



Optional Practical Training (OPT) Vincennes University International & Multicultural Student Affairs

OPT Basics:

- Allows for one year of employment authorization by USCIS and is designed to provide you with an opportunity to gain practical experience in your field of study.
- Available after each time you complete a degree (A.S., B.S., M.S., and Ph.D.)
- Requirement: job must be related directly to your major.
- Cost of application: \$380.00 (effective 11/23/2010)
- Apply no later than three months before graduation.
- Must have recommendation from your academic advisor.
- F-2 dependents (spouses and minor children) are eligible to remain in F-2 status during this time as well.
- Make an appointment to see Daniel Whitmer if you have questions. It is recommended that you submit your questions first by email, in case research is necessary.

Post-Completion OPT (c)(3)(B)

“Post-completion” means applying to do OPT “after you’ve finished” your degree program. It will be full time at the end of your academic program, after completion of the course of study, or, for a student in an Associate’s or Bachelor’s degree program, after completion of all course requirements for the degree.

Pre-Completion OPT (c)(3)(A)

“Pre-completion” means applying to do OPT while you are still in full-time classes. This work will be part-time, and a maximum of 20 hours per week. You may work full time during the summer or other official school breaks. You must be enrolled as a full-time student (12 credit hours) at all times. And you must have completed one full academic year (two semesters, summer not included). If you have not completed a full academic year, you may only apply for pre-completion OPT up to 90 days before the end of the full academic year.

You are granted a maximum of 12 months of optional practical training for each degree level. Part-time pre-completion OPT counts at a rate of 50% toward full-time OPT. For example, one year of part-time pre-completion OPT is equivalent to six months of full-time OPT. Regardless, part-time pre-completion OPT is still authorized for only one year at a time. You will need to apply again if you want to do the additional 6 months of full-time post-completion OPT.

Employment While On OPT

- While on OPT, F-1 you may only accept a job that is directly related to your major.
- Employment is only permitted upon receiving the employment authorization card (Employment Authorization Document—EAD), and only during the dates listed on the card (with one exception, discussed below).
- Upon completion of a program of study, on-campus employment is not permitted.
- You do not need stay in Vincennes – you can accept a job anywhere in the U.S., as long as you understand your reporting requirements to VU (see below).
- OPT allows you to work in more than one job, provided that all jobs are related to their major.
- There are no maximum limits on the number of hours per week that you can work while on OPT, but you must work at least 20 hours per week while on OPT.
- Immigration regulations require that you report any interruptions in your employment to your school.
- You should keep very careful track of your employment—dates, employer names, addresses, supervisor’s contact information. It will be very important for you to track and report your days of unemployment, **and** also to retain supporting documentation of the periods of time when you are employed (including offer letters, pay stubs, etc.).

Unemployment Issues

Students granted post-completion OPT can accrue up to 90 days of unemployment. Unemployment of 10 days or less when changing jobs does **not** need to be reported, and does **not** count towards the 90-day total of days of unemployment.

Days spent outside of the U.S. while unemployed count towards the 90 days of unemployment permitted. If a student on OPT nears the 90th day of unemployment, it would be best to make plans to depart the U.S., apply for a change of status to a different status or make preparations to begin a new degree program. Action would need to be taken early enough

so that by the end of the 90th day of unemployment, the student would have another option already in progress. DHS has stated that an F-1 student who is unemployed for more than 90 days will be considered to be out of status.

One strategy for maintaining your status while on OPT: Unpaid Employment. Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns as long as it does not violate any labor laws. This unpaid work must also be directly related to the student's major. The company or employer providing the volunteer position must be able to provide evidence that the student worked at least 20 hours per week. Students engaged in OPT should be careful not to "volunteer" without pay in positions that U.S. citizens would be paid for. This is designed to protect you, the employer and other workers.

Failure to report unemployment information or accruing more than 90 days of unemployment may result in DHS not approving future benefits or requests.

Applying - Plan Ahead

You should prepare your documents and mail your application 90 days before the end date of your I-20 (or 90 days before you qualify for pre-completion OPT). Your application should not be mailed any sooner.

Complete the appropriate forms and gather the information listed in the OPT Application Procedures.

Once you have gathered your documents and required items, schedule an appointment with Daniel Whitmer dwhitmer@vinu.edu 812-888-4204.

