

Optional Practical Training for F-1 students

8 CFR 214.2 (f) (10) (ii) – (13)

Definition

Optional Practical Training (OPT) offers F-1 students an opportunity for temporary employment directly related to their major area of study. This training is **not** part of the academic curriculum.

Eligibility

Students become eligible if they have maintained their F-1 status for at least an academic year (two semesters) prior to applying by enrolling full-time and possessing a valid I-20. Approved full-time study abroad may also be counted toward the required two semesters as long as the student completed one semester in the U.S. prior to studying abroad.

Time Permitted on OPT

A maximum of twelve months of full-time optional practical training per degree program level (bachelor's, master's, doctor's) may be granted to F-1 students. If part-time OPT is granted (twenty hours per week or less), it is deducted from the remaining OPT at half the full-time rate. Students become eligible for an additional twelve months **with each higher degree level**. Should a student participate in twelve months of **full-time-equivalent** (365 days) curricular practical training in a program of study, they lose the opportunity to pursue optional practical training in that degree program. All practical training must be completed within fourteen months of the program end date.

- 17-Month Extension for certain STEM degree holders is now permitted increasing the total time from 12 months to 29 months. This rule is applicable to students on OPT who are currently employed AND have employers that are registered with the “e-verify” employment verification system. Students can apply for the OPT extension as early as 90 days before the end date of the current 12-month OPT. As long as this extension is filed before the end date of the 12-month OPT period, you can continue working after the end date listed on your EAD card while your extension application is pending for 180 days or until a decision is made.
- Student on STEM extensions must report every 6-months their OPT participation. Students who fail to report their OPT participation may have their form I-20 and work authorization terminated. ISAO will send e-mail reminders to students whenever possible about OPT participation, therefore it is important that your personal e-mail address is up to date in Pathway and that you can access your UMKC e-mail account at all times.
- STEM Degrees eligible for OPT extension:
 - Actuarial Science. CIP Code 52.1304.
 - Computer Science Applications: CIP Codes 11.xxxx
 - (except Data Entry/Microcomputer Applications, which are CIP Codes 11.06xx)
 - Engineering. CIP Codes 14.xxxx.
 - Engineering Technologies. CIP Codes 15.xxxx.
 - Biological and Biomedical Sciences. CIP Codes 26.xxxx.
 - Mathematics and Statistics. CIP Codes 27.xxxx.
 - Military Technologies. CIP Codes 29.xxxx.
 - Physical Sciences. CIP Codes 40.xxxx.
 - Science Technologies. CIP Codes 41.xxxx.
 - Medical Scientist (MS, PhD). CIP Code 51.1401

Applying for OPT

For Pre-Completion OPT, eligible students may apply for **part-time** optional practical training when school is in session and **full-time** during vacation periods. F-1 students who have completed all course work with the exception of a thesis or dissertation may apply for full-time post-completion optional practical training. The student must graduate within the 12-month post-completion OPT period so carefully planning is required.

For Post-Completion OPT, applicants must apply for all practical training **not earlier than 90 days before the program end date and up to 60 days after the program end-date**. The employment start date must be within the 60 day grace period following program completion. For purposes of OPT applications, students should note that U.S. Immigration considers the degree completion date as the date that all requirements for the degree program are met and **not** the date that a degree is conferred (graduation). Since it may take over ninety days to receive work authorization from USCIS, students should plan accordingly.

Process

A Designated School Official (DSO) in the UMKC International Student Affairs Office must recommend optional practical training and will prepare a new I-20 if the student is eligible. USCIS is the final authority in determining if an Employment Authorization Document (EAD)/Work Permit should be issued.

To get a new I-20 for this purpose, **UMKC students must complete the Tegrity/Blackboard OPT course and pass the accompanying exam.**

The student must then provide the following:

- **[Academic Advisor Recommendation Form](#)** recommending the OPT Start Date (ISAO website: www.umkc.edu/isao/optinfo.htm)
- Completed **form I-765** (ISAO website: www.umkc.edu/isao/optinfo.htm)
 - **Item 16** of I-765 should read: **(C) (3) (B)**.
 - **Item 3** of I-765: The address on the I-765 form must read “**Care of ISAO, 5235 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, MO 64110-2499.**”
 - Provide the **original form**, not a copy.
- Check or money order for \$ **380.00** made payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”.
 - Do not write on the back of the check.
 - Confirm the required fee, which is regularly updated, at USCIS’ website (<http://www.uscis.gov>) and use the tab “Forms” and select “Check Filing Fees”.
- Two passport type photos (<http://travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/index.html>).
 - It is recommended that these go in a plastic sheath such as a Ziploc sandwich bag and that you print your name on the back of each photo in pencil. **Do not staple through the photos.**
- ▶ A copy of the **new** I-20 Form, provided and signed by the DSO and **signed** by the student.
 - This new I-20 form must be part of the final submission package that is completed by ISAO and that must be obtained from ISAO and mailed by the student (see below).
- Copy of front and back of I-94 card.
 - Be certain that the date stamp is legible on the copy of the front of the card.

- Copy of most recent visa that you used to enter the U.S.
- Copy of your passport that shows photo, expiration date, and name.
- Copy of any I-20's with Curricular Practical Training authorizations.
- Copy of any pre-SEVIS I-20s.

Documents should be submitted to the Service Center **in the order outlined above**.

It is strongly recommended that applicants create and retain one complete copy of all items.

Documents can be obtained in person at ISAO (5235 Rockhill Road) – or by anyone designated by the student in e-mail or writing. An ISAO staff member who will require a photo ID at pick-up.

- Do not forget to **sign the new I-20 form**.

If using the United States Postal Services using certified services, students should mail their OPT packet to:

USCIS
P.O. Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

If using an overnight courier service (such as Fed Ex or UPS), send the package to:

USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034

Delivery Phone Number: 1-800-375-5283

Within one month of USCIS receiving the application materials, ISAO should receive a receipt notice (I-797) that includes a receipt number. This number is critical for correspondence purposes if problems arise regarding the application. A receipt number is also required to check on-line the status of a given application (<https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp>).

Students will be notified via e-mail when ISAO receives an I-797 of any kind for them.

Please remember:

- If an EAD is authorized, a student may not commence employment until the start date indicated on the EAD.
- While on OPT, an F-1 student is responsible for notifying the ISAO office of any change in name, address or permanent contact email address within 10 days.
- If students transfer to another school or begin studying at another educational level, the OPT authorization to work is automatically and immediately terminated.