

# 12-Month Post-Completion Optional Practical Training OPT Information Packet & Application Overview

## Definition of Optional Practical Training (OPT):

An F-1 student may apply to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) division of the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for authorization for temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student's major area of study. The student may not begin OPT until the date indicated on his or her employment authorization document.

## Eligibility Requirements and Things to Think About

Eligibility requirements	Practical Training may be authorized to an F-1 student who has been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year.
Location	Student may work anywhere in the U.S. for the duration of OPT.
Duration & hours per week	Cumulative maximum of 12 months per educational level. Student may work 40 hours per week. Certain STEM students may apply at a later date to work up to an additional 17 months.
Field/level of work	Position must be in student's major field of study; and students should be able to justify how a position fits within their major field of study.
Offer of Employment	No offer of employment is required, but a student is expected to work or be actively seeking employment after the OPT EAD (Employment Authorization Document) is issued. However, unemployment after the EAD start date is restricted; Please contact OIPS if you are unemployed.
Effect on other work	A student who completed 12 months or more of <u>full-time</u> CPT is not eligible for OPT.

Deadlines for Submitting OPT Application to USCIS	The student must properly file his or her OPT application to USCIS up to 90 days prior to his or her program end date and no later than 40 days after his or her program end date. Please Note – exiting the U.S. while your application is still processing will result in the surrender of your application; this includes travel during your final term for Thanksgiving or Spring Break. Travel outside the U.S. immediately after graduation is not recommended.
Processing Times	It is typically that USCIS may take up to 90 days to process an OPT application. Please consider this when selection a preferred start date of work.
Start date of work on OPT	The effective start date of the EAD will be either the date employment is scheduled to begin (as listed on page 3 of the I-20), or the date the EAD is issued, whichever occurs later. Students may have some flexibility on setting a start date; please see OIPS for more information.
Approval process	Student must apply for and receive an EAD from USCIS with assistance of the OIPS before work begins.
Travel After OPT is Approved	Students may travel outside of the U.S. ONLY after OPT has been approved. Ensure you have a valid travel signature on your I-20. Updated employment information on the I-20 is not required, but you should have an offer of employment or other supporting documentation that you are returning to a job in the U.S.
Independent or Contract Work	Students may engage in independent work or contract work. Be sure to report this to OIPS. Students are also encouraged to keep a journal of work activities and days to demonstrate they are not using the 90 days of unemployment.

## Application Steps

### STEP #1:

Collect the material you need for your application:

- Original, completed, and signed Form I-765 available at: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> or by searching 'USCIS I-765.'
  - In Item #3, be sure to use a valid address where you will be able to receive mail in the months after you submit your application. Mail sent from USCIS cannot be forwarded, so if you use an invalid address, you will not receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD). You may put the Office of International Programs and Services address, but we will only allow students to pick-up their mail (we do not mail it out to you). This may cause a delay in receiving your documents. If you chose to do this, please use the address below:

#### Office of International Programs and Services

Purchase College Student Services Building, 2nd Floor Phone: 914-251-6032

Email: [international@purchase.edu](mailto:international@purchase.edu) Website: [www.purchase.edu/international](http://www.purchase.edu/international)

    #purchaseOIPS @purchaseOIPS

#### Purchase College

State University of New York

735 Anderson Hill Road

Purchase, NY 10577

Your Name C/O International Programs  
735 Anderson Hill Road  
Purchase, NY 10577