While it is possible to apply for OPT during the 60-day grace period following the end of your program, we advise against applying this late as it can take 3-4 months to obtain the OPT approval card. You must have been enrolled as a full-time student for one full academic year, currently maintaining a full-time program of study, in valid F-1 status, and intend to work in a job directly related to your major field of study.

You cannot work until you have your Employment Authorization Document (EAD). However, you can apply for jobs at any time (inform the potential employer of your situation). An F-1 student authorized by the USCIS to engage in OPT is required to report any change of name or address, or interruption of such employment to their school for the duration of the authorized period of OPT.

After you mail your necessary documents and application, the USCIS shall adjudicate the Form I-765 and issue an EAD on the basis of the recommendation from the DSO unless the student is found otherwise ineligible. The USCIS shall notify the applicant of the decision and, if the application is denied, of the reason or reasons for the denial. The applicant may not appeal the decision.

Once you have filed (mailed) your application for OPT there is no way to cancel the request. If you decide to return to school and wish to delay your employment your OPT will be terminated. Therefore, you should give very careful thought to your decision to apply for OPT so that you will not lose this valuable experience if you change your mind.

Study while on OPT (post-completion only)

You may take an occasional class or two during your OPT as long as you are working full time. However, you cannot be a full time student. Authorization to engage in OPT employment is automatically terminated when a student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level.

Travel

Generally, it is advised that you do not travel outside the U.S. while your OPT application is pending due to the fact that an officer could ask for your EAD and proof of employment upon your return to the U.S.

If you must travel outside of the U.S. while waiting for your OPT to be approved **and after** your degree completion, you should take the following items with you:

- Passport (valid for six months from the date of your re-entry)
- Signed I-20 (remember that each travel signature is valid for only 6 months during the period of OPT)
- Valid F-1 visa
- I-797C (receipt of application notice from USCIS).

We recommend **caution** in this situation. Your U.S. immigration status is determined by the I-94 card that is placed in your passport and because the I-94 is taken each time you depart from the U.S., establishing your F-1 status while

outside the U.S. will be difficult if USCIS has questions about your application. If USCIS sends a request for additional information about an aspect of your application and if it is not resolved in a timely fashion, your application will be denied. It can be **very** difficult to apply for an F-1 visa while you are on OPT. If your visa is expired, or will soon expire, keep this in mind. **Please remember that anytime you leave the U.S. there is never a guarantee that the immigration official at the port of entry will allow you to reenter.** Please speak with the advisor at ISA if you have questions.

Traveling While Employed

Dates of travel outside of the U.S. while employed do not count as days of unemployment. If a student on OPT is traveling outside of the U.S. for a vacation or for business while continuing to be employed in the major field of study, those dates outside of the U.S. do not need to be tracked or reported as days of unemployment.

While traveling on OPT, students are advised to carry the following:

- I-20, signed for travel (remember that each travel signature is valid for only six months during the period of OPT)
- Valid F-1 visa
- Passport valid for at least six months into the future from the date of re-entry to the U.S.
- Valid OPT card
- Job offer or confirmation letter (If traveling for business or on a vacation from the job, ensure that the letter clarifies this)

Once your OPT has been approved, an EAD is issued, and after finding a job, you are allowed to travel with an endorsed (signed) page three of your I-20. Please contact us to assist with the endorsement (signature) of your I-20 for travel. If you are away from Vincennes, you can mail your I-20 to us; we will sign it for you and return it to you at an address that you must include with your I-20. Please include the following:

- Travel dates
- A copy of the valid F1 visa in your passport
- A copy of your passport

Social Security Number (SSN)

If you do not already have a SSN, you will need to apply for one, once you receive a job offer. Take your OPT card/EAD, a job offer letter (on company letterhead paper), your I-20, passport (be sure to have your I-94), and any other ID with you to the local Social Security office to apply. The process takes approximately two weeks.

When OPT Ends

At the end of the OPT authorization, an F-1 student has a 60-day "grace period" to remain in the U.S. and prepare for departure, to begin a new program of study (transfer to another school), or to submit an application for a change of status. OPT will automatically terminate when a new I-20 is created for a new program of study (at IU or at another institution).

