

Optional Practical Training

Requirements:

1. You must have completed **two semesters** at an American college or university and have earned a degree (graduated)
2. Your work must be **directly related to your major field**. However, you do not have to have a job already in order to apply for optional practical training. You can have a full-time, part-time (21 or more hours per week) or volunteer job (21 or more hours per week) in your field. **STUDENT MUST EXPLAIN HOW THE EMPLOYMENT RELATES TO THE MAJOR – THIS INFORMATION WILL BE ENTERED INTO SEVIS.**
3. You are allowed a maximum of **12 months of full-time practical training**. If you work pre-completion part-time, this counts as half of full-time and will be deducted accordingly. If you complete another degree at a higher level, you will be eligible for a second (or even third) OPT. You may never have a second OPT at the same level.
4. STEM extension – see separate sheet
5. You should apply for OPT no more than 90 days **BEFORE COMPLETION OF PROGRAM or 120 days before chosen date**, but not more than 60 days after graduation. Application must be **received** by US CIS within 30 days of issuance of I-20 and/or before the 60 day grace period.
6. US CIS may require up to 90 days to approve/deny your application. If you apply during your grace period, you may lose up to one month of available OPT.
7. You may work while you are a student or after completion of program. The end date for post-completion OPT must be within 14 months of your date of degree completion.
8. You must have your EAD in hand and the start date must be on that date or in the past. In other words, if you receive your EAD prior to the start date, you may not begin work until the start date.
9. You remain an F-1 student while you are doing Optional Practical Training. If you leave the country re-enter, you must have the SEVIS travel page signed by the DSO. You will need **both the I-20 and a valid F-1 visa to re-enter**. The current advisor's manual states that you should also have the **EAD** and a **job letter** in order to re-enter. "If either is missing, then the student is assuming risk."
10. You must inform me of **any changes in address** or name while you are doing OPT. I am required by law to report this information to ICE through SEVIS. It is your responsibility to keep me up to date, through email, of any such changes.
11. **You must also inform me of your employer's (company) name, address and your job title. SEVP is now tracking student's employment to make sure that they are working at a job within your area of study (see no. 2).**
12. **Status is maintained through employment. YOU ARE ALLOWED NO MORE THAN 90 DAYS OF UNEMPLOYMENT DURING OPT IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN STATUS. SEVIS WILL TRACK THE DAYS OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND WILL TERMINATE THE RECORD IF A STUDENT DOES NOT REPORT WORK FOR MORE THAN 90 DAYS. You must inform me if you depart the US and will not return so that I can complete your program.**
13. After the completion of your OPT, you have 60 days to remain legally in the U.S. After that time, you must leave the country. If you wish to transfer to another school or apply for a Change of Status to some other immigration status, you must do so within the 60 day grace period.
14. "Cap gap" – see separate sheet.

15. If you have been in this country as an F-1 student for less than 5 years, you are not required to pay Social Security or Medicare taxes. You are required to pay all income taxes. For more information, consult IRS publication 519
16. Be sure to keep checking your DU email since this is the one which I will be using while you're on OPT.

If you qualify, the following documents must be sent by **certified mail/return receipt requested** to:

USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

- A completed **I-765 form**
- NEW SEVIS I-20** with page 3 showing OPT endorsement by DSO and chosen dates for OPT
- Photocopies from **passport**: F-1 visa, photo and expiration date of passport.
- I-94 (from website)
- Two recent **passport size photos**
- Check or money order made out to Department of Homeland Security for \$410.00**

If your application is approved, you will receive an **I-688 (Employment Authorization Document—EAD)** which resembles a driver's license. On it will appear the dates of employment authorization.

Send or bring me a photocopy of this card – USCIS requires that a copy be in your file at Dominican University.