# Youngstown
## STATE UNIVERSITY
INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS OFFICE

JONES HALL
TEL: 1+ (330) 941 2336
FAX: 1+ (330) 941 2338
www.ysu.edu/ipo

## F-1 Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training Information

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is the opportunity for F-1 students to apply knowledge gained in their degree program to off-campus work. All work during OPT must be directly related to your level and field of study. OPT is recommended by the International Programs Office (IPO) and authorized by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Normal processing time for this authorization is 60 to 90 days.

The maximum amount of time granted to work on OPT is 12 months per degree level plus a 24-month STEM extension for those who qualify. You may use some or all of the available 12 months of practical training during your course of study or save the full 12 months to use after you complete your program. OPT used during your course of study is called Pre-completion OPT. Part-time, pre-completion OPT is deducted from the 12 months at half rate. Full-time, pre-completion OPT is deducted at full rate. OPT used during after graduation is called Post-completion OPT.

**Application Process:** You must submit a timely application to USCIS and must receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) before you may begin working. Follow the steps below:

**STEP 1: Be Informed.** Read this handout thoroughly and carefully. With questions, consult the International Programs Office. Also refer to the Pre-completion OPT power point for tips on filing this application.

**STEP 2: Submit a complete Pre-completion OPT Recommendation Form** to the IPO front desk. A new I-20 recommending OPT will be ready for pick-up in 5 business days.

**STEP 3: Compile a complete Pre-completion OPT application.** Gather the required application materials and prepare your application with the documents included in this order:

- ☐ I-765 filing fee of $410. Check or money order made payable to "US Department of Homeland Security."
- ☐ Form G-1145. Use this form if you wish to receive email or text confirmation of your receipt number. Paperclip the form to the front of the STEM application. https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145
- ☐ Form I-765 completed by you with your original signature (refer to I-765 instructions on page 3). http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf
- ☐ Photocopies of **ALL** previously issued and signed I-20 documents dating back to beginning of F-1 status. This includes a copy of your new OPT I-20!
- ☐ I-94 record (https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/) or front and back of paper record (if applicable).
- ☐ Photocopy of your valid passport I.D. page(s)
- ☐ Photocopy of your most recent F-1 visa stamp (even if the visa is expired)
- ☐ Two "passport" photos. In pencil, print your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo. No eyeglasses can be worn in passport photos. Passport photos can be obtained at some U.S. Post Offices, FedEx offices, and many retailers such as CVS. More details about can be found at: http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/photos/photos.html

**STEP 4: Mail your complete application to USCIS.**
- When you have completed the entire application, make a complete set of photocopies for your files, and send the entire application to USCIS.
- Mail the application to one of two USCIS lockboxes below. You must mail the application to the USCIS office that has jurisdiction over the address you have used on #3 of the I-765. IPO strongly recommends that you send the application via an express mail carrier (FedEx or UPS) so that you have a tracking number and signature noting proof of delivery.
- Mail the application so USCIS *receives* it before the application deadlines:
  - No more than 90 days before the requested OPT start date.
  - Within 30 days of the date IPO made the OPT recommendation in SEVIS.

| If the address used on the I-765 is in: | Mail Your Application To: | |
|---|---|---|
| Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Guam, or the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands. | **USCIS Phoenix Lockbox** | |
| | **For FedEx/UPS – Recommended!!:** USCIS Attn:  AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034 | **For USPS** USCIS P.O. Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85034 |
| Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, or West Virginia | **USCIS Dallas Lockbox** | |
| | **For FedEx/UPS – Recommended!!** USCIS Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067 | **For USPS** USCIS P.O. Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266 |

**STEP 5: Wait for the EAD**
Within one month of sending the application to the USCIS, you should get a standard receipt notice. The "Receipt Number" in the top left corner of this receipt notice can be used to check the status of your case on the USCIS website at www.uscis.gov or by calling the phone number indicated on the receipt. Keep in mind that this information is updated infrequently. **You CANNOT begin working until you have received your EAD and are within the start and end dates printed on the card.**

## CHOOSING YOUR OPT START AND END DATE

Your pre-completion OPT start date depends on when you are applying for the benefit:

**Full-time pre-completion OPT for summer term:**
- Start date can be after classes and finals end in spring term
- End date must be before the start of fall classes

**Part-time pre-completion OPT for the fall/spring term:**
- If it is your final semester, the OPT end date cannot go past your program completion date.