Resources:

<http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students/opt.htm>

<http://www.uscis.gov/I-765>



OPT Application Procedure and Reporting Requirements
Vincennes University
International & Multicultural Student Affairs

Prepare/submit the following:

- Form I-20 (s)** – copies of all prior I-20s, including your original entry I-20 with the Homeland Security stamp in the upper right hand corner.
- OPT Academic Advisor Recommendation** form (attached) - The form must be completed and signed, indicating that you have been a full-time student every semester at VU and the date that you will complete your academic program.
- Application form I-765** – Complete this form on your computer before printing (codes listed below for application line 16). Be sure to use the international office address for your mailing address, in case you have already left school. See: <http://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
 - a. **(c)(3)(A)** for pre-completion OPT
 - b. **(c)(3)(B)** for standard post-completion OPT
- \$380.00 application fee** – You may use a personal check or purchase a money order (available at the post office, cash only) made payable to the **U.S. Department of Homeland Security** (print this on your check exactly as it is written here).
- Two Passport photos** – You must have this done at Walgreens or similar store that can produce an official passport photo meeting U.S. government photograph requirements. Do not attempt to take this picture yourself.
- Passport** – copy of the ID page showing all details including expiration date and passport number.
- I-94 Card** – copy of both sides of the I-94.
- EAD(s)** – copies of all previous EAD/employment authorization cards.
- I-20** – A new I-20 will be created for OPT. Do not mail the original to USCIS, only mail a copy along with your other application documents.
- Appointment** – once you have completed your application package, email the director to make an appointment. Your documents will be reviewed for approval.
- Mail** - After your appointment you will mail your application for OPT either **certified** or **express mail** to the address listed below. The application **must** reach Processing Center within 30 days of the time that the I-20 is created on the day of your appointment.

Mailing addresses for your OPT Application:

Regular mail:
USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix AZ 85036

Private courier or express mail (i.e. UPS, FedEx)
USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100
Phoenix AZ 85034

Immigration Reporting Requirements:

In order for you to maintain your status as an F-1 student you must do the following:

1. **Address** – complete home address where you are currently living even if it is temporary. You must update us EVERY time you move to a new address.
2. **Employer's name and mailing address** – you must find a job and report the address of the employer within 90 days of the start date of your OPT.
3. **Any periods of unemployment** – list specific dates that you are not employed.
4. **New employment** – you must report a new employee address within **10 days** of changing jobs.
5. **Phone numbers**
6. **E-mail address**

All information can be reported to the director of International Student Affairs at:

Email: dwhitmer@vinu.edu
Phone: 812-888-4204 or 812-888-4301
Address: 1002 N 1st Street
BSU 210
Vincennes IN 47591



F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) Request
Vincennes University
International & Multicultural Student Affairs

Part I (To Be Completed By Student)

Name: _____ Student ID #: _____

Major: _____ Is your major listed correctly on your I-20? Yes _____ No _____

Expected Date of Graduation: _____ (for post-completion OPT only)

I will request the following start date for OPT and I understand that this date cannot be changed once the OPT application has been submitted to USCIS.

OPT Start Date: _____ (authorization will be for one year).

Please describe the type of employment you will be seeking, and list the names of potential employers: _____

Have you ever received an EAD or been approved for OPT in the past? Yes _____ No _____

Have you read and do you understand the OPT immigration/reporting requirements? Yes _____ No _____

Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Part II (to be completed by the student's academic adviser)

Immigration regulations require that Optional Practical Training be used by students for employment related to the student's major/field of study. Please return the completed form to the student. Any questions can be directed to the international student advisor. Thank you for your assistance.

Academic Adviser Name and Department: _____

VU Degree Expected: _____ Major: _____

When is this student expected to complete his or her studies at VU? _____ (month/day/year)

Is the proposed employment appropriate to the student's educational level? Yes _____ No _____

Please briefly explain how the proposed employment is related to the student's field of study: _____

 Adviser's Signature

 Date

 Office Phone

Please return to: Daniel Whitmer, Director
 International/Multicultural Student Affairs
 BSU 210
 Office Phone: x4204

For office use only OPT is: <input type="checkbox"/> pre-completion (c)(3)(A) <input type="checkbox"/> post-completion (c)(3)(B) Student meets the following OPT eligibility and status requirements:
