



DREW UNIVERSITY

International Student Services

F-1 Student Optional Practical Training Information

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is off-campus work authorization issued by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for work experience in your field of study.

Student Eligibility

- Students are eligible to apply for post-completion OPT up to 90 days before your program end date (graduation).

Types of Employment Allowed

The following activities are considered allowable employment on both pre-completion and standard post-completion OPT, provided that the job is directly related to the student's program of study.

1. **Regular paid employment** in a position directly related to the student's program of study. For post-completion OPT, the work must be for at least 20 hours per week.
2. **Payment by multiple short-term multiple employers.** "Students, such as musicians and other performing artists, may work for multiple short term employers . The student should maintain a list of all employers, the dates and duration.
3. **Work for hire.** When a student performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. Students should be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.
4. **Volunteers or unpaid interns.** Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns (the work should not violate any labor laws). The work should be at least 20 hours per week. A student should be able to provide evidence, acquired from the student's employer, to verify that he or she worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.

Special Considerations

- You remain in F-1 status while you are on OPT, so you must continue to follow all regulations that govern your visa status.
- A maximum of 12 months of OPT may be granted for each degree level completed in the U.S. (e.g. bachelor's, master's, PhD). (Exception: 17 month STEM extensions)
- A student who takes advantage of full-time CPT for 12 month or more is NOT eligible for Optional Practical Training.
- Report any change of address or employment updates to Drew University's Immigration Services Coordinator. In case of address change, send an email to Drew's ISS with the following information:
 - Current Address (must notify ISS within 10 days of moving)
 - Change of Employer (address and start date)
 - Unemployment (date that job was lost)
 - Change in Immigration status
 - Departure from the U.S. if earlier than the date on the EAD
- USCIS recommends that students maintain evidence, for each job, of the position held, proof of the duration of that position, the job title, contact information for the student's supervisor or manager and a description of the work.
- If it is not clear from the job description that the work is related to the student's degree, it is highly recommended that the student obtain a signed letter from the student's supervisor or

manager or the employer's hiring official stating how the student's degree is related to the work performed.

Unemployment During OPT

- During post-completion OPT, a student (including STEM students) may not be unemployed for an aggregate of more than 90 days. If a student receives a 17-month STEM extension, the limit on unemployment is raised to an aggregate of no more than 120 days.
- Weekends and time spent outside of the U.S. are counted towards the period of unemployment.

Travel While on OPT

- Student who needs to travel outside the U.S. before receiving the EAD must have the receipt (I-797) from USCIS.
- If Student has received the EAD but has not started work, s/he must have letter from prospective employer to prove that s/he has employment.
- Student must present the following documents upon re-entry to the U.S. while on OPT:
 - Form I-20 endorsed by ISS within the preceding 6 months
 - An unexpired EAD card
 - Proof of employment

Application Procedure

- Complete Form I-765 (available online at www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf)
- Form should be completed online, printed, and then signed and dated. (Handwritten forms are easily rejected by USCIS which causes long delays in processing.)
- USCIS must receive your application before the end of the 60 day grace period.
- The start date for OPT must be within 60 days of graduation or program completion.
- Schedule an appointment (email larthur@drew.edu) or stop by ISS during advising hours. Please bring the following documents to the appointment:
 1. Job offer letter including the following information on employer's letterhead: Job description, student's name, employment start and end dates, hours/week, and supervisor's name.
 2. Academic Department Recommendation Form for CPT (completed by academic advisor or faculty member teaching/overseeing the internship course).
 3. Registration for internship must be approved so that ISS can verify the enrollment information on [CampusWeb](#).

Items Required for the OPT Application

- Completed Form G1145 attached to top of I-765 Form
- Completed Form I-765
- \$380 fee (Check or money order made payable to Department of Homeland Security. Do Not send cash.)
- Two passport-style photographs (for instructions: http://travel.state.gov/visa/visaphotoreq/visaphotoreq_5334.html)
- Photocopy of your new I-20 endorsed for OPT (pages 1 & 3) from ISS. Be sure to sign your new I-20!
- Photocopies of all previously issued I-20s
- Copy of your I-94 card (both sides)
- Copy of the visa stamp in your passport
- Copy of the identity pages in your passport
- Copy of any previously issued EAD cards

*Make a copy of the **entire application** for your records.*

Helpful Tips for Completing Form I-765

- **Question at top of form:** I am applying for:
Check box "Permission to accept employment"
- **Question #3:** Address in the United States. It is important that you use an address where you can receive mail for the next four months. Do not use a friend's address. The U.S. Postal Service may not deliver a government document (or any mail) unless you are the official resident at that address.
- **Question #10:** I-94 Number (On the small white card in your passport.)
- **Question #11:** Have you ever applied for employment authorization from USCIS? This DOES NOT include CPT. Select NO unless you have received an EAD for other off-campus work authorization.
- **Question #16:** If you are applying for post-completion OPT, the answer is (C) (3) (B).
- Sign and date the form in **blue ink**. Keep your signature **within the black lines**. It will be scanned and included on the EAD card.

Mailing the OPT Application

- Your application must be mailed within 30 days after the I-20 for OPT is created and no more than 60 days after your program completion date.
- It is recommended that you use certified US mail, UPS, or FedEx so that you have a tracking number to ensure that USCIS receives your application.
- If your return address on the I-765 is in NJ, NY, PA, CT, mail the application to the Dallas Lockbox:

For U.S. Postal Service Deliveries
USCIS
PO Box 660867
Dallas, Texas 75266

For Express Mail and Courier Deliveries
USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business
Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067