

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Instructions

What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

OPT is defined in 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(10)(ii) as "temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student's major area of study."

As a benefit of F-1 visa status, you are permitted, when eligible, to apply for **a total of one year or 365 days** of employment authorization to gain practical training in your field of study (i.e. the major listed on your I-20).

You apply for OPT to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and upon approval, you will be issued an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) which will indicate your approved period of employment authorization. Employment is only authorized for the dates listed on the EAD.

Types of OPT

→ Pre-Completion OPT (c)(3)(A)

Pre-Completion OPT is taken before you have completed your program at Colgate University (prior to graduation). Employment can be paid or unpaid; a job offer is not needed to apply for Pre-Completion OPT.

- **If taken during a fall or spring semester:** you may only work part time (up to 20 hours per week) while maintaining full-time class enrollment. In this case, employment is counted at half of the full-time rate. (If you work part-time for 30 days, it will only count as using 15 days of OPT.)
- **If taken during winter or summer break:** you may work part-time or full-time (more than 20 hours per week).

The amount of time requested for Pre-Completion OPT is counted against the 365 days of allowable OPT, however, the limit on unemployment does not apply to Pre-Completion OPT.



When to Apply

You should apply three months before you plan to begin employment. USCIS processing time is approximately three months.



Requirements

- Must have been enrolled for one full academic year (on the same SEVIS number) prior to application for Pre-Completion OPT.
- Must have declared your major.
- Must be taken prior to your graduation.
- Employment must be directly related to your field of study (the major listed on your I-20).

→ Post-Completion OPT (c)(3)(B)

Post-Completion OPT is taken after you have completed your academic program. At Colgate, your completion date and graduation commencement date are the same. All employment must be full-time (20 hours or more per week) and be directly related to your field of study. Employment can be paid or unpaid. A job offer is not needed to apply for Post-Completion OPT.



Unemployment Restriction

You are allowed to have a total of 90 days of unemployment from the start date of your employment authorization listed on your EAD. Students who exceed the period of unemployment are considered to be in violation of their status unless they begin a new academic program, depart the USA, or take actions to otherwise maintain legal status.



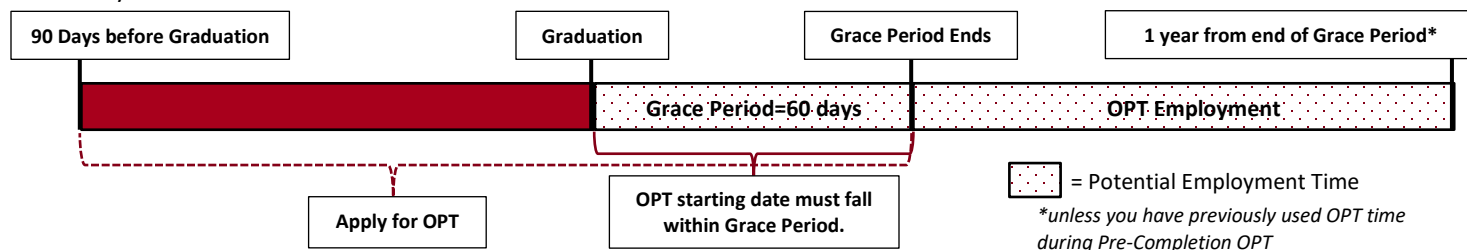
When to Apply

You become eligible to apply for Post-Completion OPT as early as 90 days before commencement and as late as the final day of your grace period (the 60-day period counted from the date of your commencement). It is not, however, recommended to wait until the last minute to apply since your application must be received by USCIS by the last day of your grace period. Also, waiting until the last minute to submit your application will cause you to "lose" some of your OPT time (see below). USCIS processing time is approximately three months.



Choosing Your Post-Completion OPT Dates

Your starting date must fall within your 60-day grace period (the 60-day period counted from the date of your graduation). Your ending date can only be 365 days from your starting date, or, if you had any Pre-Completion OPT, your ending date could only be the amount of OPT time remaining, counted from your starting date. Many students consider their job prospects when choosing a starting date. If you anticipate that unemployment time will be an issue for you, consider selecting a starting date towards the end of your grace period that way your grace period will allow you additional time for your job search before your employment authorization begins and you begin accruing unemployment time. If you have a job offer before you graduate, you may want to consider choosing a starting date towards the beginning of your grace period if you want to start working right away. The ending date of your OPT can never be more than 365 days from your starting date (or remaining OPT time), so if you wait until the end of your grace period to file your OPT application, keep in mind that USCIS processing time is approximately three months. USCIS will not give you a starting date in the past, and will instead give you a starting date of the day your application is adjudicated; your ending date will remain fixed- thus causing you to “lose” OPT time.



