WESTERN NEW ENGLAND UNIVERSITY WNE

12-month OPT Application Packet

Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment directly related to a student's major field of study, and it may be used before or after completion of an academic program. OPT may be used for 12 months for *each* degree level. OPT may be used before or after the completion of a program but it is advisable to use only after graduation. Students on post-completion OPT are limited to 90 days of unemployment. Students with certain STEM majors may be eligible for an additional 24-month extension of post-completion OPT.

Western New England University must recommend OPT for the student. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will provide final approval and issue an (Employment Authorization Document) EAD. The applicant must have an EAD card before they can begin OPT employment.

Eligibility:

- Students must have completed one full academic year of full-time study
- Maintain valid F-1 status
- Employment must be in the major's field of study
- Have not used 12 months or more of full-time CPT (Curricular Practical Training) for 12 months
- Have not regained legal status through reentry during the previous academic year

NOTE: Students will lose their OPT eligibility if they depart the U.S. during their grace period and USCIS has not received their OPT application prior to departure. Students will be unable to return until OPT is approved.

OPT Categories:

1. Pre-completion (rare)
    - Academic Year
        - During fall and/or spring semesters, the student has not completed required coursework. On- and off-campus work combined cannot exceed a total of 20 hours per week.
    - Vacation Period
        - Authorization may be part-time or full-time
2. Post-Completion (most common)
    - After completion of the degree program

Application Process:

- **Pre-completion applications:** up to 90 days before enrolled for one full academic year, if the period of employment will not start prior to the completion of the full academic year.

- **Post-completion applications:** OPT applications must be received by USCIS no earlier than 90 days before and no later than 60 days after the student's date of degree completion.

OPT Online Workshop and Quiz:
All students applying for Post-Completion OPT must complete the OPT Online Workshop and Quiz in Kodiak. You must receive a score of 90% or higher before your I-20 with an OPT recommendation will be created by ISSS. You can take the quiz multiple times.

Gather the following items for your application BEFORE meeting with the DSO:

To DSO:
____ Completed and signed OPT Request Form found at end of this packet (do NOT mail this to USCIS). Your DSO uses this form to process your new I-20 with OPT recommendation.

____ Make a Request for OPT I-20. Please allow at least 5 working days for your DSO to process your request.

To USCIS

Apply online (preferred and faster) on USCIS portal

____ Receive a NEW I-20 with OPT recommendation from your DSO. Wet sign on the I-20 with blue ink, scan it and make it ready to upload.
____ Create a USCIS Online Account, go to "File a form online" and select I-765 (Application for Employment Authorization)
____ Fill out I-765 accurately
____ Upload your OPT I-20, Passport photos, I-94, Passport copy, F-1 visa copy, previous I-20s with CPT / OPT authorization
____ Pay the filing fee.
____ Provide Biometric as scheduled

OR

Apply off-line (paper based application)

____ Receive a NEW I-20 with OPT recommendation from your DSO. Wet sign on the I-20 with blue ink.
____ Check or money order payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security." Do not abbreviate this. Write your name and I-94 number on the check or money order. Be sure to sign your check/money order and write the date: Month, date, year (mm/dd/yyyy). Current Fees found here. To pay by credit card, submit Form G-1450. Be sure this form is on the top of the packet.

____ 2 color, U.S. passport-style, photographs taken within the last 30 days – write name and SEVIS Number on back in PENCIL or Felt Tip Pen. Do not cut to size or staple. Put photos in an envelope or Ziploc bag to protect them. **Photos should be taken within the last 30 days prior to the application** and can be taken at CVS, Walgreens, etc. See I-765 instructions for more info on the photo requirement.
____ Completed G-1145 form to receive case notifications.
____ Completed and signed Form I-765 (see "Hints" below)
____ Copy of your current I-94 printout (Choose "Get Most Recent I-94")
____ Copy of your passport identity page
____ Copy of your current visa
____ SIGNED Copy of I-20 with OPT recommendation
____ Copy of any I-20s with prior CPT or OPT authorization from **ANY** U.S. institution.

