



### What is post-completion optional practical training?

Post-Completion Optional Practical training is employment directly related to your major(s), done AFTER your completion of studies. It is authorized by the Immigration Service as part of your F-1 visa status.

### Who is eligible?

You must be a full-time student, maintaining status for at least one academic-year. A job offer is not required to apply for OPT, however you **MUST** report an employer to the OISS within 90 days of the OPT start date.

### How long can I work using OPT?

- F-1 students are eligible for a total of 12 months of OPT *per degree level (Bachelors, Masters, PhD)*. *Keep this in mind if you are considering another degree at the same educational level in the future.* Students in STEM majors may be eligible for an additional 24-month extension.
- Any PRE-completion practical training that is authorized prior to completion of studies or for another degree of the same level will be deducted from the total 12-month allotment for post-completion practical training. Part-time, pre-completion OPT is deducted at a half-month rate.
- Post-completion OPT must be full-time (20 hours or more per week). **You must NOT accrue more than 90 days of unemployment during your 12 month OPT period** (See next page for details).

### When should I apply?

- Applications must arrive to the immigration service center no more than 90 days prior to your completion of studies date and no later than 60 days after your completion of studies date\*. You ARE allowed to remain in the U.S. between your completion of studies and your OPT start date.

#### \*What is my completion date?

- **Summer Graduates:** The last day of your last summer session, NOT the end of August.
- **PhD Students:** When you defend, including any revisions and your assistantship is finished.
- **May Graduates:** Your completion date will be the graduation date.
- **Exchange Students:** The last day of finals for the semester.
- You should submit your application materials to the OISS 1-2 weeks prior to when you want to submit the application to the Immigration Service Center. **It will take the OISS up to 2 weeks to process your new I-20.**
- **PLAN AHEAD and APPLY EARLY!** It can take up to 3-4 months for your OPT to be approved AND another 1-3 weeks to receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD). **You cannot begin working without your EAD card.**

### How do I chose my OPT start date?

#### Things to consider:

- **Your OPT start date must fall between the day after your completion of studies and 60 days after your completion date.** Example: complete on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, choose a date between May 24<sup>th</sup> and July 22<sup>nd</sup>
- **The dates you choose will be the dates you are eligible to work.** Note: If your OPT is approved after the date you choose, your EAD start date will be the date of approval.
- **How do I choose the dates if I do not have a job offer?**
  - If you choose a later date, (ex. July 20<sup>th</sup>) and your employer wants a June 1<sup>st</sup> start, you can't start!
  - If you choose an earlier date, (ex. May 25<sup>th</sup>), the 12 months (and the 90 days of unemployment) starts accruing from that date, even if your job starts later.
- **You cannot apply for a Social Security Number (SSN) until the start date on your Employment Card.** If you do not have an SSN, you should choose a start date at least 2 weeks prior to your job start date or the date you want to be eligible to begin working. You may also choose to apply for an SSN with your OPT application. Ask the OISS for details.
- **Once submitted to the Immigration Service Center the dates CANNOT be changed or extended.** Sometimes the OPT can be cancelled before it is approved, but you will not receive a refund of the application fee.
- **If your employer will file an H1B for you on April 1<sup>st</sup> of the following year, your OPT will automatically be extended until September 30<sup>th</sup>** as long as the end date for your OPT is April 1<sup>st</sup> or later.

## What is the 90 day unemployment limitation? Is it serious?

- Students on post-completion OPT **may NOT accrue more than 90 days of unemployment during the 12-month period of OPT indicated on the EAD card.** The 90 days includes weekends and holidays.
- You must report your employer or any change of employers using the form on the OISS website within 10 days of the change. You may also set up an online SEVIS account, however you are required to also report to the OISS.
- **Employment must be directly related to your field of study and includes volunteer work, paid or unpaid internships, and paid employment that equals at least 20 hours per week.** You are allowed to have more than one job, as long as all of the jobs are related to your field of study!
- **YES, it is SERIOUS! Failure to report an employer to the OISS WITHIN 90 DAYS of the start date on your EAD may result in automatic TERMINATION IN THE SEVIS SYSTEM. YOU WILL LOSE YOUR OPT AUTHORIZATION AND VISA STATUS! As of August 2018, F-1 visa holders will now accumulate “unlawful presence”. Accumulating more than 180 days of unlawful presence will bar you for returning back to the U.S. for a number of years.**

## Can I travel when I'm on OPT?

**Yes! You will need the following to re-enter the U.S. AFTER your completion date on your I-20.\***

- **Valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport.** (This does not apply for travel to Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean islands if you go for less than 30 days). You are still in F-1 status while on OPT! **NEVER enter the U.S. on any visa status other than F-1 – it will cancel your OPT!!**
- **I-20 form with a travel signature on page 2 from the OISS, dated within the last 6 months.**
- **EAD Card:** If you have not yet received your EAD Card, you may be able to travel with your I-797 OPT receipt. Please contact the OISS for advice on travel.
- **Job offer letter:** Upon entry into the U.S. (and at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate if you have to renew your F-1 visa), you could be asked for a job offer letter. If you have just graduated and do not have a job offer, we recommend carrying proof of interviews or email correspondence with potential employers.

