

PRACTICAL TRAINING SEMINAR

For Students in F-1 Status

International Student & Study Abroad Services

Memorial Union 116

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INTENT OF PRACTICAL TRAINING

- CPT and OPT were created as a privilege in order to gain practical training through temporary employment in a student's field of study.
- The intent of the law was never meant to be a means towards pure and/or permanent employment.

Overview

- Discussion of F-1 practical training opportunities
 - Section 1: Curricular Practical Training
 - Section 2: Regular Optional Practical Training

- CPT students – please view both Sections 1 and 2.

SECTION 1:

CPT (CURRICULAR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING)

***IF YOU ARE APPLYING FOR OPT ONLY, YOU MAY NOW SKIP TO SECTION 2 ON SLIDE 12.**

Curricular Practical Training

- ELIGIBILITY
 - Curricular Practical Training (CPT), is defined as an internship or practicum experience that is an integral part of an established curriculum.
 - It must be a particular course taken for credit through the Career Center or your academic department.

→ CPT must be related to your major field of study.

When can I apply for CPT?

- You must be in F-1 student status and in your program at NDSU for at least one academic year before you are eligible to apply.
- You must have a job offer letter from a specific company before you can apply.
 - Must be on company's letterhead paper.
- The position MUST be an internship, practicum, or cooperative (co-op) in nature. This MUST be stated within the offer letter itself.

How much CPT can I use?

- Those who use one year (365 days or more) of full-time CPT will be ineligible for Optional Practical Training.
 - Part-time CPT does not count toward this one-year threshold.
- Students are eligible for CPT during each level of study (Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, Ph.D.)
 - If you are earning or have earned multiple degrees at the same level of education, your eligibility may change. Please see your international student advisor about this situation.

How many hours per week can I work?

- **Both Undergraduates and Graduates**
 - 20 hours or less per week during the fall and spring semesters.
 - Full-time during official school winter, spring, and summer breaks.
 - After an I-20 extension, you are no longer eligible to apply for or work on CPT.
- **Specific rules for Graduate students**
 - Once all coursework is completed, you may apply for full-time CPT.
 - Once you defend your thesis/dissertation, you are no longer eligible to apply for or work on CPT.

CPT APPLICATION PROCESS

- 1) View the Employment Seminar online
- 2) Complete the necessary paperwork by completing the CPT packet, and submit it with the offer letter to the ISSAS office. You can find the application here:
https://www.ndsu.edu/international/immigration/for_f_1_students/off_campus/
 - An advisor will then email you regarding internship credit registration
 - Please allow 7-10 days for processing.
- 3) Register for the necessary credits.
- 4) Once all of the above items are completed, an advisor can issue you a CPT authorized I-20.

The I-20 is the official document authorizing you for CPT employment, and it must be presented to your CPT employer before beginning work.

Important Things to Remember

- 1) Please allow 7-10 days for processing of all CPT paperwork.
 - CPT cannot be processed on Friday for a Monday start. You will be required to allow the needed time for processing.
- 2) You may NOT begin working until you have the new SEVIS I-20 with CPT authorization. *This is why it is very important that you allow 7-10 days for the processing of the paperwork.*

CPT Extensions

- It is YOUR responsibility to make sure your CPT does not expire!
 - For example, if you are authorized for CPT from 9/30/14-12/31/14, and you wish to work past that end date -
 - You must properly request an extension of your CPT before it expires.
 - Remember, it is not possible to backdate CPT authorization. We recommend you submit extension paperwork at least 2 weeks before your CPT expires to avoid any breaks in employment.
 - Extension process: Follow the same procedures as with your first CPT application.
 - Lastly, remember that working without authorization is a serious violation of your immigration status

→ **Students applying for CPT** – please view the rest of this presentation so you become familiar with OPT regulations.

SECTION 2:

OPT (REGULAR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING)

Regular Optional Practical Training

- Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a period of 12 months of employment. OPT is available after a student has maintained full-time F-1 status for at least one academic year at NDSU.
- Like CPT, OPT must also be related to the student's major field of study.

OPT may be authorized:

1. After completion of all coursework or defense.
2. After completion of study – OPT must begin within 60 days of graduation.

For both undergraduate and graduate students: “Graduation” is considered to be your commencement date, and you must be continuing to maintain your F-1 status here in the U.S. and stay enrolled in that final term leading up to your graduation date.

Please note:

Students can apply for OPT as early as 90 days before graduation and up to 60 days after graduation. Applying after this 60-day grace period will have a serious impact on your immigration status.

Application Procedure (see ISSAS website)

1. Submit required documents to ISSAS.
2. An advisor will contact you if anything is missing, and they will let you know when your new OPT I-20 is ready. Allow 7-10 days for processing at the ISSAS.
3. Mail listed documents to USCIS
Mailing instructions: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses>

Graduate students, please note: If you are working on corrections while on OPT, you must be registered for 1 thesis/dissertation credit until your final copy is accepted. This is not an OPT requirement - this is because of the Graduate School's policy of continuous enrollment.

