

Optional Practical Training

General Information

What is OPT?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a form of temporary employment authorization intended to provide hands-on work experience complementary to a student's academic program.

Who is eligible for OPT?

OPT may be authorized to an F-1 student who has lawfully enrolled in an academic program on a full-time basis for one full academic year.

When can I apply for OPT?

Post-Completion OPT may be requested starting 90 days prior to a student's I-20 end date and up to 60 days following. **OPT applications requested earlier than 90 days prior to or later than 60 days following the program end date will be denied by USCIS.**

How long does it take for my OPT application to be processed?

Once an application packet has been submitted to USCIS, it may take up to 90 days for processing.

Once approved, when can I start employment?

OPT employment may not begin until the Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) has been issued and received by the student and a student's employment start date has been reached.

When does OPT end?

OPT can end in one of a few ways: 1) 14 months following a student's completion of study, OR 2) if a student transfers their I-20 to another school; OR 3) if a student begins full-time study at another educational level OR 4) if a student accumulates more than 90 days of unemployment.

What is my immigration status while on OPT?

OPT is employment authorization only; it does not indicate a change of status. While on OPT, individuals are still considered to be F-1 students through CMU, although they may be working elsewhere in the United States. *Students continue to be responsible for informing CMU and the Office of International Affairs of their current address until their OPT has been completed and they leave the United States or they successfully change their status.* **Once you have accepted an employment offer, you are required to notify the OIA of your employer's name and address.**

Updated 9/10/2018

What are my requirements while on OPT?

While on OPT, students 1) must be employed in a position related to their field of study, 2) may not accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment, 3) must report changes in employment or address information to the university within 10 days.

Can I undertake unpaid work while on OPT?

Non-paid work, such as unpaid internships and volunteer positions, *may* be considered provided that the work relates to a student's major field of study

Can I travel outside of the United States while on OPT?

Students may travel outside of the U.S. and re-enter while the OPT application is being processed. Once OPT has been approved, students should be prepared to show the following documents to re-enter: 1) a Form I-20 endorsed by an OIA advisor within the last six months for re-entry to the US; 2) **a letter from an employer stating that the student is expected to return to a position upon re-entry**; 3) valid passport, 4) unexpired F-1 visa stamp; 5) **EAD card authorizing OPT employment**. Remember to only show the documents you are asked for.

Application Procedure

STEP 1: Complete Online Application

Go to this website: <https://goo.gl/gBdrVM> (you will be redirected to OIA's webpage about OPT)

Click on button under the "Step 1" heading. This will open the My OIA website to begin your application. Your application progress is saved for you to resume and complete at any time.

The online application will require you to do the following:

1. Read and mark as read the learning content items relating to OPT.
2. Pass the OPT quiz with a score of 90% or higher. You have three attempts to do this.
3. Request and receive a letter of recommendation from your advisor. Your advisor will submit their recommendation electronically through the My OIA website.
4. Submit the questionnaire with your chosen start and end dates. Make sure to pay close attention to the learning content about start and end dates and use the date calculator tool to make sure your chosen start date is valid.

When finished with your application, click the "submit" button at the top of the page. Please note that you will not be able to do this until your completed advisor recommendation has been received. You will receive an email notification when this happens, after which you should return to the application to click "submit" if all other requirements are complete.

STEP 2: Make an appointment with an OIA advisor

Make sure to bring the following to your appointment:

1. Check or money order for \$410 payable to The Department of Homeland Security OR completed Form G-1450 (download blank copy at <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450>) if you wish to pay your filing fee by credit card (money order option is recommended)

2. OPTIONAL: Completed Form G-1145 (download blank copy at <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>) if you would like to receive an electronic notification when USCIS accepts your application (note: this provides a notification that USCIS received your application; you will be able to track your case with your receipt number from there)
3. Completed but unsigned and undated Form I-765 (download blank copy at <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> - DO NOT SIGN OR DATE)

- a. For Page 3, Part 2, Item 27, enter (c)(3)(B) (note: lowercase c, uppercase B)

27. Eligibility Category. Refer to the **Who May File Form I-765** section of the Form I-765 Instructions to determine the appropriate eligibility category for this application. Enter the appropriate letter and number for your eligibility category below (for example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii)).

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- b. If you have been issued an I-20 with a different SEVIS ID in the past, either with CMU or another U.S. institution, you should explain that on page 7. This is not common. If yes, enter Page Number 3, Part Number 2, Item Number 26 into the first available item. Then, list all previous SEVIS ID numbers you have had.

3.a. Page Number **3.b. Part Number** **3.c. Item Number**

3.d. Previous SEVIS ID: N0012345678

- c. If you have ever been authorized for CPT or OPT in the past, regardless of level, school, or program, you should explain that on page 7. To do so, enter Page Number 3, Part Number 2, Item Number 27 into the first available item. You should indicate which practical training you were previously authorized for, at what level (bachelors, masters, doctoral), whether it was full time or part time, and your start and end dates (remember American date format: mm/dd/yy or use long form to avoid confusion [e.g. July 1, 2018]).

