-1 Post-Completion
Optional Practical Training

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS OFFICE
Columbia University
Agenda

- General Information
- Application Process
- Traveling Abroad on OPT
- Tips & Reminders
General Information
OPT is authorization from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to work in your field of study, commensurate with your educational level.
• Maximum of 12 months of OPT per educational level (Example: BA, MA, Phd.)
• Must be in lawful student status for two semesters to be eligible.
• OPT does not require a job offer at the time of application.
During initial 12 month period of OPT, no student may be unemployed for an aggregate of more than 90 days.
90 day limitation on unemployment

- Time spent without a qualifying job during post-completion OPT
- Travel abroad while unemployed is counted
- Time over 90 days is considered a violation of F-1 status
- Travel abroad while employed during a period of authorized leave or as part of employment is not included in the 90 day limit
Employment for the purposes of OPT reporting is defined as paid or unpaid work of at least 20 hours per week in your field of study.
General Information

Forms of employment under pre-and post-OPT

• **Paid employment** – can work part-time (at least 20 hrs/wk) or full-time
• **Multiple employers**
• **Short-term multiple employers** - performing artists
• **Work for hire** – service based contractual relationship (1099 employment)
• **Self-employed business owner** - must work full-time
• **Employment through an agency** - work at least 20 hrs/wk
• **Unpaid employment** – volunteer or unpaid internship (not violating any labor laws)
Keep letters from your employers printed on letterhead that states the following:

- Position held
- Proof of duration of job
- Job title
- Contact information of supervisor
- Description of job
There is a 60-day grace period after the end date on the EAD.

Not allowed to work or travel during this time.
Students graduating with a degree in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM), may be eligible for an additional 17 months of OPT.
If you are on authorized OPT at the time that an employer files an H-1B petition for you requesting change of status and an employment start date of October 1st, your F-1 status and OPT authorization are automatically extended until September 30th. (The earliest an employer can file an H-1B subject to the annual quota (or cap) is April 1, 6 months in advance of Oct. 1).
Application Process
Obtaining OPT approval is a 3-part process:

1. Obtain a recommendation from the ISSO in SEVIS and on the new I-20.
   - $100 administrative fee.
   - Takes up to 5 business days to process.
2. Send application and $380 fee to USCIS.
3. USCIS will process and send student EAD (Employment Authorization Document).
Application Process

Earliest time to apply: 
90 days prior to the completion of your program
Latest date to apply:

USCIS must receive your application no later than 60 days after the completion of your program.
1. Complete OPT Recommendation Request Form

Start Date of OPT:
Within 60 days from the completion of your program
Application Process

Completion Date for Spring 2014:
May 21, 2014

Start date of OPT: May 22 – Jul 20
F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) Recommendation Request Form

This section is to be completed by the STUDENT for all OPT requests.

Students applying for OPT based on completion of a program or based on completion of all requirements except the dissertation (ABD) also must submit a completed OPT ACADEMIC ADVISER FORM (p. 2)

Family Name ___________________________ First Name ___________________________
Date of Birth ___________________________ CU Email ___________________________

(1) I am requesting a recommendation for:
   ___ PRE-COMPLETION OPT (before completion of degree requirements)
   ___ Part-time OPT (during the summer or during the academic year <20 hrs/wk)
   ___ Full-time OPT (during vacation period >20 hrs/wk)
   ___ Full-time OPT during the academic year (Available only to students who have completed all degree requirements and have received MPhil but have not yet completed thesis/dissertation)
You also must submit a complete OPT Academic Adviser Form on p. 2.

   ___ POST-COMPLETION OPT (Full-time only)
You also must submit a complete OPT Academic Adviser Form on p. 2.

(2) If you have ever been issued an EAD for OPT before, please provide the following information: start and end dates on the card(s) you have received, whether full-time or part-time, and the degree level:

____________________________________________________________________________________

(3) I would like to work from (mm/dd/yy) ___________________________ to (mm/dd/yy) ___________________________

NOTE: Once submitted, requested dates cannot be changed. You cannot redeem OPT time even if you don’t work.
For post-completion OPT requests, the start date must be within the 60-day period following completion of the program. For example, if your completion date is May 15, the OPT start date could be between May 16 to July 14.

