



Optional Practical Training - OPT

OPT is “temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major area of study.” A student is eligible for 12 months of OPT at one bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral educational level(s). OPT authorization Must be approved by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).

What are the types of OPT?

PRE-Completion

- Full-time, minimum 20 hours per week
 - During summer vacation
 - Must enroll for the spring prior to & fall after your OPT period
- Part-time, maximum 20 hours per week
 - While school is in session
 - Must be enrolled full-time

POST-Completion

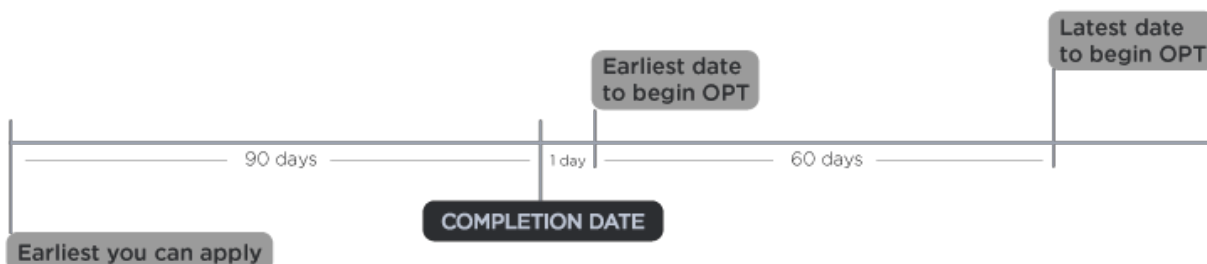
- Full-time, minimum 20 hours per week
 - At the end of your academic program
- Grad Students with completed course work:
 - May apply for OPT while working on thesis/dissertation.
 - Continuing Enrollment (601) does not prohibit eligibility

OPT Eligibility

- You must have been a full-time student for at least one academic year.
- You must currently be in F-1 status.
- You must be in good academic standing.
- You have satisfied ALL requirements for graduation, or for Graduate Students, the completion of all required coursework.
- You must not have used more than 12 months of OPT in the past at your current degree level.
- You must not have used 12 months of CPT.
- You do NOT need to have a job offer in order to apply for OPT.

How do I know when to apply?

- Degree Completion: Refers to the day you complete all your degree requirements. (*Not the date of your graduation ceremony*)
 - Most Students: The last day of the semester for which you are applying.
 - Doctoral/Thesis Students: This could be your dissertation/thesis submission date.
 - This is a very special circumstance that is rarely used.



Steps to apply for OPT



1. Obtain the [OPT Application Packet](#)
2. OPT Advisor Recommendation Form completed by your Academic Advisor or Graduate Program Coordinator
3. Complete the OPT Agreement
4. Schedule an appointment to apply for OPT at CIE
 - Call the front desk (618) 453-5774, or email issinfo@siu.edu
 - Submit the OPT Advisor Recommendation & OPT Agreement to a DSO at CIE for the REQUIRED OPT Recommended I-20
5. Complete the online I-765 application at myaccount.uscis.gov.
 - Filing Fee (credit or debit card) paid via pay.gov for \$410.00
 - 2 Digital Passport Style Photos - that have never been used before and were taken with the last 30 days (Specifications may be found in the OPT application packet)

What happens after my petition for OPT has been submitted to USCIS?

- The processing may take as long as 30-90 days.
 - It is recommended to expect 90-day processing.
- Once the application is received, USCIS will issue an I-797 Receipt Notice
 - Notice will include a case number that may be used to check the status of the student's application at uscis.gov.
- Both the I-797 Receipt Notice and Employment Authorization Document (EAD), or approval notice, are sent to mailing address included in the I-765 application.
 - The student need to validation that all information is up-to-date at the time the EAD has been issued.
 - MUST report any change (name, address, interruption of employment, phone number, email, employer, address of employment, employment start/end dates, supervisor etc.) within 10 days.
 - May be submitted via the SEVP portal or by submitting the [OPT Update Form](#).

24 Month OPT STEM Extension

- The extension will be for an additional 24 months, for a maximum of 36 months of OPT, if all of the following requirements are met:
 - Completed (or will complete) a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in a Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (STEM) degree field.
 - Degree must be on DHS' [STEM-Designated Degree Program List](#)
 - Currently engaged in post-completion OPT, applying on the basis of a STEM degree awarded in that STEM field (or making progress toward that degree)
 - Employer must be actively participating in the E-verify program
 - Must be paid employment
 - [I-983 Training Plan](#) is required to be completed by student and employer.
- Additional reporting requirements are required of approved STEM extensions
 - Must report changes of name, address, employer name/address, and/or loss of employment within 10 days of the change.
 - The student must make a "validation report," or update, with the DSO every six months from the date the extension begins.
 - Both of the above should be done using the [OPT Update Form](#).
 - Student must submit an updated [I-983 Training Plan](#) every 12 months, or when there is a change, with appropriate evaluation portions completed—while on STEM OPT.
- Visit the [24 Month STEM OPT Information webpage](#) for application materials and online filing procedures.

Need more information? Contact us.

Email: issinfo@siu.edu, Telephone: (618) 453-5774