OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING
Initial 12-Month Application for Post-Completion OPT – (c)(3)(B)

FOR STUDENTS IN F-1 STATUS

ELIGIBILITY:
A student in F-1 non-immigrant status who has maintained full-time status for one academic year is eligible for a total of 12 months of Optional Practical Training (OPT - a work experience related to the student's field of study). Optional Practical Training may be authorized:

1) During the student’s annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session.
2) While school is in session, provided OPT does not exceed 20 hours per week.
3) After completion of all course requirements for a degree (excluding thesis or the equivalent).
4) After completion of study - OPT must begin within 60 days of graduation.

APPLICATION:
Please see Page 4 for detailed application instructions. If you plan to use OPT when you graduate, we recommend applying 90 days before graduation as the processing time is about 3-5 months. For both undergraduate and graduate students, “graduation” is defined as considered to be your commencement date, and you must be continuing to maintain F-1 status in the U.S. and stay enrolled in that final term leading up to your graduation date.

You do not need to have a job offer to apply for OPT and receive an EAD card. However, you must have a firm starting date, since the USCIS officer will issue an EAD with specific dates that cannot be changed. You may not begin employment legally until your EAD is issued. Working without proper authorization is a serious violation of your F-1 status.

IMPORTANT -
A total of 12 months of Optional Practical Training is available during your stay in the U.S. for each level of study. For example, you may apply for 12 months of OPT following your Bachelor’s degree and again apply for 12 months following your Master’s degree. This does not apply for completion of two degrees at the same level of study. For example, only 12 months of OPT is available to you even if you complete two Master’s degrees. In addition, you must always obtain a degree at a higher level of study to be eligible for the additional 12 month OPT period (for example: if you complete a Master’s degree and do OPT for 12 months, you would only be eligible for an additional 12 months following completion of a Ph.D. degree, but not if you obtain a second Master’s degree or a degree at a lower level of study).

Change of Employer:
You may change employers during your Optional Practical Training opportunity, provided the job is related to your field of study.

Travel Outside the United States:
If you plan to travel outside the United States and have already applied for OPT but have not yet received your EAD card, be sure to carry the I-797 receipt notice with you along with your I-20 (with OPT requested on page 2), passport, and I-94 card. Once you receive your EAD card if you wish to travel outside the U.S., it is strongly recommended that you already have secured a position of employment. Remember to carry with you all your immigration documents, passport, approved EAD card, and a letter from your employer confirming your employment.

Please be aware that you must have a valid F-1 visa in your passport if you travel outside the U.S. on OPT or with an OPT application pending.

Also, the signature on page 2 of your I-20 is only valid for 6 months (not a year) while on OPT. Please plan in advance if you are departing the U.S. temporarily and need to obtain a travel signature on your I-20 for your re-entry.
Reapplying for an F-1 visa stamp renewal while on OPT is not recommended – in fact it is considered a risk. Holding the EAD card alone does NOT allow for re-entry to the U.S.

Reporting Information
While on OPT you are still legally required to report certain information to the Office of International Student and Study Abroad Services. **Reporting is required immediately after receiving your EAD card as well as within 10 days of any changes.** Failure to report may result in the automatic termination of your F-1 status and OPT authorization.

- Changes in name or residential/mailing address
- Report your employer name, address, and supervisor’s email within 10 days of any changes or new employment
- Report changes to another immigration status
- If you will leave your OPT employment before your OPT end date
- Notify the ISSAS office if your email address changes
- Be sure to also update changes like address and email address in CampusConnection, in addition to notifying ISSAS.

What kind of work can I do while on post-completion OPT?
You may work anywhere in the United States, but the key criteria is that the work must be related to the degree you just obtained and for which the OPT is being authorized. Post-completion OPT employment cannot be done based on prior degrees earned in the U.S. or abroad; the employment must relate to your current degree program. You do not need to provide the ISSAS office with any written documentation that your work is related to your degree – this is the responsibility of the student to determine.

Must OPT employment be in only paid positions?
Volunteer work can count as “employment” as long as it is related to your area of study, you do at least 21 hours/week, and only after your OPT has been approved. However, you need to be careful that the volunteer position is “truly” volunteer; in other words, people are never paid for doing that work or position and that it is advertised as a volunteer position. Examples of true volunteer positions may be a social work major volunteering on a crisis hotline, or a computer science major volunteering to set up a website for a nonprofit food bank, or an accounting major who volunteers with VITA during tax season – only volunteers staff these types of jobs and if anyone else did the same work, they would not be paid. You cannot “volunteer” in a position that would normally be paid, such as volunteering to work in a lab because they don’t have funds to pay you, volunteering while waiting for your OPT card to arrive only because you cannot do paid employment yet, or volunteering in a position that would displace a U.S. worker. Doing so would violate both immigration and Department of Labor laws.

