SEVIS
F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL Guidelines

F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) allows F-1 students to accept paid, off-campus employment that is directly related to their field of studies and commensurate with the level of education being sought. OPT can be used both pre- and post-completion of degree requirements according to the following guidelines:

Pre-completion

1. A student who still has coursework remaining to complete his or her educational objective or degree program may apply for Pre Completion OPT while school is in session - limited to 20 hours of work per week.
2. Part-time OPT is deducted from the 12 month limit at 50%. Thus, 2 months of part-time OPT would count as 1 month deduction from the available 12 months.
3. During the annual vacation period – full or part time
4. Full-time employment can be requested for pre-completion OPT for students who have completed all requirements for their degree except for thesis or dissertation. Students must be registered each semester for thesis or dissertation status.

Post-completion

1. After completion of all degree requirements – full time
2. Standard OPT entitles you up to 12 months of OPT per educational level.
3. OPT authorization begins on the employment start date shown on your EAD card.
4. If you begin a new academic program at a higher level, you are eligible for another 12 months of OPT.
5. Prior use of full-time Curricular Practical Training at the same educational level for one year or more eliminates eligibility for Optional Practical Training.
6. Cannot accrue more than 90 days total unemployment

In order to be eligible for OPT a student must meet the following criteria:
1. A full time student at Texas Southern University for at least one academic year before engaging in OPT.
2. Currently in F-1 status.
3. Have not been authorized for more than 12 months of full time Curricular Practical Training at your current degree level.

You do not need to have a job offer to apply, although once you are approved for OPT time is deducted from your 12 months regardless of whether or not you actually work.

Application Timeline
1. You may apply for OPT I-20 recommendation from The Office of International Student Affairs up to 120 days prior to your date of graduation but:
2. You may apply to USCIS for OPT up to **90 days** before date of completion and up to 60 days after your completion date
   You must mail off OPT Package within 30 days of the printed date of OPT I-20
3. You must specify a start date for post-completion OPT up to 60 days after you complete your degree and an end date of no later than 12 months after start date
4. USCIS may take 60-90 days to process an application for OPT, so please plan accordingly.
5. If you do not graduate you must contact our office immediately.

Application Procedure Check List

Complete the package as indicated below:

- Have your department complete the Department portion of OPT package
- Fill out by ***typing*** the *Form I-765* (http://www.immigration.gov)
- Include a transcript (unofficial) showing continuous full time enrollment
- Include a photocopy of your I-94 (front and back if you have the old card)
- Include photocopy of your passport page (must be valid for the coming 6 months).
- Include photocopy of your F-1 visa
- Include photocopies of the front and back of all previous I-20s.W
- Include a check or money order for $410.00 (payable to Department of Homeland Security)
- Include Two (2) immigration type photos (Not older than 1 year. The photographs must meet very specific requirements) (see USCIS form M-378 for color photo specifications). Add your name and date of birth on the back of pictures.
- Submit a request for a SEVIS OPT I-20 to the ISA Office

  o Before mailing:
  - Sign the OPT I-20's before sending it off. Keep 1 I-20 for you. It must be mailed within 30 days of the print date on the OPT I-20
  - Put both Immigration pictures in an envelope

Your OPT application should be mailed to the USCIS Chicago Lockbox:

U.S. Postal Service (USPS)	FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:
Attn: I-765 C03	USCIS
P.O. Box 805373	Attn: I-765 C03 (Box 805373)
Chicago, IL 60680-5374	131 South Dearbon-3rd Floor
	Chicago, IL 60603-5517

If your OPT application is approved, you will receive an EAD card from USCIS granting you permission to work off-campus. You must immediately **send a copy of the EAD card to The Office of International Student Affairs**. Do not begin employment until you receive your EAD and until the start date indicated on the card. While engaged in OPT, you are expected to engage in employment in your field of study. You may switch employers multiple times while on OPT. You **must report all changes of address** and **employment information to the OISA** . You must end your employment by the expiration date on the EAD card. Once this date has past you have a 60 day grace period to remain in the U.S. to prepare for your departure, transfer to another university or begin a new program of study. Your EAD becomes invalid as of the date you complete the transfer or begin a new program.

Notification Requirements

While you are on OPT, you are still considered an F-1 student under Texas Southern University's sponsorship. You must notify OISA immediately of Intention to terminate your OPT for any reason

Travel Information

You must obtain a travel signature from The Office of International Student Affairs on your I-20 while on OPT. If you will be traveling abroad, you must carry your I-20, passport, valid U.S. visa, I-94 card, EAD card, and a letter from your employer.

If your U.S. visa has expired, there is some risk involved in applying for a renewal.

All travel is RISKY!

STUDENT REQUEST FORM
OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

If preferred, a letter on department letterhead that includes all of the following information may be substituted.

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE STUDENT:

_____   _____
Student Name (Last First)   Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

_____ _____   _____
Student ID   Email Address   Major/Field of Study

_____ _____   _____
Desired OPT Start Date   Desired OPT End Date   Number of hours per week

                                             _____
                                             Telephone Number

*Post-completion OPT may start up to 60 days after your degree completion date.

The Above-named student is applying for OPT:

☐ Pre-completion during the academic year (20 hours/week maximum)
☐ Pre-completion during the annual vacation (part or full time)
☐ After completion of all degree requirements excluding thesis (part of full time)
☐ Post-completion

How/Why is the OPT employment related to course work? Please provide a brief description of the type of employment you are seeking.
_____
_____

TO BE COMPLETED BY YOUR DEPARTMENT:

_____   _____
Degree Level Expected   Expected Date of Completion

_____   _____
Signature of Academic Advisor   Date

_____   _____
Academic Advisor Name (print)   Phone Number