Requirements

- Must have been enrolled for one full academic year on the same SEVIS number prior to application for Post-Completion OPT.
- Must have completed your academic program prior to Post-Completion OPT starting date.
- Employment must be directly related to your field of study (the major listed on your I-20).
- Must apply within the proper window of time as listed above.

→ 24-Month STEM Extension of Post-Completion OPT (c)(3)(C), effective on May 10, 2016

Students with a Department of Homeland Security-approved STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) major, who have completed their degree and are currently on Post-Completion OPT are eligible to apply for the 24-Month STEM Extension of Post-Completion OPT (also known as “STEM Extension”). A list of approved STEM majors can be found at <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension>. There is a lifetime limit of two periods of 24-months STEM OPT; each occurring after a higher degree level has been obtained.



Unemployment Restriction

You are allowed to have an aggregate of 150 days of unemployment from the starting date of your employment authorization listed on your EAD for Post-Completion OPT, through the end of the STEM extension. Students who exceed the period of unemployment are considered to be in violation of their status unless they begin a new academic program, depart the USA, or take actions to otherwise maintain legal status.



When to Apply

If you are eligible for a STEM extension, you need to apply up to 90 days before your current EAD expires. You may not apply for a STEM extension after the EAD has expired. If you apply for a STEM extension, you may continue employment up to 180 days past the employment authorization ending date listed on your EAD while your application is pending. USCIS processing time is approximately three months.



Requirements

- Must have completed your degree a STEM-approved major <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension>.
- Have had fewer than 90 days of unemployment while on OPT.
- Must have a job with a company registered in the E-Verify system and employment must be directly related to your major (or second major). See <http://1.usa.gov/QRSA> for more information about E-Verify.
- Must apply within the proper window of time as listed above.

Application Procedure

All students applying for OPT must attend an Employment Authorization Workshop offered by OISS before your OPT application will be processed. Gather all of the documentation listed below and submit it to OISS in the order listed in the checklist. OISS will examine your documents and if everything is complete and in order, will issue you a new I-20 with the OPT recommendation. Your application will be reviewed, assembled, and copied by OISS and you will then be contacted to pick-up your new I-20; your complete application will be given to you to mail to USCIS.

- ☐ **Completed I-765 (Typed)**, Application for Employment Authorization (Download the I-765 at <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>). *Note: Do not complete the online application as it will require that you appear for a biometric appointment in Syracuse!*
 - ☐ For Part 2: List a mailing address that you will be at for at least four months. If you do not have an address to list, you should list the OISS address as: 5.a OISS, 5.b. 13 Oak Drive, 5.d. Hamilton, 5.e. NY, and 5.f. 13346. If you are a graduating senior, do not list your Colgate Box!
 - ☐ If you have Social Security number, you must enter the SSN from your card in Item Number 13.b. If you do not, check "No" for 13.a. and completes item number 14 -17.b.
 - ☐ For item number 27, the code is: (c)(3)(A) for Pre-Completion OPT; (c)(3)(B) for Post-Completion OPT; (c)(3)(C) for STEM Extension
 - ☐ STEM Extension applicants only: provide your degree level and major, your employer's name listed in E-Verify, and E-Verify number in item number 28 - 28.c.
- ☐ **Completed form G-1145**, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance, if you want to receive electronic updates from USCIS about your case. This is optional. <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>
- ☐ **Check or Money Order for \$410** made payable to "US Department of Homeland Security"
- ☐ **Two recent U.S. passport-sized photos**. For details on the requirements go to <http://1.usa.gov/1N6UeZa>.
 - ☐ Lightly write your full name, I-94 number, and date of birth on the back of each photo.
- ☐ **Completed OISS OPT Application Form (Typed)**
- ☐ **Completed Academic Adviser Recommendation Form (Student portion should be typed)**. *(24-Month STEM Extension applicants do not need to complete this form.)*
- ☐ **Copies of all of your previous I-20s you have received since entering the USA ordered from most recent to oldest**
- ☐ **Copy of your I-94 (you may obtain from www.cbp.gov/i94)**
- ☐ **Copy of your visa (not applicable to Canadians)**
- ☐ **Copy of your passport**
- ☐ **Job offer letter (only if you have one)**
- ☐ **Additional documents for STEM Extension applicants only:**
 - ☐ *Original transcript*
 - ☐ *I-983, Training Plan for STEM OPT Students*
 - ☐ *Copy of all previous EADs (both sides)*
 - ☐ *Copy of the USCIS Notice of Approval and notice where the EAD was inserted*
 - ☐ *Copy of your job offer letter from an E-Verify Company*
 - ☐ *If currently employed with an E-Verify company, submit a letter from the company confirming your employment.*

Mailing your Application

You are responsible for mailing your own OPT application. USCIS must receive your OPT application within **30 days** of the date your new I-20 with the OPT recommendation was issued. Your application will be automatically denied if your I-20 was issued more than 30 days from the date it was received by USCIS.