*\*Note: Prior to the completion date on page 1 of your I-20, you are still considered a student and DO NOT need your EAD card or receipt and job offer to re-enter the U.S. (Example: Travel in April, finish in May)*

## How do I apply?

**Step 1:** Submit the OPT request form to the OISS, and a completed I-765 form, **no sooner than approximately 3 ½ months prior to your completion and no later than 1 ½ months after your completion date.** Your work authorization can take up to 90 days to be approved, so please plan ahead. The application is available on the OISS website and in the office.

**Make sure your form is signed by your Dean, Department Chair or Advisor BEFORE submitting to the OISS.**

- Undergraduates: Your Dean's Office will sign.
- Exchange Students: Minna Ha in the Office of International Programs will sign.
- GCSOM: Leia Hopson, Graduate Student Services Cushing Hall will sign.
- All other Graduate Students: Typically your advisor, graduate director or department chair will sign.

**Step 2:** After you submit the above documentation, **the OISS will issue you a new I-20 with a recommendation for practical training for the specific time period and review your I-765 form.** The OPT recommendation will appear on page 2 of your I-20. This process will take 1-2 weeks and an email will be sent to your BC email when your new I-20 is ready and the I-765 form has been reviewed.

**Step 3:** **Pick up your new I-20 and I-765 form from OISS and mail all of the necessary items to the Immigration Service.** *An OPT Mailing Checklist will be provided with your I-20 and I-765.* **Pay careful attention to the required mailing dates at the top of the checklist and on your envelope.** Failure to ensure the application arrives between these dates will result in DENIAL of your application!

**Step 4:** **Wait approximately 2-3 weeks to receive your I-797 receipt and up to 3 months to receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD).** If you have not received a receipt within 3 weeks, please contact the OISS. Once your OPT is approved, you will receive an approval notice and the EAD card separately. You are not allowed to work until you receive the EAD card and the start date has passed on your card.



- Instructions:
1. Read the attached instructions carefully and Complete Part I
  2. **Ask your Dean's Office, Department Chair or Advisor to sign Part 2. See instructions for list of faculty or staff authorized to sign this application.**
  3. Return this signed form AND the completed I-765 form to the OISS in person or by email bcis@bc.edu

**Part 1: To be completed by the student**

Last/Family name: \_\_\_\_\_ First/Given Name: \_\_\_\_\_

NON BC-email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Major(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Eagle ID (First 8 numbers): \_\_\_\_\_

Have you received off campus work permission (OPT or CPT) from a different university in the past? Yes No

OPT Start date (mm/dd/yy): \_\_\_\_\_ OPT End Date(mm/dd/yy): \_\_\_\_\_  
*You must choose a start date within 60 days after your completion of studies date: Example: If you complete your studies on May 23<sup>rd</sup> you can choose a date between May 24<sup>th</sup> and July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Once submitted to the Immigration Service they CANNOT be changed.*

**I am currently searching for a job or internship: Skip Employer section.** I understand that I must begin work AND report my employer to the OISS within 90 days of the start date of my OPT or my F-1 status will be terminated.

**I have secured employment: Please complete the required employer information below.** I understand that I must report any changes in my employment to the OISS within 10 days of the change.

**Employer Info: Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete ALL address fields.  
**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip code:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Employment start date (mm/dd/yy):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Job Title (if known):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Explain how this job is related to your major:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2: To be completed by the Dean's Office, Department Chair, or Academic Advisor. Please see instructions for list of staff authorized to sign this application. Please return this form to the student after signing.**

The above student is applying for work permission after completion of studies through the U.S. Immigration Service. If granted, this student will be authorized for employment directly related to his/her degree. Please confirm the following:

**The student is considered to be full-time, in good academic standing and is expected to complete ALL degree requirements including thesis/dissertation/required assistantships by: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\***

*\* Note: This date is not necessarily the graduation date, especially for PhD students. Master's students who finish in the first summer session should have the end of that first summer session as their completion date.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part 3: Statement of Understanding

I understand the following:

- I am responsible for picking up the OPT I-20 and I-765 form from the OISS and mailing all of the required documents to the immigration service .
- My employment must be related to my major(s) listed on my I-20 form.
- I am authorized to work during the dates on my EAD card. I must have the card in hand in order to begin working during these dates.
- I must not accrue more than 90 days of unemployment during my OPT period. Employment includes volunteer work, internships, and employment that equals at least 20 hours per week and is related to your major(s).
- I must notify the OISS if I decide to end my OPT either by departing the U.S. permanently or by changing visa status.
- I am required to notify the OISS via an on-line form at [www.bc.edu/oiss](http://www.bc.edu/oiss) **within 10 days of any change** including: change of home address or email, change of employer, termination of employment, change of visa status or my decision to depart the U.S.
- I am required to report my employment information within 90 days of my OPT start date. Failure to do so will result in the automatic termination of my F-1 status in the SEVIS system and I will lose my OPT authorization and my F-1 status.

Student's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_