

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR CERTIFICATE STUDENTS

Current U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regulations governing Optional Practical Training (OPT) took effect on January 1, 2003. **These regulations apply to all students in F-1 status** (*those who were in the United States on or before that date and those who enter the United States after that date*).

Practical training is defined as, “paid employment directly related to your major area of study, following the completion of your academic degree.” **Students in F-1 status must have been enrolled full-time for at least nine consecutive months (one academic year) before they are eligible for Optional Practical Training.**

A certificate student in F-1 status may apply for OPT up to **90** days before completion date or semester end date. It is important that all students understand that you **cannot** apply for OPT *after* you have completed your program. **There is no grace period when applying for OPT.** Program completion refers to the date that you have finished all coursework and any project/thesis/dissertation for your degree. It is not your graduation date.

Optional Practical Training is limited to a total of 12 months. **There is no extension of OPT.** You may become eligible for another 12-month period of OPT per educational level.

PROCEDURE for OPT APPLICATION

1. Submit completion letter and transcript obtained from CABPs academic advisor
2. Complete the attached I-765 Form using the information from your passport
3. Bring the above documents to ISSC with the completed OPT contract (included) signed by advisor. Select the starting date of your OPT from the list provided on page 2.
4. You will then receive the OPT SEVIS I-20 from ISSC after five to seven business days.
5. Mail copy of OPT I-20 with other supporting documents to USCIS (see check list page 4).

OPT START DATES

Possible start date depends on your future plans. Optional Practical Training must begin no later than 60 days following your semester end date.

LAST POSSIBLE DAY FOR OPT TO BEGIN

FALL I – 2007 GRADUATES:	
Semester End Date: 10/29/2007	Last possible OPT Start Date: 12/27/2007
FALL II – 2007 GRADUATES:	
Semester End Date: 12/20/2007	Last possible OPT Start Date: 02/17/2008
SPRING – 2008 GRADUATES:	
Semester End Date: 04/08/2008	Last possible OPT Start Date: 06/06/2008
SUMMER – 2008 GRADUATES:	
Semester End Date: 07/31/2008	Last possible OPT Start Date: 09/28/2008
FALL – 2008 GRADUATES:	
Semester End Date: 12/11/2008	Last possible OPT Start Date: 02/08/2008

You may choose any date between the *semester end date* and *last possible OPT start date*. Please be aware that we do not advise traveling out of the US during the period between the semester end date and OPT start date.

ISSC will prepare your OPT SEVIS I-20 with the OPT dates reflecting your request. Whenever you pick up this OPT SEVIS I-20, please make sure that all information contained is correct.

An offer of employment is not required to obtain approval for OPT. OPT is recommended by the ISSC and authorized by the USCIS.

****THINGS TO NOTE BEFORE MAILING OUT YOUR OPT APPLICATION**

An application filed without the required fee, all the necessary documents, signature and photographs will be returned to you as **incomplete**. You may correct the deficiency and **resubmit** the application; however, an application is not considered properly filed until the USCIS accepts it. If your application is complete and filed at a USCIS Service Center, you will be mailed a **Notice of Action Form I-797**, which is a receipt notice.

❖ **Decisions on your application**

- **Approval:**
If approved, your EAD card will be mailed to you at your filed address.
- **Request for further information:**
If additional information or documentation is required, a written request will be sent to you requesting further specific information.

- **Denial:**

If your application has not been approved, you will receive a written notice explaining the basis of your denial. There is no due process after the denial. You may apply for reinstatement if you intend to enter a new program.

❖ **Time**

It will take the **USCIS Vermont Service Center 2 months or more to process your request**, depending on the USCIS Vermont Service Center's workload. Employment may not commence until you have obtained approval from USCIS Vermont Service Center and you have your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card in your hand.

COURSE ENROLLMENT DURING OPT

A student authorized for OPT may engage in part-time studies at a U.S. College or University, but anytime he/she begins a new degree program the OPT will be cancelled. Authorization for OPT is automatically terminated when you transfer your SEVIS record to another school or begin full-time or part-time study at a different educational degree level.

TRAVEL

The DHS and the U.S. Department of State (DOS) has stipulated that an F-1 student who has filed a timely application for OPT post-completion of study may travel outside the United States while the OPT application is pending, provided that the F-1 student can present the USCIS Processing Center's receipt, proving that the application has been filed.

However, once the EAD card for OPT is issued to the student, and the student decides to travel abroad, the student can only enter the United States to **resume or start employment, not to search for employment**. DHS has clarified that the F-1 student does not need to have begun actual employment before departing, so long as the student has a valid written job offer upon return.

If you have recently applied for Optional Practical Training, you are **strongly advised not to travel** until you have received a response (your approved EAD card) from USCIS Vermont Service Center because you may not be able to re-enter the U.S. without it.

If you want to travel abroad while you are on OPT in order to re-enter the U.S. you need the following documents:

1. SEVIS I-20 signed by the Designated School Officer at Baruch College
2. Valid EAD card
3. Unexpired passport
4. Valid F-1 visa
5. Letter from a US based employer certifying that you are returning to resume or commence employment

CABPs OPT CHECK LIST

All applications must be filed with the documents listed below. **You must submit:**

- ✓ **A copy of your current SEVIS I-20 (with OPT recommended on the 3rd page) and copies of all your previous I-20s (1st & 3rd pages)**
IMPORTANT: If you are missing any of your previously issued SEVIS I-20s, you must submit a police report, which states exactly which I-20s were lost or stolen. The ISSC will not provide you with any copies of I-20s without a police report.
- ✓ **A copy of your Form I-94 Departure Record** (front and back)
- ✓ **A copy of your completion letter**
- ✓ **Recent copy of official transcript**
- ✓ **A copy of your passport identification page** (which includes your photograph).
- ✓ **Form I-765 (original)**
- ✓ **Two photos** with a white background taken no earlier than 30 days before submission to USCIS. They should be un-mounted, printed on thin paper, glossy, and un-retouched. See attachment of the Press Release for detailed information about the photos. **Lightly print your name and your Admission number**, if known on the back of each photo in pencil.
- ✓ **Fee** Applicants must pay a fee of **\$340.00** to file this form. If the request is denied the fee will not be refunded. Pay in the exact amount. Checks and money orders must be payable in U.S. currency. Make check or money order payable to, **“U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.”** There will be an additional charge and delay if your check is not honored.
- ✓ **A copy of your last EAD if applicable** (front and back)
- ✓ **Where to file:** If you live in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, or Pennsylvania mail your application to:

**Dept. of Homeland Security
USCIS Vermont Service Center
75 Lower Welden Street
St. Albans, VT 05479-0001**

Note: Please be sure to write **“Optional Practical Training – Form I-765”** in the lower left hand corner of your envelope. See example below:

<p>Department of Homeland Security USCIS Vermont Service Center 75 Lower Welden Street St. Albans, VT 05479-0001</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Optional Practical Training Form I-765</p>	

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FORM I-765

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) recommend that you retain a copy of your completed application for your records.

COMPLETE the items 1-16 on the FORM I-765:

- Item # 1-8: Personal information
- Item # 9: Social Security Number, if available
- Item #10: Alien registration Number or I-94 Number
- Item #11: You should **only** answer yes, if you have applied for Economic Hardship or Optional Practical Training employment before
- Item #12: Date of last entry into the U.S.
- Item #13: Place of last entry into the U.S.
- Item #14: Manner of last entry (As a **Student, Tourist or Worker etc.**)
- Item #15: Current Immigrant Status (**Student**)
- Item #16: Eligibility Categories - **(c)(3)(i)** - *F-1 Students Seeking Optional Practical Training in an Occupation Directly Related to Studies. The USCIS adjudicates a request for employment authorization by determining whether an applicant has submitted the required information and documentation, and whether the applicant is eligible. In order to determine your eligibility, you must identify the category for which you are eligible and fill in that category in question 16 on Form I-765.*
- **Certification:** Sign within the white space (do not cross the line); include your telephone number and the date.

- **Please do not mail your OPT application package, until you receive your SEVIS I- 20 with the recommended OPT dates indicated on the third page**
- **Once you have received your EAD Card, you must provide the ISSC with a copy. You will then be issued a new I-20 indicating that the OPT has been approved**