**Note: You may not change your OPT dates once you have filed the application with USCIS!**

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING FORM I-765

❑ **Download the form I-765 from** https://www.uscis.gov/i-765 **and complete it as a form-fillable pdf.** Do NOT complete the form by hand. The form is read by a machine-readable scanner.

❑ **Check the first box: "I am applying for: Permission to accept employment."**

❑ **Complete lines 1 through 16:**
  ❑ #1 Name: **Type your family/last name in all capital letters and your first name in sentence case.**

  ❑ **#3 Return Address:** This must be an address at which you can receive mail for at least the next 90 days. You cannot put in a forwarding order on this address - the immigration service's envelopes state "Do Not Forward." If the EAD is sent to an address with a forwarding order, or if you cannot receive mail at the address you use, your EAD will be returned to the immigration service. You may use the IPO address for your EAD card but note that we are unable to track the progress of your case. If you choose to use IPO as your mailing address, enter the address as:

  1 University Plaza Jones 1042 IPO
  Youngstown, OH 44555

  *NOTE: If you use IPO's address, you will receive an email as soon as your EAD card arrives in the office. Do not call to inquire if your card has been received. If you want IPO to mail the EAD to you, we will use eShipGlobal to send your EAD via UPS or FedEx. You will receive instructions from IPO to create a shipping label as soon as your EAD arrives. You will be responsible for paying for shipping using a credit/debit card.*

  ❑ **#10 Alien Registration Number or Form I-94 Number:** Your 11-digit I-94 number can be found at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/. It is the "Admission (I-94 Record Number)".

  ❑ **#11 Previous Employment Authorization:** The answer is "no" unless you have previously applied for an EAD (OPT card). The answer is "no" even if you have had CPT or a previous H-1B visa.

  ❑ **#12 Date of Last Engry into the U.S.:** Refer to the date on your most recent port of entry stamp in your passport.

  ❑ **#13 Place of Last Entry into the U.S.:** Refer to the most recent port of entry of entry stamp in your passport, the three letter airport code found on that stamp reflects your place of last entry.

  ❑ **#14 Status at Last Entry:** Unless you changed status from within the U.S., the answer to this question is "F-1 Student".

  ❑ **#15 Current Immigration Status:** "Student"

  ❑ **#16 Eligibility Categories:** For F-1 Pre-completion OPT, the code is **( c ) ( 3 ) ( A )**

  ❑ **#17, #18 and #19: S**hould be left blank for Pre-completion OPT**.**

  ❑ **Certification:** Sign and date the I-765 in **dark blue ink using a ballpoint pen**. Sign WITHIN the 2 lines.

# REMINDERS: REGULATIONS WHILE YOU ARE ON OPT

❑ **Required Updates**. If you are moving for your internship, you must update your address with:
  • **IPO**: email csdevenburgh@ysu.edu
  • **Penguin Porta**l: http://www.ysu.edu/penguin-portal

❑ **Traveling abroad while on OPT.** In order to re-enter the U.S. while on OPT, you must have:
  • Valid passport
  • Valid F-1 visa sticker in your passport
  • OPT I-20 signed within the last 12 months

# OPT – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## 1. What is F-1 Optional Practical Training?
Practical training is the opportunity to apply knowledge gained in your degree program to off-campus work. The work must be directly related to your level and field of study. OPT is recommended by IPO and authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This authorization can take 2 to 3 months to obtain. The maximum amount of time granted to work on F-1 OPT status is 12 months per degree level. You may use some or all of the available 12 months of practical training during your course of study or save the full twelve months to use after you complete.