It is your responsibility and the employer’s responsibility to determine if the volunteer position follows the regulations and the ISSAS office cannot advise on the legality of this volunteer work other than the information provided here. If your employer has questions about hiring you as a volunteer worker, they should consult their company human resources or payroll office, their company attorney, or the Department of Labor itself. If you have decided to do volunteer work while on OPT, you are responsible for keeping documentation on the position, how many hours you worked and that it was considered volunteer.

When can I start to work under OPT?
You may only begin employment when you have received the EAD (Employment Authorization Document) card and the beginning date of employment authorization (shown on the EAD) has arrived.

Does OPT employment need to be full time?
No, but you should be working at least 21 hours/week total. You may also work for more than one employer while on OPT.

Is OPT a different visa?
No. A person with OPT authorization is still in F-1 status, holding an EAD for OPT. You still need an ISSAS advisor signature on your I-20 if you want to re-enter the United States during your time on OPT. The ISSAS office advisor signature should be no more than six months old at the time you re-enter.
What If I Cannot Find a Job?
This will be an issue because under current OPT rules, students on OPT cannot accrue more than 90 cumulative calendar days of unemployment during the 12-month period of OPT. If you accumulate 90 days of unemployment, your legal F-1 status ends immediately as of the 90th day. Before the 90th day, you will need to make arrangements to leave the U.S., start a new degree program, or change to a different status. If you remain in the U.S. after 90 days of unemployment, your legal status in the U.S ends and you must depart the country immediately unless you have made arrangements as stated.

I am switching jobs, and I will have a gap of one week between one OPT job ending and the next starting. Will that count as unemployment?
Yes – OPT Policy Guidance states that “Each day (including weekends) during the period when OPT authorization begins and ends that the student does not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment.”

What if I am out of the U.S.? Does this count as unemployment?
If your time away is authorized by your employer, such as on vacation/sick leave or traveling on company business, you are still considered employed. A note on days of unemployment: Unemployment is counted as calendar days. In other words, Saturdays and Sundays count when you are unemployed, not just Monday-Friday. Please ask an adviser if you have any questions about unemployment.

Very important: We do not recommend students e-file the I-765 form for any OPT. Applying online may lead to delays with your application including an additional required biometrics appointment, special requests through the SEVIS Help Desk by the ISSAS office that may require days and sometimes weeks, and a Request for Evidence (RFE) from USCIS. RFEs will likely delay the processing of your application by USCIS as the processing time is stopped when they issue the request to you and is begun again only when they receive your response to the RFE. Please apply using this application and the paper I-765 as noted in the instructions on page 4. Biometrics appointments are currently not required if you apply through the ISSAS office.

Do you have questions about the I-765? Please thoroughly read all instructions on the I-765. It is important that you submit ALL pages even if some pages do not apply to you. Part 6 of the I-765: Per the instruction pages given you must complete Part 6 as it applies to you regarding any previously issued SEVIS numbers, and any CPT or OPT issued at any level of study (at NDSU and at other institutions you have attended). Beginning with 3a. in Part 6 we recommend using Page 3, Part 2, Item 27 for information regarding CPT or OPT, and Page 3, Part 2, Item 26 for any old SEVIS number information. List all previously issued SEVIS numbers, all periods of CPT and OPT and the academic level at which it was authorized. Since there are no specific instructions on how to complete this section with this information, we suggest typing in the blank lines starting with 3.d. in the following format: SEVIS Number, CPT/OPT, part-time/fulltime, start-end dates, degree level. [Please note these page numbers, part numbers and item numbers reference the I-765 version dated 5/31/2018 and are subject to change with new iterations of the I-765 form.]
APPLICATION CHECKLIST
OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING – Keep checklist for your records

→STEP 1: Submit the following documents to the ISSAS office.
- □ Optional Practical Training Information for SEVIS I-20 form (page 5)
- □ OPT Student Responsibility Statement (page 6)
- □ Health Insurance Statement (page 7)
- □ Degree Program Verification Form (page 8)

→STEP 2: An advisor will review your application. Allow between 7-10 days for processing.