(4) Name and Address of Employer ___________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Student’s Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Office & Campus Address: 524 Riverside Drive New York, NY 10027
Mailing Address: Mail Code 5729 2900 Broadway New York, NY 10027 212-854-3857 Fax 212-854-1235
Revised 08/04/2011
2. Ask your Academic Adviser or Dean to complete the Form for Academic Advisers confirming your completion of studies.
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS OFFICE

For Post-Completion and ABD Students

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Form for
Academic Adviser, Department Chair, or Program Coordinator

This form must be completed in its entirety for the ISSO to accept the student’s OPT application.
• ITEM 1 MUST BE COMPLETED FOR ALL APPLICANTS.
• Box 2 or 3 should be checked if applicable to the student’s situation.

The student listed below is requesting the ISSO recommendation for employment authorization in his/her field of study. In order to issue a recommendation, we are required to obtain the following information. Please complete and sign the section below. If further information is advisable or necessary, describe in an accompanying letter.

This is to confirm that:

Student Name: _____________________________________________

1. is expected to complete [bachelors / masters / doctoral] degree (please circle one) requirements by

   (DATE: mm/dd/yyyy) Note: For terms other than spring, this is not the degree conferral date. It is the end of the term in which degree requirements are met.

   Please check any box that is applicable to this student:
   2. □ has completed all coursework, is at the "all but dissertation" (ABD) stage and has received MPhil (if applicable).
   3. □ has received a grade for any course-related Curricular Practical Training previously authorized (if applicable).

Faculty/Adviser Name (please print) _________________________________

Title and Department ____________________________________________

Email _________________________________________________________ Phone ext. ______________________

Signature _________________________ Date ________________________
3. Complete **I-765** application (either typed or in blue ink). Refer to your electronic I-94 record/card to fill in questions regarding your last entry to the U.S.
Mark the first box!

U.S. mailing address must be valid for 3 months

I-94 Number 11 digit Admission #

Sign here in blue ink

LEAVE THIS AREA BLANK
Before Question 1 under “I am applying for:” check the box for “Permission to Accept Employment”

#11 - is asking if you ever applied for an EAD card before. CPT or on-campus work does not count.

#16 - The code for post-completion OPT is (c)(3)(B).

#17 - Leave blank as does not apply to regular OPT applications.
**Mailing Address Tips** - select an address that is valid for 3-4 months from the time you mail out the application.

When using an address that is not your own:

- **c/o John Smith, 405 W. 119th St. Apt. 2P, New York, NY 10027**
- **c/o J. Smith** (if name is too long, first initial with last name is fine)
Must submit proof of your F-1 status.

• Print out of Electronic I-94 admission record (www.cbp.gov/I94)

OR

• Copy of both sides of white I-94 card
I-94 ARRIVAL RECORD
Application Process

• Come to the ISSO with the following documents:
  
  • Print out of electronic I-94 information / white I-94 card
  • Passport
  • All I-20s
  • Completed I-765
  • Completed OPT Request Form and form from school advisor
  • Trainee Administrative Fee -$100 by cash or credit card
  • online-https://lexington.columbia.edu/ isso/trainee
An ISSO advisor will review your eligibility and the required forms.
Within 5 business days, the ISSO will issue a new I-20 with the OPT recommendation on page 3 and e-mail you when it’s ready to pick up.

**Please check your Columbia email account.**
Pick-up envelope will include mailing instructions for completing the application process.
Application must be received by USCIS within 30 days from the OPT recommendation date in SEVIS or it will be denied.

*Section 10 of I-20 - date issued*
Verify completion date before you send application to USCIS.
OPT Recommendation

Recertification
Application Process

PLAN EARLY

The USCIS can take anywhere from 1 to 3 months (or more) to process OPT applications.

