

PRACTICAL TRAINING SEMINAR FOR STUDENTS IN F-1 STATUS

Office of International Student & Study Abroad Services

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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.*



*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 Cooperative Education program 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.)
 - You are eligible to apply for CPT at each level of study as long as you have not exhausted your full-time CPT limit at a particular level here at NDSU or at any other school you may have attended.

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.*

■ 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.*
- *Students in non-thesis programs (such as MBA or MACC, and others) are not allowed to do full-time CPT during Fall or Spring semesters)*

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.
https://www.ndsu.edu/international/immigration/for_f_1_students/off_campus/
- 3) Your ISSAS advisor will email you with directions to register for credits.
- 4) Register for the necessary co-op or academic credits.
- 5) 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 9/30/18-12/31/18, 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. During the student's summer vacation or at other times when school is not in session.
2. After completion of all coursework or defense
3. 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

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 3-5 months to process.
 - *Check current case processing times on the 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.
- You may change employers during your OPT period, provided it is related to your major field of study.
- You must state specific dates for when you wish to start and end OPT employment so plan accordingly.

IMPORTANT

- Current regulations require F-1 students to report any change of employer and employer address to their institution
- In addition, while on OPT, it is your responsibility to update the ISSAS with your current home address.
- “90 day rule” – You are only allowed a period of 90 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 cannot assist with application status questions once you have mailed your application to USCIS. If you have questions:
 - *Check your status online at the USCIS.gov website*
 - *Call USCIS*
 - *If your OPT has been pending for longer than the posted processing times on the USCIS website, please contact your international student advisor in ISSAS*

Additional information

- A total of 12 months of initial post-completion OPT 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 following your Master's degree.
 - *This does not apply if you complete two degrees at the same education level or if you complete a higher degree and go down an education level.*
- 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.
- You lose your OPT if you decide to transfer to another university or when you begin a new program.

Leaving the Country on OPT?

- If your F-1 visa is expired, you must remain inside the U.S. until you have either:
 - A) *finished your OPT* *-or-*
 - B) *decided to return to your home country and not continue your OPT*

- If your visa is valid throughout your entire period while on OPT:
 - *You may leave the U.S. while the OPT application is pending, provided you bring the I-797 receipt notice with you and you possess a valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport.*
 - *After you have your EAD card, you should then carry that with you in addition to your I-20, passport, I-94 card, and a letter from your employer.*

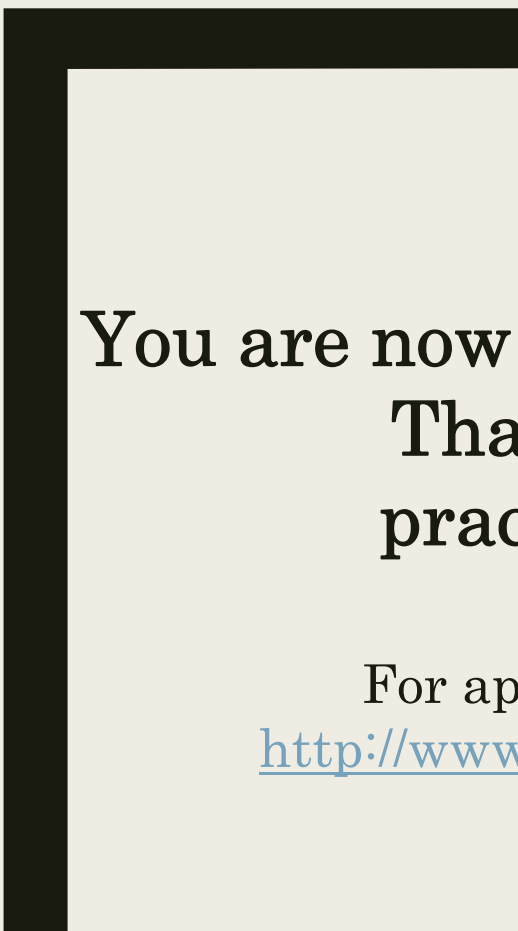
Additional information: Common questions on completing the I-765 form for OPT

- **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.]*

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.



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

For applications and more information:
<http://www.ndsu.edu/international/employment>