→STEP 3: An international student advisor will contact you when your new OPT I-20 has been issued. You will get two (2) new I-20s. Sign both, and keep one for yourself. You must mail the other I-20 along with the following application materials directly to USCIS:
- □ One (1) I-20 as mentioned above in Step 3.
- □ I-765 (Found at www.uscis.gov)
  Do not type your name in the signature line – you must sign your name in pen.
- □ Form G-1145 (Found at www.uscis.gov)
  For electronic notifications from USCIS of your case status by text message/email.
- □ $410.00 check or money order payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security
  -OR- pay by credit card (Visa, Mastercard, American Express, or Discover) using Form G-1450
- □ Copy of form I-94 Departure Record
- □ Copy of the photo and biography page of your passport
- □ A copy of any previous EAD cards (front and back) if you were ever approved previously for an EAD at any level of study.
- □ Two passport-sized photos taken in the United States within the past 30 days

Mailing your application: See the I-765 instructions under the section titled “Where to File?” where it says “For all other Form I-765s, file at the USCIS Phoenix or Dallas Lockbox facilities based on where you live.” Where you mail it is based on the address you put in Part 2 #5 on the I-765.

Please note: The application may take 3-5 months to process, depending on the USCIS Service Center that has been assigned to handle your case. USCIS will issue and mail your receipt notice and EAD card to you directly at the address you put in Part 2 #5 of the I-765. If the decision has taken longer than the posted time for processing, please contact the USCIS National Customer Service Center (1-800-375-5283) to request an update on your case. If you want to know the current average processing times, please visit www.uscis.gov and enter “Processing Times” into the search bar at the top of the website.
OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING
INFORMATION FOR SEVIS I-20

Please look at your current I-20 and enter the end date here: _______________________

I understand that through the requesting of OPT, my I-20 end date may be adjusted, depending on my requested start date as listed in #1 below. My on-campus work eligibility will end on the program end date as listed on the new OPT I-20 that will be issued to me. If I have any questions about this, I will ask my international student advisor before applying for OPT.

Please initial here that you understand this statement.

1. Requested Start Date for OPT ____________________ 2. Requested End Date for OPT ____________________

3. Number of hours per week (0-20=part-time/21+=full-time) ____________________________

4. Please write the category code that you have written in section 20 of the I-765 form:
   __________________ For example, post-completion OPT is (c) (3) (B)

5. Your non-NDSU email address: __________________________ Your phone number: __________________________

   □ I am applying for OPT without a job offer.
   □ I currently have a job offer.

   Name of employer: ____________________________________________

   Employer Address: ____________________________________________

   (City, State, and Zip) ____________________________________________

   Supervisor name, telephone number and email address: ________________

   ____________________________________________________________

   Your job title: ____________________________________________

   In the box below, please describe how the above listed employment is directly related to your coursework and program of study.

   __________________________________________________________________

With this application, I verify that I am requesting the OPT start and end dates as listed on this page. Once I receive my EAD card, I will provide ISSAS with a copy of my EAD, and report my employment/unemployment to ISSAS within 10 days of the start date listed on my EAD card. Your record could be automatically terminated by SEVIS for failing to comply with reporting guidelines.

Student Name________________________________________________________

Signature___________________________________Date______________
OPT STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT – Please read carefully

By submitting this OPT application, I agree that the information provided in this application is true and accurate. I understand the rules and regulations concerning my participation in OPT and confirm I am responsible for understanding all of the following:

- With this application, I certify that I have read all pages of this application in full and have submitted all required documents to the ISSAS office as listed in Step 1. If my application was not complete, the time needed to process my application will be delayed.
- I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure my OPT application is complete. I will properly file my OPT application in a timely manner. I understand that my OPT application must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the date on which the ISSAS office issued my OPT I-20.
- I understand that if my home address, employer address, or immigration status changes, I will update the ISSAS office within 10 days of the change. I understand that USCIS does not forward mail. If I have any change in home address, in addition to reporting it to the ISSAS office, I will update it directly with USCIS.
- Once I receive my EAD card, I will provide ISSAS with a copy of my EAD, and report my employment/unemployment to ISSAS within 10 days of the start date listed on my EAD card. Your record could be automatically terminated by SEVIS for failing to comply with reporting guidelines.
- I understand that once the OPT recommendation has been issued and the application sent to DHS, it is not possible to cancel or edit it.
- Regarding on-campus employment: I will examine my new OPT I-20 and my new program end date as listed on my OPT I-20. I understand that the last day I will be eligible for on-campus employment will be this program date as listed on my new OPT I-20. I understand that if I am currently employed as a graduate assistant or in any other on-campus job, it is my responsibility to discuss the financial consequences of ending this assistantship with my on-campus department.
- I agree to seek employment directly related to my degree of study as listed on my I-20 and understand this is my responsibility to determine whether or not a prospective job is directly related to my degree.
- I understand that my OPT authorization is automatically cancelled if I transfer to a new school or begin study at another educational level.
- I understand that I cannot accrue 90 days or more of unemployment at any time during post-completion OPT. The SEVIS system will terminate your SEVIS record (and OPT employment) after 90 consecutive days of unemployment so you must update the ISSAS office with any changes immediately.
- I understand that if I decide to travel while on OPT I must have a valid I-20 signed by a DSO within six months before reentering the U.S., an unexpired EAD, a valid passport, a valid employment letter, and a valid F-1 visa stamp to be readmitted to the U.S. The employment letter should contain salary information, a statement that the employment is temporary, and verification that I will be employed immediately after returning from travel.
- If I am applying after my I-20 expiration date or after my graduation, I certify that I am applying within my 60-day grace period.
- If I am applying for pre-completion OPT, I agree to notify the ISSAS office if I plan to graduate before the period of my pre-completion OPT ends, and that I cannot continue to work past my graduation unless I have received post-completion OPT authorization.
- I understand the following:
  - If I am a Bachelor's student, I must graduate before I can begin my OPT employment.
  - If I am a Master's or Doctoral student, I must graduate before I complete my OPT employment. If I do not graduate before completing my one year of OPT, I will lose my legal non-immigrant status in the U.S.
- If I have any questions about the status of my OPT application after I have mailed it to USCIS, I will contact USCIS to resolve my application issues and understand that the ISSAS office cannot provide me with updates on my application status at that point.
- If I receive a Request for Evidence from USCIS on my OPT application, I agree to mail the documents requested to USCIS in a timely manner otherwise my application will be rejected.
- I understand that failure to comply with any of the above conditions could result in loss of my F-1 status.

____________________________________  _____________
Student Signature           Date
PRACTICAL TRAINING
HEALTH INSURANCE STATEMENT

I, ____________________________________________, acknowledge that Practical Training is an opportunity for international students to obtain work experience directly related to their field of study. It is not work automatically guaranteed by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service.

1) Practical Training During Studies (Pre-Completion OPT):
To apply for Practical Training, I understand I must be continuously registered for classes at NDSU and therefore realize that I will be charged for health insurance. Even if my employer provides me with health insurance during Practical Training, I know that as long as I am registered at NDSU, I am required to be covered by the North Dakota state mandated health insurance policy unless I am provided with comparable coverage through my employer and qualify for a waiver.

2) Practical Training After Completion of Studies (Post-Completion OPT):
I also understand that if I am engaging in practical training after completion of studies, any remaining unused health insurance coverage cannot be refunded. If I am enrolled for any reason during practical training, I am required to be covered by the North Dakota state mandated health insurance policy unless I am provided with comparable coverage through my employer and qualify for a waiver.

_______________________________________
Last (Family) Name, First Name (Please Print)

_______________________________________ _____________
Student Signature     Date
DEGREE PROGRAM VERIFICATION FORM
To be completed by Academic Advisor or Department Chair

From: Academic Advisor/Chair of the Department

To: Office of International Student and Study Abroad Services

Date: __________________________

Regarding: ________________________________
(Name of Student)

(Degree program)

The student is expected to complete* his/her degree on _____________________________
(Month/Date and Year)

Please note: For graduate students, this date reflects the anticipated completion of all degree
requirements. Also indicate the date the student has completed all required coursework (excluding
thesis/dissertation credits): _____________________________
(Month/Date and Year)

_______________________________________________
Signature of Academic Advisor or Department Chair

_______________________________________________
Department

This form is a requirement for any F-1 student applying for Optional Practical Training (OPT). This information is
needed to process the student’s request for OPT. It is not intended to be a confirmation that the student’s
department has approved the student’s choice to do OPT, but rather it is a required informational sheet to help the
ISSAS office best advise the student applying for OPT. Please note that Practical Training is temporary
employment granted to the student to gain work experience related to his/her field of study. If you have questions
about practical training, please contact the Office of International Student and Study Abroad Services in Memorial
Union 116 (Tel: 701-231-7895) or see our website at www.ndsu.edu/International/employment.