OPT Information Packet

What is OPT?
- F -1 benefit – Temporary work authorization (Employment Authorization Document)
- Work authorization to participate in trainings directly related to student's major
- Does not require a job offer when applying
- Maximum of 12 months fulltime
- 1 year per each academic level

OPT Eligibility:
- A full time student at CSUDH for at least 1 academic year prior to filing (2 consecutive semesters)
- In the degree program as stated on I-20
- Maintained F-1 status and in status
- A valid passport which is valid for next 6 months in the future
- Made good academic progress toward the degree
- Not used 12 months or more of full time Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
- Not used 12 months of Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (Pre- OPT)

If you are eligible for OPT, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will accept applications **as early as 90 days BEFORE and up to 60 days AFTER your date of completion**. Completion date is the end of your last enrolled term, and it does not depend on the Commencement Ceremony.   If you are currently working on-campus, the employment **MUST END** when you complete your program of study. **You cannot begin employment prior to receiving the EAD.**

We highly recommend you apply during the early period as it usually takes 3 to 4 months to obtain approval from USCIS, and there is NO procedure to expedite your application. If, by the time you have completed your course of study, you have not received the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS, it is recommended **not to travel outside the U.S.**

90 Days of Unemployment

Students on OPT are allowed to be unemployed for **maximum 90 days** during the approved OPT duration. IMPORTANT NOTE: You do not need to have an employer before requesting Optional Practical Training (OPT).

Procedures and Documents to apply for OPT:
> **STEP 1:** Prepare Request Packet
> **STEP 2:** Make an appointment to submit the OPT packet to ISS. Processing time is 5 business days.
> **STEP 3:** Pick up paperwork from the ISS office (wait for an email)
> **STEP 4:** Assemble OPT Application Packet (include photos and check)
> **STEP 5:** Mail the OPT packet to USCIS for decision. Allow 90 days for processing
> **NOTE:** You must mail the OPT package within 30 days of the new I-20 issuance date.

Documents:
1. OPT Request Form
2. Form I-765 (www.uscis.gov – **type and print; do not e-file**)
3. Form G-1145 (www.uscis.gov – **type and print**)
4. 2 copies of unexpired passport (Valid 6 months in the future; biographical page)

5. 2 copies of I -94 (White card version: front and back; online – www.cbp.gov/i94 to print)
6. 2 sets copies of ALL issued I-20s
7. 2 U.S. passport style photos taken within last 30 days
8. $410.00 check or money order payable to Department of Homeland Security
9. If applicable: 2 copies of previous EAD card

Duties and Obligations while on Optional Practical Training:

1. You must update your U.S. residence (including telephone number and email address) within 10 days when you move. Email: iss@csudh.edu
2. Your employer information must be updated within 90 days of OPT start date and in between if there is a change by submitting OPT Employment Update Form.
3. I-20 must be signed by the ISS office when traveling outside the U.S. Travel signature is valid for 6 months.
4. You must provide a copy of your EAD to the ISS office; this is a requirement to verify the approval in SEVIS.
5. You must notify the ISS office if you leave the U.S. with no intention of returning to continue your OPT.
6. You are required to maintain valid medical insurance coverage.
7. Your employment must be directly related to your field of studies.

Types of OPT:
Pre- Completion OPT vs. Post- Completion OPT
- **Pre- Completion OPT**: before graduation
    - ONLY part-time OPT allowed for Pre-Completion OPT
    - Apply 90 days before requested start date
- **Post- Completion OPT**: after graduation
    - Full-time allowed (Minimum 20 hours per week)
    - Apply during the OPT filing period

Type of OPT	Pre-Completion	Post-Completion	STEM OPT Extension
When	During program of study; before graduation	After program completion date	Immediately after end of initial 12 months of OPT; for eligible STEM degree programs
Length	Up to 12 months. Part-time OPT deducted at half the rate.	Up to 12 months	Up to 17 month (changing to 24 months effective May 10, 2016)
Work Hours per week	Part-time (20 hours/ week) while school is in session; Full-time during official school break	Part-time or Full-time work; volunteering OK; multiple jobs OK; minimum 20 hrs per week	Full-time employment; must work an average of 20 hours per week
Unemployment Rule & Other Notes	CPT vs. OPT	90-Day cumulative limit	Employer must be E-Verify; 120-days cumulative limit including post and STEM

(Revised 2/10/17)