Hints for filling out Form I-765
Complete the I-765 ON THE COMPUTER then print, sign, and mail. Do NOT hand write the information below:

Click in the box: Initial Permission to accept employment

Item 1	If your name does not fit in this section, please use Part 6. Additional Information.
Item 2	Put NA in ONE box if you have not used any other names
Item 5	If you may move while this application is being processed, use a stable address such as ISSS. Mail from USCIS is **not** forwarded by the Postal Service. You may use the University's address if you wish: In Care of: ISSS Street Number: 1215 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA 01119
Item 6	If you are using ISSS' address, select 'No.'
Item 7	Put your address (where you actually live).
Item 8-9	It is unlikely you have one of these, put NA.
Item 13	If you would like to apply for an SSN, do so here by putting 'yes.' If you have an SSN already, click 'no' and then add it in the boxes (note: many have had to handwrite in this portion)
Item 15-17	Complete these if you would like to apply for an Social Security Number
Item 21a	This is the 11-digit number on your most recent I-94
Item 21c	It is unlikely a student would have one of these. Put NA.
Item 24-25	For most students applying for OPT, it is "F-1 Student."
Item 26	See top left corner of your I-20. Starts with 'N.'
Item 27	(C)(3)(B)
Item 28-31	These are not applicable to your application. Put NA.

Part 3

Item 1-2	Click this box certifying you can read and write English. Leave rest blank.
Items 3-6	Include your contact information
Item 7	Sign in **BLACK INK**

Part 4 & 5 Leave blank but include in your application packet.

Part 6 Everyone must complete this Part and mail it to USCIS, even if all that is included is your name. If you had any of the situations apply, follow the instructions below:

You Changed Your Name:
Page Number = 3; Part Number = 2; Item Number = 1
1.a. Family Name = previous family name
1.b. Given Name = previous given name

You Received a NEW Passport since you last entered the U.S.
Page Number = 3; Part Number = 2; Item Number = 21
New Passport Information; Passport Number: XXXXXXXX
Country of Issuance: Country; Expiration Date: XXXXXX

You had CPT (include ALL instances of CPT):
Page Number = 3; Part Number = 2; Item Number = 27
SEVIS Number, Part (or full)-time CPT, Dates of CPT, Degree (i.e. Bachelor)

You previously had OPT (include ALL instances of OPT)
Page Number = 3; Part Number = 2; Item Number = 12
SEVIS Number, Post-Completion OPT, Dates of OPT, Degree (i.e. Bachelor)

Other SEVIS Numbers:
Page Number = 3; Part Number = 2; Item Number = 27
List all previous SEVIS Numbers

Submit OPT Application to USCIS

Keep a copy of the above documents for your records. If you pay by credit card, the G-1450 must be on top of the application with your photographs, then put the G-1145, followed by your application materials. **Mail the application by registered or express mail**. Keep the tracking number for your record.

Use the **Phoenix Lockbox address** if you indicated your address on FORM I-765 in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Guam, or the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

USCIS PO Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036	For Express mail (Fed Ex, UPS): USCIS Attn: AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034

Use the **Dallas Lockbox address** if you indicated your address on FORM I-765 in Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, **Massachusetts**, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North

Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, U.S. Virgin Islands, Vermont, Virginia, or West Virginia.

USCIS PO Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266	For Express Mail: USCIS Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy 121, Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067

YOU are responsible for mailing your OPT application to USCIS. Be sure to get a tracking number.

Wait for EAD card to be mailed to you from USCIS.

- If you submitted the G-1145 form, you should expect to receive an email or text message approximately one week after USCIS receives your complete application.
- Several weeks after you apply, you should receive a receipt notice (Form I-797c) in the mail from USCIS. This is proof that USCIS has received your application. Make sure to check the spelling of your name. If you notice an error, contact ISSS. The receipt will also have your case number printed on it with which you can track the progress of your application on the USCIS website.
- It takes approximately two to three months for USCIS to process your request and mail your EAD card to the address on Form I-765.
- **Request for Further Evidence**. Occasionally, a student will receive a Request for Further Evidence (RFE) from USCIS. These requests are typically because the application is missing a document or new photographs are required. If you receive such a request tell ISSS **IMMEDIATELY** to help with your reply to USCIS and submitting the requested documents. Be sure to make copies of your RFE materials before you mail them, and send the reply by courier mail with tracking.
- **EAD Delays:** Students should contact the USCIS Contact Center at 1-800-375-5283 if it has been more than 75 days since your application was receipted (the date listed on your I-797 receipt or date email received).

