Optional Practical Training
REMINDEERS

- I would like to remind you that the appointment system was created in order to keep you from waiting for paperwork and to reserve appointments for students with serious concerns and/or issues. Please remember the following:

- Reviewed paperwork will have your name on the envelope and the date that I reviewed/or approved it in the upper right hand corner. ONLY remove information from my IN BOX that belongs to you!

- Please place information that you want me to review in the front of the box, not in the back or in between other envelopes that I have already reviewed. I can not review what I can not find in my box.

- Please do not make appointments to pick up information or drop it off for my review; there are 500+ F1 students and only one international student advisor.

- Several of you have not picked up TRANSFER I-20s and other documents that have been in my box since last semester; please pick up this information as they will not be mailed to you.

- Your attendance at these meetings is encouraged. *I do not accept walk-ins any longer.* If you are unable to make the meetings, please consult the website, or the International Student Access Center on Black Board. You may also make an appointment (for serious personal concerns ONLY) or send me an e-mail with your questions.

- JOIN US on FACEBOOK...UDC Global Network (F1 Students)
Other Employment Options

- **Curricular Practical Training** - CPT “must be an integral part of an established curriculum.” It allows an F-1 student to engage in “alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education or any other type of required internship or practicum.” A student may choose to receive wages or academic credit for this experience. Should you start an internship without prior authorization, your CPT will not be approved. CPT does not require USCIS approval. CPT employment can many times create an opportunity for future OPT and/or H1B employment.

- **Economic Hardship:**
  Applies to students whose financial situation has changed unexpectedly or beyond their control. It may include any of the following: loss of sponsorship (partial or total), substantial fluctuations in currency or exchange rates, large increases in tuition, medical bills, and/or unexpected expenses. Do not immediately apply for this.
Definition of Optional Practical Training (OPT)

- Temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major area of study and commensurate with degree level.

- USCIS allows for a maximum of 12 months practical experience.

- OPT is available before and after completion of the educational objective.
  - Different rules apply to pre- and post- completion OPT.

- Requires UDC Designated School Official Approval

- Requires USCIS approval.
Requirements for OPT

- Employment must be in the student’s area of study.

- Passport must be valid for at least 6 months into the future.

- Prior use of full-time CPT for one year or more makes you ineligible for OPT.
Pre-completion OPT
(before completion of the course of study)

- 20 hours/week limit while school is in session and while the student still has coursework to complete.

- Over 20 hours during official school breaks as long as student is currently enrolled **and** intends to register for the next full term (full time).

  - A status violation may occur if the student does not register full-time in the next term.
Post-completion OPT
(after completion of the course of study)

- 20 or more hours after the student has completed all course requirements but thesis or dissertation.

- Undergraduate students can request OPT only after completion of the course of study.

- Graduate students can apply for OPT
  - After completion of the course of study (no courses left including research credits)
  - After completion of the program requirements.
Application Deadline for OPT after Completion of Studies

- We RECOMMEND that you start the application 90 days before you complete the course of study (no courses left to take). You can apply up to 90 prior to program end date and up to 60 days after. However, the longer a student waits to apply, limits the amount of grace period they have after OPT completion.

- USCIS takes approximately 60-90 days to process OPT.
  - There is no way to expedite this process.

- If your application has not been adjudicated within 90 days of USCIS receipt, you may request from the USCIS local office that they grant you an interim 240-day Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

- Maintain evidence that your employment is related to your program of study.
Important Information to Know

- Students should have viable employment by program end date. This could be employment from current CPT.

- If you have a job offer, submit the letter of employment with your OPT application.

- Students must submit documents no later than 30 days from date of issuance.

- If you fail to complete your program of study but have already applied for OPT, you need to immediately notify your DSO for guidance.
17-month extension of OPT for STEM Degree

- Students who are on a period of post-completion OPT (not including associate’s) in a Science, Technology, Engineering or Math program are eligible to apply for a 17-month extension.
- Students authorized an OPT STEM extension must work for an E-Verify employer in a position directly related to STEM degree.
- Students must provide the I-765, supporting evidence, and the fee. YES! Again!
- Students must provide a letter indicating the job title, proof of duration of position, contact information for student’s supervisor, and a description of the work.
- Students must make sure they apply for the extension prior 90-120 days to the end date of their OPT.
- STEM- extension students must report any changes in name, address, employer address or employment status to me within 10 days.
- Must send a validation report to me every six months while on a STEM OPT extension, include: full name, current mailing address, name and address of current employer date that you began working for current employer.
Common Questions
Can I re-enter the U.S. if my request for OPT is pending?

- Yes, you can re-enter with pending OPT. However you could experience difficulties to re-enter if your OPT has been approved and you do not have your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and a letter of employment.

Can I re-enter the U.S. if I left while on OPT?

1. Yes, you can reenter, but you must carry with you your EAD and letter of employment
2. If your OPT has been approved and you depart before you gain employment, you cannot re-enter.
What documents must an OPT pending student show to the Consular Officer to extend or obtain a new visa?

- OPT pending applicants may present the I-765 receipt notice (form I-797) as proof of the eligibility for the F-1 visa.
- OPT pending applicants may also present the I-765 receipt notice to the Port of Entry Officer (if asked for additional documentation when entering the country).
- Employment letter

May I file for OPT and remain unemployed?
No. If you file for OPT, yet remain unemployed for 90-days, once your OPT has been approved, you run the risk of being terminated in SEVIS by the DSO or by DHS. Even after you have been employed and then seek to change employers or lose your job, you will accrue days of unemployment and must report those periods to your school DSO/PDSO. Changes in employment/unemployment must be reported within 10 days to avoid problems with DHS.