Refer to the I-765 instructions available at 1.usa.gov/3vAiE for the current mailing address. The address you list as your mailing address on your I-765 determines the address to which you should send your application. For example, if you list a New York address as your mailing address on your I-765, you should use the USCIS mailing address for New York residents. It is recommended that you send your application via USPS Certified mail with Delivery Confirmation or via Fed-Ex. If you use Fed-Ex or a different courier service (not USPS), you should use the courier address listed in the I-765 instructions. **Take care to send your application to the correct address as USCIS will return any application sent to the wrong address which will cause significant delays and may possibly make you miss your filing deadline.**

What Happens Next?

Once USCIS receives your properly filed application, they will cash your check or money order and issue you a receipt notice (I-797C) within approximately 30 days. This receipt will contain your case number which you can use to track the status of your case at www.uscis.gov.

The normal processing time for I-765 applications is approximately three (3) months. You should receive a decision on your case, most likely an approval notice (I-797C) and a separate letter containing your EAD by the end of the three month window. If three months from the date listed on your receipt (I-797C) have passed, you should contact the National Customer Service number listed on your receipt to inquire about the status of your case and also contact OISS. You should not call customer services if your case is still within the standard three-month processing time. **Please be advised that OPT applications cannot be expedited.**

Starting Work

You may begin working after you have received the EAD in hand and you are within the authorized employment period listed on the EAD. You should not begin work before you receive the EAD or before your authorized employment period begins as it is a violation of your status. It is advisable to keep a record of your employment including offer letters, pay stubs, and job descriptions.

Reporting Requirements

Remember the 10 Day Rule. All changes must be reported to OISS within 10 days of the change via https://bit.ly/OPT_Reporting*
Failure to report changes is a violation of your immigration status and will result in the termination of your SEVIS record.

- Upon receipt of your EAD, you must submit a copy of both sides of the card to OISS for your file within 10 days.
- If you begin or end employment, you must complete the OPT Reporting Form within 10 days of the change. This information is reported to SEVIS, so it is important to provide timely and accurate information.
- If you move to a new address, you must report your new address using the OPT Reporting Form within 10 days of moving. Your SEVIS record will be updated with this information.
- If you change visa status, you must submit a copy of your new visa or approval notice (I-797C) within ten days of the change so that your SEVIS record may be properly closed.
- If you travel abroad and reenter the USA while on OPT, you should submit a copy of your new I-94 (both sides) to the OISS within 10 days of your return.
- If you depart the USA with no intention of returning to complete your OPT period, you must send a copy of your departure flight information (if applicable) to OISS so that your SEVIS record may be properly closed within 10 days before or after your departure.
- **STEM Extension Applicants:**
 - You must submit the OPT Reporting Form **every six months**, regardless of if there have been any changes. This is called “STEM Validation.” Failure to submit your validation report every six months will result in the automatic termination of your SEVIS record.
 - ***If you are terminated or “depart” from a job, you must notify OISS within 48 hours.**

Travel While on Post-Completion OPT or STEM Extension

Travel on Post-Completion or STEM OPT is not always recommended. If you plan to travel outside of the USA while on Post-Completion OPT or STEM Extension, contact OISS so that your unique situation may be discussed prior to your departure from the USA, whenever possible. In general, after your EAD has been issued, you must be able to present proof of employment (employment verification letter and paystubs) or an official job offer letter to reenter the USA. If your visa has expired, you would also need to renew your F-1 visa in order to reenter the USA. Please be advised that travel signatures while on Post-Completion OPT or STEM extension are valid for only six months.

Starting a New Academic Program/Transferring

Please note that if you decide to transfer from Colgate (if on Pre-Completion OPT) or begin a new academic program such a graduate school while on Post-Completion OPT or STEM Extension, all current OPT employment will end on the date of your SEVIS transfer to the new school regardless of if your EAD is still valid.