## 2. What are the eligibility requirements to apply for F-1 Optional Practical Training?
To be eligible to apply for OPT, you must: (1) have been in full-time student status for at least one academic year by the requested start date of your OPT, and (2) be maintaining valid F-1 status at the time of the application.

## 3. When can I apply?
You may apply for pre-completion OPT up to 90 days before your requested OPT start date. Your OPT application MUST be receipted by USCIS within 30 days of the issue date as noted on the new OPT I-20. Applying outside of these timelines will result in the denial of your OPT application.

## 4. How can I use OPT while I am still in my program?
You may use OPT while you are still in your degree program as follows: (1) part-time while school is in session, (2) full-time during annual vacation periods, and/or (3) full-time after you have completed all course requirements for the degree and have a thesis requirement remaining. These periods of OPT used before you graduate will be deducted from the total allowable period of 12 months. Part-time, pre-completion OPT will be deducted at one-half the full-time rate.

## 5. What if I apply for pre-completion OPT and don't get the EAD in time?
You cannot begin work without the EAD in hand and unless you are within the dates printed on the card. If you do not have the EAD, you would need to negotiate with your employer to defer your work start date.

## 6. What if I lose my offer or decide I don't want to work using my pre-completion OPT?
It is extremely difficult cancel any type of OPT. Once the EAD has been issued, immigration considers that you are using the benefit. Consult an OIE advisor for more specific questions.

## 7. How long does it take to get authorization for OPT and when should I apply?
Authorization for OPT is granted by USCIS. Their standard processing time is 60-90 days. Therefore it is important that you apply for the authorization well in advance of the date you wish to start working. You may apply up to 90 days before your requested pre-completion start date. Note: The OPT I-20 cannot be more than 30 days old when it arrives at USCIS or OPT will be denied!

## 8. My OPT I-20 was issued almost 30 days ago and I haven't filed yet. What do I do?
Your OPT application MUST be receipted by USCIS within 30 days of the issue date as noted on the new OPT I-20 to avoid denial. If you delay filing the application, you must come to IPO's front desk to request a new I-20 with a new OPT issue date. The new I-20 will take 5 business days to re-issue. To be safe, file at least 2 weeks before the 30-day timeout of the OPT I-20.

## 9. Do I need to have a job to apply for OPT?
You do **NOT** need to have a job offer before applying for Optional Practical Training.

## 10. Do I need to have a job/job offer while I am on OPT?
F-1 regulations require that you do have employment in your field of study while in your POST-graduation OPT period. You are only allowed to have a total of 90 days of unemployment in your 12 month period of OPT or 120 days if you apply for and receive the 17-month extension. *Unemployed days DO NOT accrue or "count" during any periods of pre-completion OPT.*

## 11. Does the job I have while on OPT have to be paid employment, or can it be unpaid?
F-1 students may participate in volunteer internships without work authorization if doing so won't violate any labor laws. If you will be compensated in some way for the service you are providing, you must have employment authorization.
Compensation includes money, lodging, meals, transportation, gift certificates, or other remuneration. IPO generally recommends that students obtain work permission for all unpaid/volunteer internships in case funding becomes available later, to apply for a Social Security number, or to use the experience on a resume or CV. Please consult an IPO advisor before engaging in a volunteer or unpaid internship without work permission.

## 12. Can I begin working before I receive the Employment Authorization Document?
No. You may **NOT** begin employment before you receive your EAD from USCIS; working before practical training has been authorized by the USCIS constitutes illegal employment that will jeopardize your legal status in the US.

## 13. May I ask USCIS to expedite processing of my OPT?

No. USCIS allows students to file the OPT application up to 90 days before the program end date. USCIS does not honor expedite requests for OPT. Should you make a request anyway, it will be denied and will result in longer processing times. You should apply early.

## 14. Do I have to do anything with OIE while I am on OPT?

Yes! Immigration regulations REQUIRE that while you are on OPT, you **MUST** report your address information to IPO. You must email address changes within 10 days of moving.