The ISSO may take up to 5 business days to process a new I-20 with the OPT recommendation.
Application Process

OPT Checklist

- G-1145 form
- I-765 form
- Fee $380 - payable to Department of Homeland Security
- Copies of page 1 and 3 of all previously issued 1-20s
- Copy of your passport ID page (page with picture and passport expiration date)
- Copy of F-1 entry visa
- Print out of I-94 information OR copy of both sides of I-94 card
- Copy of both sides of any previously issued EAD cards
- Two U.S. passport style photos – http://tinyurl.com/optphotos
Form G-1145 – This form should be on top of your application if you want USCIS to notify you by email and/or text message that they have accepted your application. You can access this form through our website or at http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf
Mailing address
All applications must either be filed at the USCIS Dallas or USCIS Phoenix lockbox facilities.

If you indicate an address on the I-765 form in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut or Pennsylvania, please send the application to:

**US Postal Service (USPS)**
USCIS
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

**Express mail or Courier service (FedEx, UPS, DHL)**
USCIS
ATTN:AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121, Business
Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067
EAD cards are delivered separately from your Approval Notice. The envelope looks like this:

OPT Approval Dates
Travel Abroad and OPT

*Before* your EAD is issued, you may reenter the U.S. to *resume* searching for employment. You must carry evidence of a PENDING OPT application (Receipt Notice).
After EAD is issued, you may reenter U.S.

- to *resume* employment that has already commenced, OR

- to begin a job that has already been offered.

This means you should carry a letter from the employer, in addition to the EAD.
After the completion of your program, the following documents are required for re-entry in F-1 status:

- An unexpired **passport** valid for 6 months into the future (some exceptions)
- A valid, unexpired **F-1 entry visa** (except Canadians)
- An **I-20** that has been **recertified** in the last 6 months
- **Proof of your OPT**
  - Receipt notice (pending OPT application)
  - EAD and a letter from an employer (once OPT approved)
Entry Visa

YOU

# of Entries

Visa Type

Expiration Date
Eligibility to enter the U.S. as an F-1 student

Does NOT determine how long you may remain in the U.S.
VISA APPLICATIONS

• **NOT guaranteed** an entry visa (from a U.S. Consulate) simply because you have been granted OPT (by the USCIS).

• You **always** need to establish non-immigrant intent to qualify for an F-1 visa.
Tips and Reminders
Contact the ISSO if there is an error on your receipt notice or EAD or if you receive a Request for Further Evidence (RFE) for your application.
You MUST have the EAD in hand before beginning any employment.
OPT REPORT FORM

You are required to report any changes in employment or status within 10 days:

• Change in name or address of residence
• Name and address of employer
• Name and address of any new employer
• Any period of unemployment
• Decision not to use OPT and departing the U.S. to return home or to another country
• Change to another nonimmigrant status in the U.S. or change to Permanent Resident status

https://www1.columbia.edu/sec/cu/isso/OPT_Reporting.html
Tips and Reminders

Social Security and OPT

You can apply for a social security number on the start date of your OPT authorization indicated on your EAD.

Tips and Reminders

Sign up with Columbia Alumni Affairs to have your e-mail from your Columbia UNI-based account forwarded to another account to receive important information about OPT from the ISSO.

http://cuit.columbia.edu/email-alumni
ISSO – Optional Practical Training

- [http://www.tinyurl.com/issoOPT](http://www.tinyurl.com/issoOPT)
- Application forms and detailed instructions

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

- [http://www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)
- Track your case online
Be sure to read your **ISSOnews** e-mail for information on regulations, workshops and deadline reminders.
ISSO CONTACT INFORMATION

Office Hours
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
10:30 – 4:00 pm.
Closed on Wednesday

Address and Phone Number
524 Riverside Drive in International House North,
between 122nd Street and Tiemann Place
(212) 854-3587

Website
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/

E-mail Address
isson@columbia.edu