

**LSUHSC INTERNATIONAL SERVICES OFFICE**  
**PRE-COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)**  
**INSTRUCTIONS**

International Students maintaining lawful student status for one full academic year may be eligible for 12 months of Pre Completion Optional Practical Training following completion of studies in order to obtain practical training in their completed field of study.

Students who are not eligible for Pre-Completion OPT:

- Students who have been enrolled for less than one academic year (Fall and Spring semester, can include time spent in a different status which also permits full time study)
- Students who have already received 12 months of Pre-Completion OPT during their course of study
- Students who have already used 12 months of full time CPT during their course of study

Students who wish to apply for Pre 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). I recommend \_\_\_\_\_ (name) undertake (duration) 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](http://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)
- 4) 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.
- 5) Once the letter, pictures and forms have been completed, contact the International Services Office at (504) 568-4802 to schedule an appointment to process the appropriate application.
- 6) Bring the following items to the scheduled appointment in the International Services Office:
  - 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 \$380 (fee may change without notice – check USCIS website for current fee)
  - Passport/Visa/I-94
  - Current Form I-20

If the student is eligible for Pre Completion OPT, the International Services Office will issue an I-20 with an OPT recommendation for submission to USCIS with the other required documentation and I-765. A petition for pre completion optional practical training cannot be submitted more than 90 days prior to the desired start 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.

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 Pre 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 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)
- **Students approved for Pre-Completion OPT MUST maintain full time enrollment, unless otherwise authorized by International Services.**

#### Appropriate Employment on Pre 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.

If you cannot show that your employment was appropriate for Pre 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.

#### Standard Post Completion OPT

ALL Pre-Completion OPT authorized time counts against the total 12 months of OPT available, including Post-Completion OPT, available following degree completion. Part Time Pre-Completion OPT (20 hours per week or less) is counted against the total OPT time available at half rate. **Students who have used 12 months of OPT as pre-completion are NOT eligible for Post-Completion OPT.**

#### STEM Extensions

Students with approved Standard Post Completion OPT who have 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 Post Completion OPT 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.

**A student who has used all 12 months of OPT as pre-completion is not eligible for Standard Post Completion OPT, and would therefore also be ineligible for a STEM extension.**

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