How long does it take for USCIS to process my application?

- It may take up to 3 months to process.
 - Check current case processing times on the www.USCIS.gov website for the USCIS Service Center where you mailed the application.
- It is VERY important that you apply at least 3 months prior to when you think you might start employment.
 - You may not get a full 12 months if you apply after you graduate.

What if I don't have a job offer?

- No job offer letter is required for OPT.
 - If you have or receive a job offer, please submit the OPT Reporting Form, found in the F-1 section of the “Immigration” menu on our website:
<https://www.ndsu.edu/international/immigration>
 - If you feel your application requires an expedite, you can contact USCIS to request the expedite. Please note: your international student advisor is not able to request an expedite on your behalf.
- You may change employers during your OPT period, provided it is related to your major field of study. If you do change or leave an employer, notify ISSAS via the OPT Reporting Form.
- You must state specific dates for when you wish to start and end OPT employment so plan accordingly.

IMPORTANT – Reporting your OPT Employment and Unemployment

- Current regulations require F-1 students to report any change of employer and employer address to their institution.
 - Reporting is required immediately after receiving your EAD card as well as within 10 days of any employment changes.
 - Failure to report may result in the automatic termination of your F-1 status and OPT authorization.
- In addition, while on OPT, it is **your responsibility** to update the ISSAS office with your current home address. You can update your address here by accessing the “Immigration” menu on our website and looking in the “Information for All International Students” section for the address reporting form.
- “90 day rule” – You are only allowed a period of 90 cumulative days of unemployment during your 12 months of OPT authorization.

What if I haven't received my EAD card?

- Once your OPT is approved by USCIS, an EAD (Employment Authorization Document) will be issued.
- You may NOT begin working until you receive your EAD card and NOT until the start date listed on the card.
 - Working without authorization will have serious implications on your immigration status.
- The ISSAS office cannot assist with application status questions once you have mailed your application to USCIS. If you have questions:
 - Check your status online at the www.USCIS.gov website.
 - Call USCIS.

Additional information

- A total of 12 months of OPT is available during your stay in the U.S. for each progressive level of study.
- For example: You may apply for 12 months of OPT following your Bachelor's degree and again apply following your Master's degree.
 - If you complete two degrees at the same education level or if you move to a lower level of study, communicate with your International Student Advisor about your OPT eligibility.
- You cannot be a full-time student and work on OPT at the same time. OPT is void if you begin a new degree program.
- If you've been granted OPT and you decide to transfer to another university or if you begin a new program, you lose your OPT.

Leaving the Country on OPT?

- **If your F-1 visa is expired** and you choose to travel outside of the U.S., you will be required to apply for a new U.S. visa before returning. As with any visa application process, there are risks involved, so plan accordingly. Make sure to talk to your International Student Advisor if you have any questions or concerns about this process **BEFORE** you travel.
- **If your visa is valid throughout your entire period while on OPT:**
 - If OPT is pending: There are risks involved, so plan accordingly. Make sure to talk to your International Student Advisor if you have any questions or concerns about this process **BEFORE** you travel.
 - After your OPT is approved, you should carry the EAD with you in addition to your I-20, valid passport, I-94 card, valid visa, and a letter from your employer.

IMPORTANT: For Graduate Students

For graduate students on OPT:

- **If you will be finishing your degree within your year of OPT, apply for post-completion OPT – (c) (3) (B), not pre-completion OPT.**
 - Applying for pre-completion OPT can be very problematic for various reasons. Please email your international student advisor if you would like more information.
- **You may defend and finish writing your thesis or dissertation while you are on post-completion OPT.**
 - You must register for at least one thesis/dissertation credit until you turn in your final copy in most cases. Please check with the Graduate School for more information depending on your situation. But please note, depending on your individual situation, not finishing your degree by the end of your OPT can impact your immigration status.

Additional information:

Common questions on completing the I-765 form for initial 12-month OPT

- #3 – Use your current home mailing address. If this address changes after you have submitted your OPT application, notify USCIS immediately to avoid mailing confusion or delays. There’s an update address form online:
<https://www.uscis.gov/addresschange>
- #14 – Use the number labeled as *Admission (I-94) Record Number* as shown on your online I-94
- #15 – The line that states “Which USCIS Office” applies only if you had a previous EAD card (refers to your answer of Yes or No in #15). Leave this blank if this will be your first EAD card.
- #20 – The code you should enter for Post-completion OPT is: (c) (3) (B)
(See slide 22)
- “Certification” section
 - Sign your name in pen. If you type your name into the PDF document and do not sign it, your application will be rejected and returned.

**You are now ready to apply for CPT or OPT.
Thank you for viewing the
practical training seminar!**

For applications and more information:

https://www.ndsu.edu/international/immigration/for_f_1_students/off_campus/