OPT Portal

SEVP allows students to update via the OPT portal. You will receive an email **after** OPT approval.

Requirements while on OPT:

- On-campus employment ends the same day as your program end date on your I-20 with OPT recommendation. You must have an approved EAD card on file with Western New England University's HR to work or volunteer as a research assistant with a faculty member.
- During OPT you are still in F-1 status at Western New England University
- Employment must be a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- Employment must be directly related to your course of study.
    1. OPT students can have a volunteer position but it must be related to your degree. Note about volunteer positions.

2. Do NOT enter unrelated volunteer information into your record. Please send all employment updates for review and entering in SEVIS to isss@wne.edu.

- Unemployment Caution: SEVIS records will automatically terminate for students who have no employment reported for 90 days. Be sure that you have made alternate plans and communicated them to ISSS before your record is terminated. If you have any concerns, contact ISSS.
    1. If you have accumulated 90 days of unemployment, you will no longer be in F-1 status and you do not have a grace period.
    2. Any length of unemployment is tracked in SEVIS and failure to maintain status may result in automatic termination of the SEVIS record.
- Can only work during the authorized dates listed on EAD card.
- Upon receipt of the EAD, scan card and email them to your DSO for their record

Thesis or Dissertation Students

If you have applied for post completion OPT before you finish your final dissertation defense or thesis, it is recommended that the I-20 end date correspond to your dissertation defense or date of submission of your final, edited dissertation. It will be impossible to change this date once your OPT application is submitted to USCIS should you change your dissertation defense plans.

On-campus employment ends the same day as your program end date on your I-20 with OPT recommendation even if you have not finished defending your thesis or dissertation. You must have an approved EAD card to work on-campus.

Reporting Requirements

Students are required to report to the DSO **within 10 days**, any change in the following:

- Legal Name
- Residential address
- Employer name and address
- Change in status of current employment, including loss of employment, change of status to H-1B, transfer to another F-1 program, or change employers.
- Notify your DSO if you decide to permanently depart the U.S. during your OPT.
- Notify your DSO if you change your visa status during your OPT.

Students are required to report to the DSO **every 6 months** - regardless if there is a change or not - the following:

- Legal name
- Residential address
- Employer name and address
- Status of current employment

Failure to report the above changes may result in the termination of your F-1 status.

Keep Records of your Employment

Keep records of your employment history for your personal file, to present as evidence of maintaining lawful status should you apply for future immigration benefits. Scan all the items below and save electronically.

Examples of records to keep:

- Offer letters or contracts
- Job duties
- Payroll stubs and W-2s
- Letters describing volunteer activity and hours (if applicable)
- Taxes you have filed

Travel while OPT application is PENDING

This is not recommended as there may be problems returning to the U.S., especially after your program end date on the I-20. If you must travel, contact your DSO before doing so to discuss the risks.

Travel during APPROVED OPT

Under normal circumstances, a student who has both (1) an EAD for post-completion OPT or receipt notice [Form I-797] and (2) a job or job offer should not experience difficulty reentering the US. If either of these two conditions is missing, then the student is assuming risk. Each Port of Entry is different so be prepared with all documents.

While on OPT, travel signatures on page 2 of the I-20 are only valid for **6 months** from the date of the most recent signature. If your travel signature has expired, come to ISSS during to request a signature.

You must have a passport, valid visa, and signed I-20 in addition to your EAD and job offer letter.

Cap Gap Extension

The H-1B "cap-gap" occurs when an F-1 student's status and OPT work authorization expires after April 1, and before the student can start approved H-1B employment during the next fiscal year that begins on October 1. For example, a student currently on OPT on April 1 who timely-filed an H-1B petition that requests an employment start date of October 1 of the following fiscal year will have their duration of status and OPT employment authorization extended to October 1, called "cap-gap."