4.a. Page Number **4.b. Part Number** **4.c. Item Number**

4.d. Part Time CPT - Masters - 08/27/18 - 12/15/18

Full Time CPT - Masters - 05/15/18 - 08/10/18

Full Time OPT - Bachelors - 07/10/2017 - 07/09/17

4. Photocopies (not originals) of any previous I-20 you have had for CPT or OPT authorization (page 2 of the I-20 shows CPT and OPT authorization); old I-20s that do not include CPT or OPT authorization are not required
5. Photocopy of passport information pages
6. Photocopy of visa in passport
7. (download at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/recent-search>).
8. Two photos meeting specifications for passports (see last page)

STEP 3: Receive new I-20

After reviewing the materials in steps 1 and 2 and confirming eligibility for post completion OPT, your OIA advisor will recommend you for OPT and issue you a new I-20 with an OPT recommendation. Pay

close attention to the date under the advisor signature on your new I-20. **You are required to mail your materials to USCIS within 30 days of this signature. Failure to do so could result in denial of your OPT request.**

STEP 4: Submit Documents to USCIS

Once you receive your I-20 with the recommendation, place your documents in the following order and mail them to USCIS per the mailing instructions below. **DO NOT STAPLE** any of your materials.

1. Check or money order for \$410 payable to The Department of Homeland Security OR completed Form G-1450 if you wish to pay your filing fee by credit card (money order option is recommended)
2. OPTIONAL: Completed Form G-1145 if you would like to receive an electronic notification when USCIS accepts your application.
3. Original Form I-765
4. Original I-20 with OPT recommendation
5. Photocopies of all I-20s showing CPT or OPT authorization if previously authorized.
6. Form I-94
7. Photocopy of information pages of passport and visa page
8. Two photos meeting appropriate specifications

Remember to mail your materials to USCIS within 30 days of receiving your I-20 with OPT recommendation (see "Date Issued" in the SCHOOL ATTESTATION section and count 30 days after to figure out deadline).

If you listed a Michigan address as your mailing address on your I-765, mail your documents to USCIS by **certified mail with return receipt** to the following address:

**USCIS
P.O. Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036**

Or this address for FedEx, UPS, DHL shipments:

**USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
Phoenix, AZ 85034**

If you listed a non-Michigan address as your mailing address on your I-765, see this page for the USCIS address you should use: <https://www.uscis.gov/forms/forms-information/uscis-phoenix-and-dallas-lockbox-facilities>.

Students are not allowed to begin employment until they receive the EAD in the mail and their OPT start date has been reached. Please allow up to 90 days for processing.

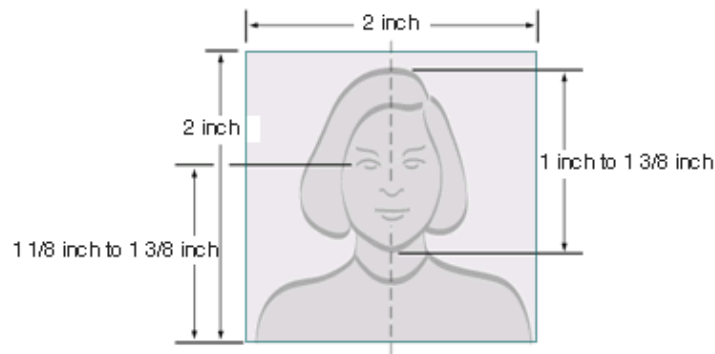
Photos for OPT Applications

Recommendations

- Make sure that the photo presents the full head from the top of the hair to the bottom of the chin.
- Center the head with the frame.
- The person in the photo should have a neutral expression and be facing the camera.
- Remove glasses (required).

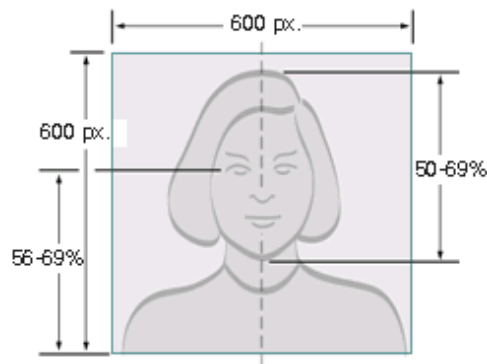
Paper Photo Head Size Template

- Photo must be 2 inches by 2 inches.
- The height of the head (top of hair to bottom of chin) should measure 1 inch to 1 3/8 inches.
- Make sure the eye height is between 1 1/8 to 1 3/8 inches from the bottom of the photo.



Digital Image Head Size Template

- The top of the head, including the hair, to the bottom of the chin must be between 50% and 69% of the image's total height.
- The eye height (measured from the bottom of the image to the level of the eyes) should be between 56% and 69% of the image's height.
- Image pixel dimensions must be in a square aspect ratio (meaning the height must be equal to the width). Minimum acceptable dimensions are 600 pixels (width) x 600 pixels (height). Maximum acceptable dimensions are 1200 pixels (width) x 1200 pixels (height).



For more detailed information, please visit the following link:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/requirements/photos.html>