General Information
Post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a type of work authorization for F1 students. It permits F1 students to gain work experience in their major field of study upon completion of their program. An F1 student is eligible for a maximum of 12 months of OPT per educational level. OPT is a benefit of an F-1 student. It is NOT a type of visa.

NOTE: Students with certain science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees may be eligible for a 17 months extension of their OPT. Please refer to the Factsheet on F-1 OPT Extension for STEM Degree Holders.

Eligibility Requirements
To be eligible for OPT, the F1 student must:
- be in valid F-1 status;
  - have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year
  - currently enrolled as a full-time student or authorized for part-time status
- have applied for graduation through the Office of Admission and Records;
- have passed the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR).

Please note: You do not need a job or a job offer to apply for OPT.

Application Deadline
Definitions:
Program Completion Date- The official last date of the semester. Please refer to CSUDH’s Academic Calendar to verify the official program completion date for each semester/year.
OPT Recommendation Date- The date that the ISS Coordinator entered the OPT recommendation in SEVIS.

The application deadline is determined by a student’s program completion date. Students can apply for OPT as early as 90 days prior to their program completion date, but no later than 60 days after their program completion date.

In addition, USCIS must receive the OPT application within 30 days of the date on which the ISS Coordinator entered the OPT recommendation in SEVIS. Usually, the date that is printed on ITEM #10 of the OPT I-20 is the date that the ISS Coordinator recommended the OPT. (Please verify the OPT Recommendation Date with the advisor at OPT STEP 2.) Students who wish to start working immediately after their program completion date should mail out their application 90 days before their program completion date.

Duration (Start and End Dates) of OPT
An F-1 student is eligible for a maximum of 12 months of OPT per educational level. Students may request an OPT start date as early as the day after their program completion date, but no later than 60 days from their program completion date. Employment authorization will begin on the start date that was requested or on the date the OPT application is approved, whichever is later. If the OPT application is approved, the student will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS via mail. The start and end dates will be printed on the EAD. These dates are the authorized period for OPT. Students may not work before or after the authorized OPT dates.
OPT Application Process
Students interested in applying for OPT are **required to attend an OPT workshop** during their final semester at CSUDH. Workshop dates are listed at the ISS office.

**STEP 1:** Student will drop-off the following documents to ISS:

- **OPT Request Form**
- **Completed Form I-765.** Please download the form at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).
  - This is an online fillable form. Please type your information.
  - Write “OPT” to the right of the “Permission to accept employment” box.
  - Use the eligibility code (c) (3) (B) for item #16
  - Please leave Item #17 blank
  - Sign your name using a BLACK ink pen. Make sure your signature stays in between the signature lines and that it does not touch the lines above or below.
- **COPY of the most recent I-94 Departure Record Card / electronic form** ([https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html))
- **COPY of your Passport Identification Page(s)**
  - Passport page(s) must show your name, photograph, date of birth, passport expiration and/or renewal date.
  - Passport must be valid at least 6 months into the future.
- **Copy of all previously issued OPT/CPT I-20s** if you had OPT or CPT in the past.
  - The student should ask previous schools for copies of I-20 if he/she does not have the originals.
- **Copy of any previously issued EAD(s).**

Please allow 3-5 business days to review and recommend your OPT. An advisor will email you when the OPT I-20 has been issued and is ready for **STEP 2.**

**STEP 2:** The student will return to ISS with following items:

- **2 U.S. Passport-Style photographs with small envelope.**
  - Photos must meet U.S specifications (not taken in home country).
  - The student must write his/her name and I-94 number on back edge of each photo lightly in pen.
- **Check or money order** for $380.00 payable to “Department of Homeland Security”
  - Write “For OPT” on the memo line.
- **Completed Form G-1145** Please download the form at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).
  - When filing Form I-765 at one of the USCIS Lockbox facilities, you may elect to receive an email and/or text message notifying you that your application has been received. You can complete the Form G-1145 and attach it to the first page of your application.

*At STEP 2, the advisor will assemble the application packet and will immediately hand it over to the student. The original OPT I-20 will also be given to the student. Student will keep the original OPT I-20. Do **not** mail the original OPT I-20 to USCIS. The advisor’s responsibilities are limited to reviewing the application packet for accuracy. **The student is required to mail the OPT Application Packet to the appropriate USCIS Lockbox based on the address that is printed on the student’s Form I-765.** For students living in California, please mail your packet to Arizona USCIS Lockbox Facility. For students living outside of California, please refer to the Form I-765 Application Instructions ([www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)) for the appropriate lockbox location.