- Use **(C) (3) (B)** in Item #20 on the form
- Place “N/A” or do not fill in #21,22,23
- Don’t forget to sign and date the form!
- If you do not know an answer to a section on this form, leave it blank and OIPS will review it with you.
- Optional but highly recommended so that you can receive electronic notification (via email and/or text message) from USCIS about the status of your application. Original, completed Form G-1145 is available at: <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145> or by searching ‘USCIS G-1145.’
- Copies of all I-20s from Purchase and any other schools you have attended in the U.S. – this should be the first page and 2<sup>nd</sup> signature pages. Double sided is ok.
- Copy of the biographical/identification page of your passport
- Copy of the F-1 visa stamp page from your passport. Canadian students will not have this.
- Copy of any previous EAD cards (if applicable).
- Copy of the front and back of your Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record (for students who came into the U.S. at a land border) or a copy of your electronic I-94 Admission Number for students who arrived by airplane: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home> or search ‘CBP I-94.’ You can also use this website to review your travel history and answer #13 on the I-765
- Two passport-style photographs taken **within the last 30 days**. Applications have been rejected if photos are not current; they cannot match your visa or passport photo.
  - Lightly print your full name and I-94 Number on the back of each photo in pencil
  - The photos should be placed in an envelope or plastic bag and paper clipped or stapled to the application so they are not lost
  - USCIS specifications for these photos can be found here: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/photos/photos.html>
- Check or money order in the amount of \$410 made payable to:  
**U.S. Department of Homeland Security** (use the USCIS address below if need be)

## STEP #2:

Make an appointment with the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS) and bring all application material mentioned above. In addition to this application material, please **think about what begin and end dates you would like for OPT**. OIPS will review your material and create a new Form I-20 with employment authorization (including your preferred start and end dates)

## STEP #3:

### Office of International Programs and Services

Purchase College Student Services Building, 2nd Floor Phone: 914-251-6032  
Email: [international@purchase.edu](mailto:international@purchase.edu) Website: [www.purchase.edu/international](http://www.purchase.edu/international)  
    #purchaseOIPS @purchaseOIPS

### Purchase College

State University of New York  
735 Anderson Hill Road  
Purchase, NY 10577

You are responsible for mailing your application. Submit all application materials to USCIS using an express mail courier like **UPS, FedEx, or DHL** so that the materials will arrive in a timely manner and can be tracked at every step along the way. Sending it regular mail or express via the **U.S. Post Service is strongly discouraged** (and does require a separate mailing address)

Send the application to the address below:

**U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services  
Attn: AOS  
2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business  
Suite 400Lewisville, TX 75067**

*If you must (NOT recommended) use the U.S. Postal Service, the address is:*

*USCIS  
P.O. Box 660867  
Dallas, TX 75266*

**STEP #4:** Receive an official Receipt Notice from USCIS within 2-3 weeks. NOTE – this is only confirmation that they have received your OPT application and NOT that they have begun processing it. You can check the status of your OPT application with USCIS by using your receipt number (this should have been emailed to you) and by logging in here:

<https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/mycasestatus.do> (or by searching ‘USCIS Case Status’)

**STEP #5:** Receive the Employment Authorization Card (EAD) within 2-3 months and begin working only after the start date printed on the EAD. If you plan to travel after graduation but before you have received an EAD, please notify OIPS immediately and before booking travel; there are specific restrictions to travel during this period.

**STEP #6:** Continue to maintain valid F-1 status; remember to report address changes and employment to OIPS





## Final Considerations

You are still considered in F-1 status during the period of OPT employment.

- You cannot work on-campus in regular student employment after the new end date of the Form I-20.
- You must update OIPS regarding any changes of mailing address or name changes.
- You must update OIPS regarding any changes in employment/employer.
- You must request a travel signature on your Form I-20 from OIPS before leaving the US.
- You have a 60-day grace period upon completion of OPT.
  - If you use the 90 day of unemployment, there is no grace period.
- You may be able to extend the EAD card for an additional 17 months of OPT if you meet the extension eligibility requirements (STEM majors) and apply in a timely fashion. Contact OIPS for details.
- You will no longer be authorized to engage in OPT employment if/when you transfer to another school or begin study at another educational level.

---

### Office of International Programs and Services

Purchase College Student Services Building, 2nd Floor Phone: 914-251-6032  
Email: [international@purchase.edu](mailto:international@purchase.edu) Website: [www.purchase.edu/international](http://www.purchase.edu/international)  
    #purchaseOIPS @purchaseOIPS

### Purchase College

State University of New York  
735 Anderson Hill Road  
Purchase, NY 10577