However, if you need an I-20 for any other reason to prove you are in cap-gap status, contact ISSS. You should send an e-mail to ISSS with end date on EAD card, current mailing address, current employer name and address including the start date of that employment, and employer name and address during Cap-gap dates.

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OPT Request Form

Section 1: Student Information ***(REQUIRED, to be completed by student)***

Students Name: _____

Current Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email address: _____ Major: _____

Degree Level: Bachelor _____ Masters _____ PhD/J.D./PharmD _____

Term finish coursework: Fall ____ Winter ____ Spring ____ Summer _____ Year: _____

Section 2: OPT Dates: ***(REQUIRED, to be completed by student)***

Your OPT start date must be between one and 60 days AFTER your program end date listed on your I-20. OPT must be completed within 14 months of your I-20 program end date.

> **Dissertation/Thesis students are eligible to begin OPT once all coursework is completed. It is recommended you choose a start date after your dissertation defense or date of final submission as your start date. It will be difficult to change this date once your OPT application is submitted to USCIS should you change your dissertation defense plans. On-campus employment ends the same date as the I-20 end date.

I am requesting 12 months of post-completion OPT, starting on the following date, and I understand that these dates cannot be change once I have submitted my OPT application to USCIS.

OPT Start Date: _____

Section 3: Academic Advisor/Department Recommendation ***(REQUIRED, completed by Faculty Advisor/Dean)***

To be completed by your academic advisor, department chair, or dean. Please keep in mind that your advisor or department can only confirm the expected graduation date; they cannot confirm eligibility for post-completion OPT.

> *If you do NOT believe the student will complete all degree requirements by the term indicated below, do not complete this form. Please contact isss@wne.edu.
>
> **PhD/Thesis students are eligible to begin OPT once all coursework is completed. It is recommended they choose their dissertation defense or date of final submission as their end date.

After conducting a degree audit for _____, *(student's full name)* I expect this student will be able to complete all degree requirements for a _____ (*Degree level)* in _____ *(major)* in _____ *(final term)*.

*If this is a PhD/Thesis student, when did they complete the coursework? _____
When are they expected to defend their dissertation/thesis? _____

Advisor's Name: _____

Advisor's Signature: _____Date: _____

STUDENT STATEMENT: I have read the attached cover pages regarding optional practical training and fully understand the implications of the authorization. The information I have provided is true and accurate.

Section 4: OPT Agreement: ***(REQUIRED, to be completed by student,)***

By signing below, I _____, (student name) agree to all of the following:

1. I understand the F-1 regulations regarding OPT and that I need to abide by all the regulations in order to maintain my status.
2. I understand that I am no longer eligible to work on-campus once the program end date on my I-20 with OPT recommendations expires, doing so will result in my SEVIS record being terminated for unauthorized employment.
3. I understand it is my responsibility to report changes to any or all of the following information to the ISSS office, within 10 days of the change:
    a. Legal name changes
    b. Change in residential or mailing address
    c. New employment or changes in employment
        i. Provide: employer name, address, start date, EIN (recommended), job title, and a statement detailing how your employment relates to your degree.
    d. Changes in immigration status—including the filing of an H-1B petition, application for adjustment of status, or any other change in immigration status.
    e. Early departure from the U.S. – if I decide not to use my OPT or depart the U.S. before the end date of my OPT with no intention of returning.
4. I understand that during OPT, F-1 status is dependent on employment and I could be considered out of status if I am unemployed for more than 90 days. I understand it is my responsibility to keep track of my days of unemployment.
5. I understand that any length of unemployment will be tracked in SEVIS and failure to maintain status by being unemployed may result in automatic termination of my SEVIS record.
6. I understand that I am required to report my current information every six months.
7. I understand that previous SEVIS terminations, leaves of absences, and/or failure to graduate as planned could have implication for OPT, including the loss of eligibility for post-completion OPT.
8. If I am a PhD/Thesis student, I understand I cannot apply for STEM OPT (if eligible) until I have officially completed my degree.

Student Signature: _____Date: _____