



F-1 Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application Packet

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

1. Students in the Intensive English Program or on a J visa are not eligible for OPT.
2. Students must have been enrolled on a full-time basis at UWEC for 1 full academic year before being eligible for OPT.
3. Students must have completed academic program (graduated).
4. Prior use of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for a cumulative of 1 year or more eliminates eligibility for OPT.
5. Training must be directly related to the student's major area of study; training should be commensurate with the level of the student's study.

OPT Application Information/Requirements:

1. An offer of training is not required at time of OPT application submission to USCIS.
2. Training may consist of both paid and unpaid training. Both should be reported.
3. Work cannot begin until the student has received both an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card from USCIS and the start date has arrived.
4. Students must be participating in more than 20 hours of training per week to be considered employed full time. Less than 20 hours per week is considered unemployment. The DHS tracks training through UWEC SEVIS reporting, which is why it is essential that students report all training to the CIE.
5. Students may meet the full-time requirement through two training positions concurrently that total more than 20 hours per week. All training must be reported to the CIE and be in the student's major field of study.
6. Students may engage in OPT for more than one organization for the duration of OPT authorization; as long as the training qualifies under OPT standards.
7. Students are expected to work or be actively seeking training after the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card is issued. Students on post-completion OPT are limited to a maximum of 90 days of unemployment during OPT. Volunteer work that meets OPT standards may be reported as employment.

8. Students may have a cumulative maximum of 12 months of OPT per educational level. A one-time extension of 24 months (for a total of 36 months) may be available to certain STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) degree recipients. This is based on the CIP code of major (not UWEC's definition of STEM).

OTHER IMPORTANT OPT INFORMATION:

GRACE PERIOD (Pre- OPT)

You are still in status even if your initial grace period is over and you have not received your EAD card. Your I-20 with your OPT recommendation shows you are in lawful status.

TRAVEL

The CIE does not recommend travel outside of the U.S. while waiting for OPT approval, as traveling outside of the U.S. before or after you receive your EAD card may create problems/risks for a successful re-entry to the U.S.

The general guidance is that a student who has both an EAD for post-completion OPT and a letter from the training organization (stating specific return date) should not experience difficulty re-entering the U.S. If either of these two conditions are missing, then the student is assuming risk. The risk is that you may not be allowed to re-enter the U.S. If you do not have your EAD card and training (documentation from an ISS staff member for re-entry) in the U.S. when attempting to re-enter the U.S., the CIE recommends that you do not travel. Remember, you also need a valid travel signature from an ISSS staff member for reentry.

INSURANCE

You are not covered by the UWEC insurance policy after you graduate. You are strongly encouraged to continue to have health insurance coverage while on OPT. Insurance may or may not be offered through the employer. You may contact Student Assurance Services for an appropriate policy. Look on your current insurance card for a phone number to enroll.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

Your employer will need your Social Security Number (SSN). If you do not have a SSN, you may apply on the I-765. When you begin work, you and your employer must complete Form I-9 which requires you to document both your identity and your authorization to work. For Form I-9, your EAD card is acceptable proof of both.

OPT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

In order to meet the federal reporting requirements for OPT you must:

1. **Report your new addresses, phone number, or email address** within 5 days of any move or change to <http://bit.ly/1NG0mY6>
2. **Report any change to your employment** at <http://bit.ly/1NlhjRl> within 5 days of the change. You must include employer information, Employer EIN number, hours per week, address, etc. These changes include:
 - a. new employment
 - b. additional employment
 - c. any breaks in employment or discontinuation of employment
3. **Provide a 6- month update on your employment status and personal information.** You can do this at: <http://bit.ly/1NlhjRl>
 - d. A good way to remember this is New Year's Day and the Fourth of July. Schedule a reminder in your phone.

If you have any questions please email international@uwec.edu.

TAXES

Employers are required by law to withhold certain taxes from your paychecks. By April 15th of each year, you must file a federal income tax return and a Form 8843, "Statement for Exempt Individuals," covering the prior calendar year--whether you owe more taxes or not. The ***CIE is not able to answer tax questions.*** You are required and responsible for tax filing. We recommend using Sprintax for non-resident tax filing at: www.sprintax.com

SEVIS TRANSFER

If you would like to begin a new full-time program of study at any point during or following OPT, you must follow the proper procedures to transfer to the new institution (for example, graduate school). Your OPT ends when the SEVIS transfer takes place. Contact a UWEC ISSS staff member for guidance.

GRACE PERIOD (Post-OPT)

You may remain in the United States for up to 60 days following the expiration date of your EAD (called your "grace period"). During your grace period, you are allowed to either depart from the United States or change to another status. Employment is not permitted during this 60-day period. If you depart the country during this grace period, you may not reenter under your UWEC I-20.

APPLICATION TIMELINE:

1. Students should begin application procedures at least 3-4 months before the program end date. OPT usually takes approximately 100 days to adjudicate after submission to USCIS.
2. Form I-765 for standard post-completion OPT can be filed up to 90 days before the program end date, provided that it is filed within 30 days of the date an ISSS staff member enters the OPT recommendation into SEVIS and signs the new I-20. Students must begin application paperwork early to allow the ISSS staff time to update the SEVIS record with the recommendation.
3. OPT applications should be properly filed with USCIS before student's program end date.