Questions

After reading this information, if you have any questions about OPT or would like to discuss your unique situation with OISS, please schedule an appointment by calling 315-228-6131 or email us at oiss@colgate.edu. For more information about OPT regulations, visit the [Practical Training section](#) of the ICE website or the [Training Opportunities in the United States page](#) on Study in the States.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application Form

Please type.

Name: _____
Last First Middle

Colgate ID: _____ **SEVIS Number: N00** _____ **Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy):** _____

Colgate Email: _____ **Class Year:** _____

Non-Colgate Email (*Post-Completion and STEM applicants only*): _____

Best phone number to reach you at: _____

Primary Major : _____

Second Major : _____

List all periods of Curricular Practical Training and/or Optional Practical Training:

OPT / CPT	Start Date: _____	End Date: _____	Part-Time / Full-Time
OPT / CPT	Start Date: _____	End Date: _____	Part-Time / Full-Time
OPT / CPT	Start Date: _____	End Date: _____	Part-Time / Full-Time
OPT / CPT	Start Date: _____	End Date: _____	Part-Time / Full-Time

Which type of OPT are you requesting (*select one*):

_____ Part-time (less than 20 hours per week) Pre-Completion OPT during the winter or summer break.

Dates requested: **Start Date:** _____ **End Date:** _____

_____ Full-time (20 hours or more per week) Pre-Completion OPT during the winter or summer break.

Dates requested: **Start Date:** _____ **End Date:** _____

_____ Part-time (less than 20 hours per week) Pre-Completion OPT during the fall or spring semester.

Dates requested: **Start Date:** _____ **End Date:** _____

_____ Full-time (20 hours or more per week) Post-Completion OPT.

Dates requested: **Start Date:** _____ **End Date:** _____

_____ STEM Extension of Post-Completion OPT.

Dates requested: **Start Date:** _____ **End Date:** _____

Statement of Intent:

Write a brief summary explaining the type of work you plan to do and how it relates to your course of study at Colgate.

Employer information (if available):

Employer Name: _____ Employer EIN number: _____

Employer Address where you will be working: _____

Supervisor Name, Phone number, and Email Address: _____

Job Title and brief description of duties: _____

If you are listing the OISS address as the mailing address on your I-765, do you give OISS permission to open any USCIS letters/documents that arrive to our office on your behalf? If yes, your USCIS mail will be opened and a copy will be made for your file. You will be notified once anything is received. If no, you will be notified when mail from USCIS is received and you will be responsible for submitting a copy of the document to OISS.

_____ Yes

_____ No

_____ I am not listing the OISS address on my I-765.

Additional Comments: _____

Student's Certification:

I have read all of the above information regarding the OPT application process and I understand that I must comply with the OPT regulations to maintain my nonimmigrant status for the duration of my OPT period. I understand that it is my responsibility to timely file my application to the appropriate USCIS address and to include all of the necessary items. I understand that I must report all changes to OISS within 10 days of the change, with the exception of STEM applicants who must report termination or departure from employment within 48 hours. I understand that all employment must be directly related to my field of study and that I should keep a personal record of my employment, including all pay stubs, offer letters, and job descriptions. If I plan to travel outside of the USA while on Post-Completion OPT or STEM Extension, I should contact OISS to discuss my travel plans prior to departing the USA, whenever possible. If I witnesses fraudulent activity by an OPT recruiter or company, I will contact the ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) tip line at 1-866-DHS-2ICE.

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Academic Adviser Recommendation Form

The top portion of this form should be completed by the student (typed) and the bottom portion should be completed by the Academic Adviser. The student should submit the completed form to OISS along with the other items required for the OPT application. (24-Month STEM Extension Applicants do not need to complete this form.)

To Be Completed by the Student:

Student Name: _____ Student ID: _____

Major (OPT must be in this field of study): _____

Statement of Intent:

Write a brief summary explaining the type of work you plan to do and how it relates to your course of study at Colgate.

To Be Completed by the Academic Adviser:

Please confirm the above information and complete the following fields.

Student has completed/will complete all course requirements on/by (MM/DD/YYYY): _____

Student is expected to graduate on (MM/DD/YYYY): _____

To the best of your knowledge, is the type of employment the student has described in the statement of intent directly related to the student's primary major?

____ Yes

____ No

Additional Comments: _____

Academic Adviser Name: _____

Academic Adviser Title: _____

Academic Adviser Phone: _____ Academic Adviser Email: _____

Academic Adviser Signature: _____ Date: _____