



OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

Definition of OPT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major area of study.” [8 C.F.R. & 214.2(f)(10)(ii)].
Filing Deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must apply for post-graduation Optional Practical Training <i>up to 90 days before the program end date and up to 60 days after the program end date.</i>
Preconditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis at a USCIS approved school (SUNY Potsdam) for at least one full academic year (9 months) before being eligible for OPT. Part-time F-1 "border commuter students" are eligible only for OPT following completion of the course of study.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may engage in OPT for any employer for the duration of OPT authorization; as long as the employment qualifies under OPT standards. Employment must be within the U.S.
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may engage in OPT for a cumulative maximum of 12 months during any uninterrupted stay in F-1 status • Students graduating with a degree in science, technology, engineering, math or a related field have the option of applying for a 17-month extension of their 12-month OPT (for a total OPT period of 29 months). This application must be filed separate from the initial OPT application.
Hours per week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only full-time OPT can be requested; a student must be employed for a minimum average of 20+ hours per week.
Field/Level of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be directly related to and commensurate with the level of the student’s course of study
Offer of Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No offer of employment is required to apply for standard OPT, but the student is expected to work during the OPT EAD validity period. Students on post-completion OPT are limited to a maximum of 90 days of unemployment over the entire year-long OPT period.
Approval Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student must apply to Designated School Official (DSO) for OPT recommendation sufficiently in advance to allow the DSO to update the student’s SEVIS record with the recommendation prior to the 60th day of the grace period after program completion. • Students must apply for and receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), also called the “OPT Card,” from United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) with assistance of DSO before work begins. • The effective date of the OPT card issued by USCIS Service Center will be either, the date employment is scheduled to commence (date reported by DSO recommendation in SEVIS) OR the date an EAD is issued – whichever occurs later. • Student cannot begin employment until the EAD is actually received AND the start date on the EAD card has been reached.
Travel while on OPT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can I reenter the U.S. if my request for OPT is pending? Yes – you may reenter so long as your Form I-20 has not expired HOWEVER you are assuming a risk. • Can I reenter the U.S. if I left while on OPT? If your OPT has been approved and you depart before you get a job, your OPT ends and you cannot reenter. If you have a job you may travel and reenter to resume work at the same job. • The best guidance is for students to have both an EAD for OPT AND a job and/or a job offer letter. If you have these documents you should not experience difficulty reentering the U.S. If either of these two documents are lacking, then the student is assuming some risk.

To Receive OPT Authorization, the Student Must...

1. **Make 2 copies** of:
 - a. **ALL prior Forms I-20** (first and third pages),
 - b. both sides of **I-94 card** and
 - c. **passport** (ID & Visa pages)
2. Have your Academic Adviser complete the “**Adviser’s OPT Recommendation Form**” indicating your current academic status and the expected date of completion of studies.
3. Complete “**Student Acknowledgement of Responsibility**”
4. Complete “**Student Acknowledgement of OPT Eligibility, Understanding, and Dates**” form
5. Complete **Form I-765** (Application for Employment Authorization) *with the assistance of International Education staff* and **make 2 copies**. (Always check <http://www.uscis.gov/i-765> for most current information)
 - a. Mark with the code “(c) (3) (B)” at item 16.
 - b. Be sure that you write your address **EXACTLY** as indicated below:

3. Address in the United States (Number and Street)		(Apt. Number)
44 Pierrepont Ave INTL ED C/O		SUNY
(Town or City)	(State/Country)	(ZIP Code)
Potsdam	NY	13676

6. Write a check, money order or cashier’s check to the order of “**US Department of Homeland Security**” for the I-765 fee of **380 USD** and **make 2 copies**. *Check, money order or cashier’s check must be drawn on a US financial institution – checks or money orders from Canadian institutions will not be accepted.*
7. Obtain **two passport style photos** (see instructions on page 3 of this document). Lightly print your name and your I-94# on the back of each photo with a pencil.
8. If you would like to be notified via text or email when your application has been accepted, fill out **Form G-1145** and **make 2 copies**.
9. **ONCE YOU HAVE COMPLETED STEPS 1 – 8 – You must set up an individual appointment with International Education staff (international@potdam.edu)**. You’ll need to bring all documents and copies listed above to this appointment. This appointment should be made sufficiently in advance of the 60th day of your grace period to allow your SEVIS record to be updated **BEFORE** your grace period ends.

You can download and print all forms from our website:

- a. Go to the International Education & Programs (IEP) web site: www.potsdam.edu/academics/international
- b. Click on “Immigration Information”
- c. Click on “Employment: Optional Practical Training (OPT)”
- d. There are various links (in red) under the heading “OPT Documents”

You can check USCIS Case Status online at: <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>. You must have an Application Receipt Number from USCIS, which will be sent to you via mail shortly after you submit your application to USCIS.

IMPORTANT REMINDER:

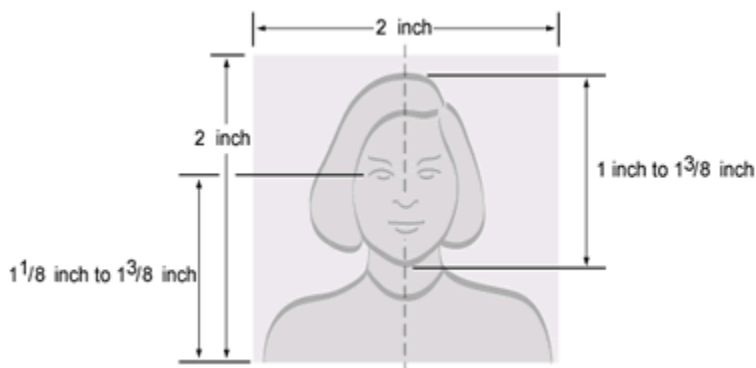
**You may not begin working until you have received your OPT card
AND the start date is reached.**

AFTER YOU HAVE RECEIVED APPROVAL FOR OPT:

- SUNY Potsdam IEP Office will receive your card, and contact you when it is ready to be picked up. If you are no longer on campus, please provide us with the address to which you would like it sent.
- You must keep us informed of your current address while you are on OPT; **notify us within 10 days of address change:** international@potsdam.edu
- You must also notify us of periods of unemployment; **notify us within 10 days of changing employers or when employment ends:** international@potsdam.edu
- You must keep us informed of your employment status while you are on OPT. **You must submit a report every 6 months** listing your:
 - employer's name
 - mailing address
 - telephone number
 - fax number
 - email address
 - start date of employment.

Instructions for photos:

- Please see http://travel.state.gov/passport/guide/composition/composition_874.html for full instructions on photo requirements
- Photo must be taken within 30 days of application
- Frame subject with full face, front view, eyes open
- Make sure photo presents full head from top of hair to bottom of chin; height of head should measure 1 inch to 1 3/8 inch (25 mm to 35 mm)
- Center head within frame
- Make sure eye level is between 1 1/8 inch and 1 3/8 inch (28 mm and 35 mm) from bottom of photo
- Photograph subject against a plain white or off-white background
- Position subject and lighting so that there are no distracting shadows on the face or background
- Encourage subject to have a natural expression



Photos can be taken at the following locations: (call for current prices)

- Walgreens – 173 Market Street, Potsdam 265-6192
- Kinney Drugs – 48 Maple Street, Potsdam 262-0529
- Wal*Mart - 7494 Us Highway 11, Potsdam 268-6928