HOW TO APPLY FOR OPT:**STEP 1: Attend an OPT Workshop**

Watch your e-mails for times and dates.

STEP 2: Meet with DSO to review your complete application documents

Follow the OPT Instructions and Application Checklist (see pg. 4) to help you compile and complete OPT application and supporting documents. Bring your completed Form I-765 and all supporting documents to the meeting.

The ISS staff member will evaluate your eligibility for OPT and may issue an I-20 providing the OPT recommendation. A photocopy of this updated I-20 must be included in your OPT application documents to USCIS.

STEP 3: Submit OPT application to USCIS

We recommend using a mail service that requires delivery confirmation. Before sending your completed application, make photocopies of all your application materials and keep them with your other important papers. The Form I-765 must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the date an ISSS staff member made the OPT recommendation in SEVIS (see page 2 of the I-20 for the date).

Mailing Address: USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

STEP 4: Track Your Application

USCIS will send a notice of receipt called Form I-797. This notice will state your receipt number and provide information on how to check the status of your application online. If you use the CIE's address on your application, the Form will be sent to the CIE. If you see your card approved, please note it will take 2-3 weeks to arrive.

STEP 5: Wait**STEP 6: Submit any Requests for Evidence (RFE)**

You may receive an RFE from USCIS. This is usually a good sign that your application will be approved soon. Respond to the request immediately with whatever information USCIS requests. The CIE can help you with the submission.

Instructions and Application Checklist

You may use this helpful checklist to guide you as you prepare to compile your OPT application as these are the materials necessary for your OPT recommendation and application.

Bring the following to your OPT meeting

Form I-765: Application for Employment Authorization

Form I-765 is available online at: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf>. Some suggestions for completing Form I-765:

PLEASE SEE "INSTRUCTIONS FOR FORM I-765"

- Academic Advisor's Evidence of Program Completion Form** *(included in this packet) For DSO only. Not submitted to USCIS.*
- OPT Start & End Date Form** *(included in this packet) For DSO only. Not submitted to USCIS.*
- One photocopy of the photo page (identification page) of your passport** (proof of identity)
Include any extra pages that record extensions of the validity of your passport.
- One photocopy of your F-1 visa** *(even if expired)* (proof of identity)
- One photocopy of your I-94**
- One photocopy of previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card (both sides)** *(if applicable)*
- Two passport size photographs** *(See USCIS photo instructions at www.uscis.gov)*
Print your name and I-94 card number lightly in pencil on the back of each photo. Put the photos in a small, plastic bag or envelope and attach it to the top of the I-765. DO NOT CUT the PHOTOS! The photos must be taken in the previous 6 months.
- Application Fee**
Payment should be a Money Order and made payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Attach the Money Order to the front of the I-765. You can obtain a money order at a bank.
The current fee is listed at: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>. You must to pay the filing fee, but you do not pay the biometric services fee.

At the meeting:

- New I-20 with OPT Recommendation** You will receive a new I-20 with an OPT recommendation on page 2. Keep the original forever and send a photocopy as a part of your OPT application packet.



University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Academic Advisor's Recommendation Form For F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)

OPT is temporary training authorization that gives F-1 international students an opportunity to apply knowledge gained in the classroom to practical experience.

This form provides the Center for International Education with the information required by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. The student's academic advisor or department chair must complete and sign this form.

Questions can be directed to the Center for International Education, 715-836-4411. Thank you for your assistance.

Student's Name: _____

Student's Major/Minor: _____

Advisor's Name, Title, and Department: _____

The student mentioned above will complete UWEC's graduation requirements on:

Month/Day/Year

As advisor to the above-mentioned student, I support the interest in pursuing temporary off-campus training authorization under OPT provided that the student only pursues training related to the student's major/minor field of study.

Academic Advisor's Signature

Date

Phone Number



University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Optional Practical Training Start and End Date Form

When choosing your training start and end dates that will appear on your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card, please keep the following points in mind:

1. The EAD card may take approximately 100 days to arrive and will reflect your employment authorization start and end dates.
2. You may NOT engage in training until you receive your EAD card and reach the start date on your EAD card.
3. You may NOT engage in training after the end date on your EAD card.
4. Although you may apply for OPT authorization before the completion of your program, you must request a start date within the 60-day period following program completion.
5. You may apply for OPT up to 90 days before your program end date (on your I-20). **Do not apply earlier!** (Even one day.) USCIS will keep your money and reject your application.
6. Choose the earliest day that you might want to start working.
7. You may not change your OPT start and end dates after you have applied for OPT.
8. If you want the latest possible day to start training, the latest day is 60 days after your graduation or completion of program. Reminder: 60 days is not two months – use the following link to calculate days <http://www.timeanddate.com/date/dateadd.html>.
9. If you must travel outside of the U.S. before you start working, be sure to carefully re-read the Travel section of this application packet.

Student's Name: _____

Major Field of Study: _____

Proposed Employment: *In the field of:* _____

OPT Start Date: _____

OPT End Date: _____

Student's Signature: _____

Date: _____