**Important:** ISS does not require ANY fees for the services it provides to international students. No fees, under any circumstances, shall be submitted to ISS.
**During the OPT Period**
F-1 Students must maintain all of the following requirements while on OPT:

- The student must work in a job that is **directly related to his/her major field of study**.
- Students must work **full-time** (20+ hours per week) during OPT.
- **Types of Employment allowed during the OPT period**
  A. Paid employment
     - Multiple employers
     - Short term employers
     - Short-term multiple employers
     - Work for hire (1099 contract based employment)
     - Self-employed business owner
     - Employment through an agency or consulting firm
  B. Unpaid employment - must not violate any labor laws; must work at least 21 hours per week
     - Volunteer work
     - Unpaid internship

- **Change of U.S. Address**
  - Students who have submitted their application and are changing their address but have not yet received a receipt should contact Customer Service toll-free at 1-800-375-5283.
  - If the student has a receipt, he/she can report the change of address from www.uscis.gov, using USCIS’ Change of Address online. Remember to report the change of address to ISS as well.

- **OPT Reporting Requirements**
  While on OPT, students are responsible for reporting their **U.S. address, company name and address, and any periods of unemployment every six months** to ISS by e-mailing the required updates to iss@csudh.edu.  
  *Warning!* SEVIS records of students who fail to report their information within the required time will be automatically terminated.

- **90 Days Unemployment Rule**
  Effective April 8, 2008, F-1 status is dependent on employment while the student is on OPT. Students may not accrue an aggregate of 90 days of unemployment during their OPT period. Students who accrue more than 90 days of unemployment will be considered out of F1 status. Student must notify their advisor if they are nearing their 90th day of unemployment to discuss their future plans to remain in correct immigration status. Otherwise, students will need to depart the U.S.

**Additional Information**
- The I-20 shows the program completion date on page 1, section 5 (expiration/program end date). ISS will adjust the date to the program completion date when appropriate.
- Students who’s OPT application is pending and fail to complete their program requirements as planned MUST contact their advisor to change the program completion date on the I-20.
- Undergraduate Students who are authorized for OPT, but fail to meet graduation requirements are permitted to work part time only until they complete all graduation requirements. The student can work full time after all graduation requirements have been completed. *(Exception: Undergraduate students can work full time during summer and winter breaks while completing graduation requirements.)*
- Graduate Students who are authorized for OPT, but then fail to meet graduation requirements are permitted to work full time while they complete all graduation requirements.
- Student will contact a advisor if he has not received the EAD within 90 days from the date shown on the I-797 Notice of Action.
- If the student loses a valid EAD, he/she must re-apply to USCIS with all required documents as well as the application fee. The student will contact the ISS Coordinator for current information.
**Travelling Outside the U.S.**
The student must use the new OPT I-20 for all purposes including travel.
Travel risks – Please note that the EAD states “Not valid for re-entry to the United States.” F-1 students must have a valid visa in order to re-enter the U.S.

With a pending OPT application, the student will need:
- A Travel signature – each signature is valid for 6 months at a time
- Valid F-1 visa- students with an expired F1 visa must contact the U.S. Consulate or Embassy in their home country to renew their F1 visa prior to their return to the U.S.
- The I-797 Notice of Action (payment receipt) from USCIS or E-Notification of Application Acceptance

With an approved OPT, the student will need:
- A travel signature – each signature is valid for 6 months at a time
- Valid F-1 visa- students with an expired F1 visa must contact the U.S. Consulate or Embassy in their home country to renew their F1 visa prior to their return to the U.S.
- Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
- An offer of employment or verification of employment on company letterhead

**Options After OPT**
At the end of OPT, the student can select ONE of the following options: (must be done within 60 days of the EAD expiration date).
- Return to home country
- Apply to CSUDH for a higher degree (CSUDH issues a new I-20)
- Transfer out to another school (New school issues a new I-20. **Note:** If the student transfers the SEVIS record to another program prior to the expiration of OPT, he/she will forfeit the remaining period.)
- Change Status within the U.S. (The best option here is to consult with an immigration attorney)

**H-1B Cap Gap Extension**
- Duration of F-1 status and work authorization will be extended for a student on OPT who is the beneficiary of a timely-filed H-1B petition requesting an employment start date of October 1 of the following federal fiscal year (October through September). This would apply to all students on OPT, not just STEM students.
- The student must submit proof of a filed or waitlisted petition and request that the work authorization period be extended accordingly.
- The student must submit a verification of employment on company letterhead. The employment start date and employer address are required.
- The extension of duration of status and work authorization would automatically terminate upon the rejection, denial, or revocation of the H-1B petition filed on the student's behalf.
## Estimate Wait Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student should:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mail OPT Packet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark your calendar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-1145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive an email or text message within 24 hours upon receipt of application from USCIS Lockbox.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified Return Receipt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive Green Postcard within 2-3 weeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notice Receipt (I-797)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive official notification within 3-4 weeks from time of mailing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Case Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track the status of the OPT application after receiving I-797.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPT EAD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive EAD 90 days from date on I-797.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Contact Information:

Liat A. Vorobiev  
International Student Services (ISS) Coordinator  
International Student Services (ISS)  
Ivorobiev@csudh.edu  
(310)243-2892 (Office) / (310)217-6926 (Fax)  
Loker Student Union #110  
California State University Dominguez Hills