Volunteering will assist you in maintaining your status while you look for a paid OPT position.
Common Questions Cont...

- **When do I have to start?**
  - You must begin no later than the 60th day after your program end date. Keep in mind that doing so, eliminates the 60 day grace period at the end of employment.

- **Does a student need to have a job or job offer before leaving and re-entering the U.S.?**
  - No, you do not need a job before leaving or re-entering.
  - After your EAD is issued, you can only re-enter the U.S. to resume employment with proof of an employment letter.

- **Will my unemployment be affected if I leave the country?**
  - Yes. Every day that you are unemployed and out of the country counts towards the 90 (or 120) days. If the student travels during a period of approved leave by an employer, it will not count as unemployment.
May I have more than one job?

- Yes, you can hold one or more jobs, as long as they are in your field of study.

If I have another U.S. visa (e.g., B-1/B-2), may I use it to enter the United States?

- No. If you use your tourist visa or any other, you invalidate the F-1 visa and your OPT privileges.

If I am employed by UDC, does it require an EAD?

- No, if you have not completed the course of study or graduated.
- Yes, if you have completed the course of study or graduated.
OPT Process

USCIS Process

Leave the following documents in one package in my in box; I will review the completed application and return it to my in box for pick up, with the OPT I-20, within 48 business hours. DO NOT make an appointment to review your OPT application! PLEASE do not leave oversized envelopes and folders in my box.
USCIS Process

1. Complete form I-765 (Points 1-16 only). All forms can be retrieved on www.USCIS.gov

   Pre-completion OPT code (c) (3) (A)
   Post-completion OPT code (c) (3) (B)
   Extension OPT code (c) (3) (C)

2. Complete OPT Application (obtained from website or an advisor).

3. Provide two photographs of yourself with your name lightly printed on the back. They must meet the USCIS specification.

4. A statement addressed to DHS indicating why you are applying for OPT (lots of students forget this one).

5. An offer of employment including the employer’s address, contact information and your contact information (if applicable).

6. Check payable for $340.00 to US Department of Homeland Security (fee subject to change).

7. Submit photocopies of:
   a. I-94 card (both sides)
   b. Biographical pages of your passport (must be current 6 months or more)
   c. Current visa page (it does not matter if your visa has expired)
   d. Copy of New OPT I-20 (will be given to you)
   e. Copies of all previous I-20’s (do not include the second page)
   f. Change of status adjudication results (if applicable)
   g. Previous EAD (if applicable)
   h. Top portion of EAD adjudication receipt (if applicable)
Mailing Instructions

- After your OPT application has been approved, using a return receipt requested service (approximately $6.00), mail the application documents to the following address:

  USCIS
  PO Box 660867
  Dallas, TX 75266
Mailing Instructions Cont…

- **US Post Office and USCIS Response**

  - Post office return receipt.
  
  - Notice of Action from USCIS, where they will acknowledge the receipt of your money and the I-765 (OPT) application (10-30 days).
  
  - You **might** receive a request from USCIS to submit additional evidence to process your OPT application. Please speak to an international advisor immediately if you receive this **blue form**.

  - EAD (60-90 days).
OPT Check List (this is a copy of the form that I include in your OPT application once I have reviewed it).

Please include the following documents in your OPT packet and bring them to a UDC international advisor for review:

- Draft copy of OPT application. Please include your e-mail address on this form.
- Draft copy of I-765 form
- Statement to DHS
- Employment letter (if applicable). Include your supervisor’s contact info.
- Photocopy of new OPT I-20
- Photocopies of all previous I-20’s
- Two photographs of yourself (passport style) **(Do not glue or staple!) Send these with your approved OPT application, do not submit them to me.**
- Check for $340.00 USD (just for review)
- Photocopy of both sides of I-94 card (front & back)
- Photocopy of passport page
- Photocopy of visa page
- Photocopy of your change of status adjudication results (if applicable)
- Top portion of EAD receipt (if applicable)
- Photocopy of previous EAD (if applicable)

Note: If you do not currently know who your employer will be, do not forget to contact me via e-mail with the name of the employer, supervisor’s contact info (telephone and e-mail) as well as your e-mail address. Failure to follow this procedure will result in termination of your SEVIS record 90 days following receipt of your EAD card.
Life after OPT or Graduation

- You have several options...
  - Apply for another program of study, by the deadline at UDC or another school (requires the submission of an initial I-20 application by application deadline or transfer to another school)
  - Apply for the H-1B visa with your employer (STEM students may extend OPT by 17 months if criteria are met)
  - Apply for another visa type
  - Depart the country
  - Your transfer-in date to a new school or program effectively ends your OPT

Change of Status (COS)

F1 to H1B requires that students show proof that the petition has been filed or waitlisted.
- If the student is in a period of authorized post-completion OPT on or after the date the student becomes eligible for the extension, the student’s post-completion OPT is automatically extended (Cap Gap).
- Cap Gap OPT is the period of time between the time a nonimmigrant’s F1 student status would ordinarily end and his or her H1B status begins.
- For information on how to file for H1B status, please see your employer.
Resources

E-Verify Program Information and Final Rule
http://www.nafsa.org/_/Document/_/federal_contractor_e-verify.pdf

U.S. Customs and Immigration Services
www.uscis.gov
If you have any questions, please contact
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