

LSUHSC INTERNATIONAL SERVICES
POST COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)
INSTRUCTIONS

International Students maintaining lawful F-1 status for one full academic year may be eligible for 12 months of Post Completion Optional Practical Training following completion of studies in order to obtain practical training in their completed field of study. (This includes graduate students who have completed all formal coursework and are working on a thesis/dissertation.)

Students who are not eligible for Post-Completion OPT:

- Students who have previously used 12 months of Pre-completion OPT at the same educational level. (Bachelor's, Master's, PhD, including a degree obtained at a different institution.)
- Students who have previously used 12 months of full time CPT at the same educational level, (Bachelor's, Master's, PhD, including a degree obtained at a different institution.)

Students who wish to apply for Post Completion OPT must do so by filing a petition for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) as follows:

- 1) Obtain a letter on departmental stationary addressed to Remy Allen, Designated School Official, from your faculty sponsor, advisor or program coordinator, which states:
 - The practical training is recommended
 - The proposed employment is (or will be) directly related to your major area of study
 - The employment is (or will be) commensurate with your educational level
 - Expected date of program completion

Sample language provided as:

Dr./Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____ will complete the requirements of the academic program in _____ at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, School of _____ on (date). Following graduation, I recommend (name) undertake one year of practical training to augment his/her education in (field).

The proposed training is (or will be) directly related to his/her program of study and is (will be) commensurate with his/her educational level. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

- 2) Complete Form I-765 (Application for Employment Authorization) in draft form which can be downloaded from the USCIS website under forms (www.uscis.gov) ***As of April 2021, Form I-765 requesting OPT can be filed online (with uploaded evidence) using a MyUSCIS account. ISO continues to recommend filing on paper absent compelling reason (critical timeline) to use the online system. ***
- 3) Obtain two passport photos within 30 days of submission to USCIS. Print your full name, social security number and date of birth on the back of these photos.
- 4) Once the letter, pictures and forms have been completed, contact International Services at (504) 568-4802 to schedule an appointment to receive your I-20 with OPT recommendation.

5) Bring the following items to the scheduled appointment in International Services:

- Faculty sponsor letter (on departmental stationary)
- Completed draft form I-765
- Two photos (name, social security #, date of birth on back)
- Check or money order payable to: U.S. Department of Homeland Security in the amount of \$410 (fee may change without notice – check USCIS website for current fee)
- Passport/Visa/I-94
- Current Form I-20 (completion date should indicate student is within 90 days of completion)

If the student is eligible for Post Completion OPT, International Services will issue an I-20 with an OPT recommendation for submission to USCIS with the other required documentation and I-765. A petition for post completion optional practical training cannot be submitted more than 90 days prior to completion/graduation date. Adjudication of the petition may take up to the 90 days, so please be sure to allow enough time to obtain appropriate documentation and schedule an appointment to file for OPT in a timely manner.

Travel while OPT application pending

If a student has completed studies and leaves the United States **before** OPT is authorized and the **EAD is received**, the student may be unable to obtain OPT authorization upon return to the United States (if permitted to reenter at all). Therefore, it is recommended the F-1 Student not exit the United States prior to receiving the EAD and a job identified. If you do not have a job identified, you may also be unable to reenter the U.S.

Practical training may not begin until the Employment Authorization Card has been received or before the start date noted on the EAD card.

Reporting Requirements during Post Completion OPT

During OPT, you are required to maintain updated information with International Services. You are required to report/provide:

- Any change in employer. (Name, mailing address and start date, previous employer and end date, if applicable)
- Any interruption in employment. Students on standard Post Completion OPT are permitted a total of 90 days of unemployment during their standard OPT authorization period. Exceeding this limit may impact eligibility for future immigration benefits and may result in termination of your SEVIS record. **If at any point, you are within 45 days of this limitation, contact International Services immediately!** Any change in your name, address or contact information. (A current physical and/or mailing address is required.)
- Any travel plans.
- Any updated documents (Passport, I-94, entry visa, replacement EAD)

Appropriate Employment on Post Completion OPT

Work done for OPT must be "directly related to the student's major area of study." Employment based on an OPT EAD that is not directly related to the major area of study would be considered a status violation. The employment must also be commensurate with your educational level.

Documenting that your OPT employment is appropriate is **your** responsibility, not that of International Services. It is recommended that you maintain evidence for each job documenting the position held, proof of the duration of that position, the job title, contact information for your supervisor or manager, and a description of the work. If it is not clear from the job description that the work is related to your degree, obtain a signed letter from your hiring official, supervisor, or manager stating how your degree is related to the work performed.

According to SEVP policy guidance, “a student must work at least 20 hours per week in a qualifying position to be considered employed. If a student has a variable schedule, within a month, it should average out to at least 20 hours per week”.

If you cannot show that your employment was appropriate for Post Completion OPT, as applied for, you may be considered to have violated your status, which may require that you leave the United States and/or make you ineligible for future immigration benefits.

[STEM Extensions](#)

Students with a STEM degree major and an employer who participates in E-verify may also be eligible for an additional 17 months of OPT following their initial authorization. It is recommended that a STEM extension be applied for 90 days **prior** to the expiration of the standard OPT authorization period. A STEM extension may not be requested if the Post Completion OPT period has already expired.

More information on STEM Extensions and how to apply is available from International Services.

[Cap Gap Extensions](#)

(not available to LSUHSC-New Orleans employees)

Students in a valid period of F-1 Post Completion OPT whose OPT end date is before October 1st AND whose **cap subject** employer has **timely** filed (during the H1B acceptance period, beginning **April 1st**) a **change of status** H1B petition on their behalf with a **10/01 start date** have continuing work authorization until a decision is made on the H1B petition. If the H1B approved, cap gap work authorization is automatically extended until September 30th. If the H1B is denied, revoked or withdrawn during the cap gap period, the student's cap gap authorization ends 10 days after the date of the denial, revocation or withdrawal (not the date the notice is received). The student retains the option of using their 60 grace period which begins on the date of denial, revocation or withdrawal.

Students in valid F-1 status (D/S) as indicated on their I-20 who are no longer in their approved OPT period when the H1B petition is filed (**begins April 1st**) but are still in valid F-1 status during a grace period that will end before October 1st whose **cap subject** employer has **timely** filed (during the H1B acceptance period, beginning April 1st) a **change of status** H1B petition on their behalf with a **10/01 start date** do NOT receive additional or continuing work authorization, only their F-1 duration of status is extended until a decision is made on the H1B petition filed on their behalf. If the H1B is approved, F-1 status is extended until September 30th. If the H1B is denied, revoked or withdrawn during the cap gap period, the student retains the option to use their 60 grace period which begins on the date of denial, revocation or withdrawal.