## 15. Is my ability to travel while on pre-completion OPT impacted?

No, as long as you have your valid I-20, valid passport, and valid F-1 visa. The EAD is not necessary for travel while on pre-completion OPT. When you get the pre-completion OPT I-20 back from IPO, it will be automatically signed for travel (valid for 12 months). For questions about travel and visa renewal, always consult IPO.

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# Employment Related Information

### Employment Eligibility Verification (I-9)

When you begin work, you and your employer must complete a form entitled "Employment Eligibility Verification" (IRS Form I-9) which verifies your eligibility to work in the US. The I-9 must be updated each time you receive a renewal of your work permission. This form requires you to document your identity and work authorization. For F-1 students, the most typical combination of documentation is your passport, I-94 Record, OPT I-20 and EAD.

### Social Security Number (SSN)

For payroll purposes, you will also need to provide your SSN. If you do not already have an SSN, you are required to bring your passport, I-94 record, OPT I-20, and EAD to the Social Security Administration (SSA) and apply for an SSN card. The same documents are required for a replacement card. To find the closest SSA, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/locator.

### Social Security Withholding and Other Taxes

In general, F-1 students who have been in the U.S. fewer than five years are "non-residents for tax purposes" and are exempt from Social Security (FICA) and Medicare taxes. If you are a non-resident for tax purposes and your employer does withhold FICA, speak to your payroll office. You and your employer can refer to Internal Revenue Service Publication 519, "U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens" for additional information. Your earnings **are subject to applicable federal, state, and local taxes.** Tax returns must be filed on or before April 15 each year for the previous calendar year. The results of the filing will determine if any of the withheld income taxes can be refunded to you.

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## Pre-completion OPT Recommendation Form

To the Student: Complete the following information.

**Name:** _____ **Date of birth (mm/dd/yyyy):** _____
       (Family)                              (First)

**Y Number :** _____     **Non-YSU e-mail:** _____

**Address\*:** _____
          (Street)                    (City)                  (State & Zip Code)
*\*Address must also be updated in the Penguin Portal!*

☐ **Check here if you have a secondary MAJOR or are in a dual degree program.**

**OPT Start Date:** _____      **OPT End Date:** _____

**Full-time or Part-time:** _____      **Passport Expiration (mm/dd/yyyy):** _____

**Check one:     The work  ☐ WILL   ☐ WILL NOT   directly relate to my field of study/degree program.**

**Have you applied for OPT before?:  ☐ No ☐ Yes   If yes, Educational Level:  ☐ Bachelor's  ☐ Master's     ☐ PhD**

☐ I understand that all periods of pre-completion OPT are deducted from the available period of post-completion OPT.
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**To:  Academic Advisor or Authorized Department Personnel**
The above-named student is applying for permission to engage in employment for OPT as provided in the immigration regulations for F-1 students. OPT is employment in a job related to the student's field of study and is intended to enhance and supplement the formal, classroom education. U.S. Immigration and Citizenship Services (USCIS) will authorize OPT.

- IPO must have a statement from the student's academic advisor indicating the date the student is expected to complete all degree requirements. The date of completion is not necessarily the end of the term or the  graduation date, but the date of which all requirements for the degree program are expected to be fulfilled.

Please complete the information below and return it to the student so we may process the student's request. Should you have any questions, please call IPO at 330-941-2336.

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### The information below must be completed and signed by the <u>academic advisor</u>, not by the student.

This is to certify that_____is expected to complete **all** requirements for the degree on
                        *(Student's name)*

_____ **and** will receive the degree of _____ in the field/major of_____.
*(Date: mm/dd/yyyy)*                                      *(Level)*                              *(Field of Study)*

_____          _____
(Name of Academic Advisor or Authorized          (Signature of Academic Advisor or
Department Personnel—Please Print)               Authorized Department Personnel)

_____          _____
(Telephone Number and/or email address)          (Date)