Optional Practical Training Workshop

Office of International Services
Fall 2025

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INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

Roadmap of Workshop

1. Overview of OPT
2. Timelines
3. Determining Eligibility
4. Form I-765 Application Process
5. Requirements After Approval
6. After OPT – What comes next?

What is Optional Practical Training?

THREE TYPES

- **Pre-Completion OPT – prior to graduation (uncommon)**
  - Form I-765 category (C03A)

- **Post-Completion OPT – apply for this first**
  - Form I-765 category (C03B)

- **STEM OPT Extension – eligible students apply later**
  - 24-month extension of already approved OPT
  - Form I-765 Category (C03C)

What is Post-Completion OPT?

POST-COMPLETION OPT (CATEGORY C03B)

- Temporary (12-months maximum) off-campus employment authorization for eligible students in F-1 status
  - Post-graduation <u>benefit</u> of degree completion
  - Does <u>not</u> change your visa status
  - Does <u>not</u> require work visa sponsorship

- Allows you to gain real-world experience in your major field of study

- Designated School Official (DSO) recommends you for OPT

- Student files to and is approved by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

Timelines

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Sep. 13, 2025 First day to apply to USCIS	**Dec. 12, 2025** Graduation & Program End Date	**Feb. 10, 2026** End of Grace Period & Last day to apply

- Applying prior to graduation is strongly recommended
- Decisions from USCIS can take 3 – 4 months on average
- Only apply if you are confident you will complete degree
- Delays should be expected – do not work until fully approved!

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Timelines

SELECTING A _REQUESTED_ START DATE – NOT GUARANTEED

Range of allowable _requested_ start dates

Dec. 12, 2025	Dec. 13, 2025	Feb. 10, 2026
Graduation & Program End Date	60-day grace period begins	End of grace period & Last day to apply

- For start date, consider business days and avoid holidays
- Consider personal needs (rest, relocation) and your confidence in securing employment/training
- Requested end date is one year later, minus one day
- Dates cannot be modified once application is submitted

Eligibility Requirements

12-MONTH POST-COMPLETION OPT

- On track to complete a degree program in valid F-1 status
  - Exception for thesis-based graduate students
- Must be physically present in the U.S.
- Fully enrolled in U.S. for at least 1 academic year before beginning OPT
- If you have done Curricular Practical Training/CPT:
  - Cannot exceed 364 days of full-time CPT at current degree level
- Cannot be previously approved for OPT at current degree level
- Offer of employment and SSN are not required before applying

Applying for OPT

STEP-BY-STEP SUMMARY:

Step 1	Submit OPT I-20 Request and pay processing fee.
Step 2	Create myUSCIS account and file Form I-765 application.
Step 3	Answer questions, upload evidence, and review.
Step 4	Submit application and pay filing fee(s).

*Entire process will take approximately 1 to 3 business weeks.

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How to Apply for OPT

STEP 1: REQUEST OPT I-20

- Complete the electronic **OPT I-20 Request** through the International Student Portal.

  1. Choose full-time (more than 20 hrs/wk) or part-time
  2. Choose a requested start date in 60-day grace period
  3. List academic advisor as the "Approver" to confirm program information and graduation eligibility
  4. Pay $75 non-refundable OPT I-20 processing fee
  5. Apply for graduation (Office of the Registrar)

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How to Apply for OPT: Form I-765
STEP 2: CREATE USCIS ACCOUNT AND FILE I-765

- Create <u>online USCIS account</u>. File Form I-765.

  1. Category: Post-Completion OPT (**C 3 B**)
  2. Reason: "Initial permission to accept employment"
  3. Continue answering questions in application
  4. Importance of the Mailing Address – USPS Address Tool

How to Apply for OPT: Form I-765
STEP 3: UPLOAD REQUIRED EVIDENCE

1. U.S. Style **Passport Photos**
   - <u>U.S. passport photo requirements</u>

2. Most recent **I-94 Arrival Record**
   - Class of Admission should be F-1

3. Employment Authorization Document OR **Government ID**
   - Valid passport ID page with name, expiration, and photo; and/or previous EAD card if applicable

4. Previously Authorized CPT (from current degree level) or OPT
   - Use CPT I-20s and/or previous OPT I-20s + previous EAD cards

5. Form I-20 with OPT Recommendation
   - sign in blue ink and upload all 3 pages
   - **OPT I-20 only <u>valid for 30 days</u> after issuance by DSO**

*Note: a valid F-1 visa is <u>not</u> required evidence in the OPT application.

How to Apply for OPT: Form I-765

STEP 3, CONTINUED: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Optional "Additional Information" Section not required but can be helpful to add context, if you have:

1. Previous CPT (indicate dates, degree level, full/part-time, etc.)

2. Previous OPT (indicate dates, degree level, full/part-time, etc.)

3. Changes to your name, SEVIS ID, passport, etc.
   - indicate previous SEVIS IDs you have had
   - indicate if you have renewed your passport and provide old number and expiration date

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How to Apply for OPT: Form I-765
STEP 4: REVIEW & SUBMIT

- **Review** application for accuracy, pay filing fee(s), and submit.

  - Required and <u>nonrefundable</u> fee: **$470** (online) or **$520** (paper)

    - Optional $1,685* <u>Premium Processing</u> fee for expedited processing/decision (30 business days)

Fees accurate as of September 2025: <u>USCIS Form G-1055 Fee Schedule</u>

After Submission of I-765

- Online applicants automatically receive an electronic Receipt Notice in Documents tab.

- Later, you will receive a Form I-797C paper Receipt Notice at your mailing address.

- USCIS lists estimated processing time on website.

- Do not leave the U.S. and do not start working.

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After OPT Approval

- Email notification on day of approval (if you file online)
  - Create SEVP portal account on/after approved start date

- I-797 Approval Notice sent to mailing address
  - EAD card will arrive approximately 1-2 business weeks later

- "Valid From" date on EAD is when employment can begin
  - Do not work until you have the physical EAD card in hand
  - The "unemployment clock" begins on the "Valid From" date

- Report Approval to International Services & provide EAD copy

- International Travel now possible – be cautious.

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Reporting Requirements

- **SEVP Portal** – tool for reporting employer information directly to SEVIS Record

  ...and...

- **MSU International Student Portal** – report approval, upload EAD card, request updated Form I-20, etc.

Reporting Requirements

WHAT TO REPORT: → **WHEN TO REPORT:**

Any changes to address and phone number

How the employment relates to field of study

Employer's name, address, and taxpayer ID (EIN)

Job title, start and end dates of employment

Full-time (must work more than 20 hours/week)

Supervisor's name, phone #, and email address

Per regulations, all changes must be reported within **10 calendar days**.

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Types of Employment

EMPLOYMENT/TRAINING MUST BE:
- ➢ **MORE THAN 20 HOURS PER WEEK**
- ➢ **DIRECTLY RELATED TO MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY**

- Paid full-time employment
  - Multiple employers (e.g., 2 part-time jobs)
  - Short-term multiple employers (performing artists)
  - Work for hire: contract employment
  - Employment through an agency
  - Self-employed business owner
- Unpaid employment: volunteers or unpaid interns; cannot violate any labor laws
- Unemployment: 90-day limit for Post-Completion OPT

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Special Situations

- OPT is Approved but you <u>do not graduate</u>
- OPT is Denied
  - Review Denial Notice for reasoning
  - Can re-apply with new I-20 if within application window
- EAD Card is lost, incorrect, or not delivered
  - Apply for replacement EAD
- Withdrawing OPT application

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Ending OPT Early

CONTACT A DSO FOR ADVISEMENT

Change of immigration status (H-1B)

Abandon OPT and F-1 status and depart U.S.

Begin a new program or transfer before OPT ends

After OPT Ends

AFTER COMPLETION OF APPROVED PERIOD FOR OPT

- During 60-day grace period begins after the "Valid Until" date on EAD, you can:
  - Must depart the U.S., or
  - Begin new program within 5 months to continue F-1 status at MSU, or
  - Transfer SEVIS Record to another school that begins within 5 months, or
  - Begin STEM OPT (must apply **BEFORE** OPT ends)

What is STEM OPT?

STEM OPT EXTENSION BASICS

- 24-month extension of authorized Post-Completion OPT
  - Must apply <u>before</u> Post-Completion OPT ends – can apply up to 90 days before

- Degree must be in an <u>approved STEM field</u>.

- "Employer Specific" – one at a time; must be E-Verify.

- Vitally important that job position and responsibilities show a **<u>clear</u>** and **<u>robust</u>** connection to your **<u>major field of study</u>**

- Employer must help student complete a formal training plan (Form I-983) and learning objectives.
  - Must be submitted to DSO for review before applying and after any changes are made during STEM period.

International Services

Contact International Services:

- Phone: 417-836-6618

- Email: internationalservices@missouristate.edu

- Website: international.MissouriState.edu/services

- Contact MasonGaspard@MissouriState.edu to schedule appointment for case-specific advisement

Helpful Links:

- MSU Graduation Checklist

- U.S. Passport Photos

- How to create a USCIS account

- Tips for filing online forms with USCIS

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