

## F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

### What is OPT?

A practical work experience in your field of study, after completion of a degree, for a maximum of one year.

### Who is Eligible?

- Students who are in F-1 status and have been enrolled on a full-time basis for at least 9 months; **and**
- Who will be completing a course of study this trimester or in the near future; **and**
- Whose proposed OPT employment will be directly related to their course of study.

**Please Note: Students who spend the last semester outside of the US and expect to return to apply for OPT will not be eligible unless they were in an approved study abroad program earning credit. ACCHS students who are carrying out field work in their last semester before applying for OPT may not be eligible.**

### Application Procedure:

1. Before you apply for OPT training, consult the Program Administrator to find out if you are eligible. After consulting with your Program Administrator, complete the following:
  - ✓ Submit the F-1 Document Request Form and Student Request Form (pink) requesting OPT.
  - ✓ If you are eligible for OPT, complete I-765 form.
  - ✓ Complete the I-538 (Certification by Designated Official) form.
2. Assemble the following documents:
  - ✓ Photocopy of both sides of your **I-94** card
  - ✓ Photocopy of the picture page/expiration date of your **passport** and **US visa page**
  - ✓ **2** photos taken according to the directions provided. Print name and SEVIS number in pencil on back of each photo
  - ✓ **\$175.00** check or money order made payable to **US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)**.
  - ✓ job offer letter **ONLY IF** you are expediting your OPT
3. Come to the ACCHS office Tues. - Sat. during business hours to process your OPT. ACCHS will provide you with a new I-20 and an envelope for mailing out your application. We recommend certified mail.
4. Checklist for mailing out your application to USCIS:
  - ✓ Complete I-765 form
  - ✓ Photocopy of both sides of your **I-94** card
  - ✓ Photocopy of the picture page/expiration date of your **passport** and **US visa page**
  - ✓ **2** photos taken according to the directions provided. Print name and SEVIS number in pencil on back of each photo
  - ✓ **\$175.00** check or money order made payable to **US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)**.
  - ✓ job offer letter **ONLY IF** you are expediting your OPT
  - ✓ **PHOTOCOPY** of all pages of your new I-20 endorsed for OPT and signed by you. Do not send the original.
5. Generally, within two weeks of sending in your application you will receive a receipt notice. This is proof that you have a process pending with USCIS. The notice of action will contain your LIN number. You can use this number to check your case status on line at <http://uscis.gov/graphics/index.htm> click on Case Status on line. Note: the LIN number will also be printed on the back of your cancelled personal check.

**For your Information:**

- ✓ You **must** have the **Employment Authorization Document/Card (EAD)** to begin OPT and the start date must be valid in order to begin working.
- ✓ EAD will be mailed to the address that you put on the I-765. (**USCIS will not mail your EAD to a P.O. Box.**) The Post Office **WILL NOT FORWARD** mail from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). If you move, your EAD card will be returned to USCIS, and it will be difficult to get it back.
- ✓ Travel outside the US in the period in which your program of study has ended and you have **not yet received** the EAD card is risky. ACCHS recommends that you contact the office for advice if you are no longer enrolled in classes, have not yet received your card and you want to leave the US before beginning OPT. If you do travel once you have your card, ACCHS recommends that you return to resume employment. It is a good idea to carry proof of that employment, interview or job search.
- ✓ USCIS will issue an EAD **approximately 90-120 days**, after receipt of your application unless you are found ineligible. (**USCIS will send you a receipt stating they received your application**). If 90 days have passed and you do not yet have your card, you should contact the ACCHS administration office. You may receive more information regarding an Interim EAD card.
- ✓ You **MUST** submit a photocopy of your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) to ACCHS. BCIS **REQUIRES** that a copy of this document be kept in your file.
- ✓ After graduation while on OPT you are still in F-1 status. Please see the attached **While you are on OPT** to learn about your responsibilities during your practical training year. Also attached is some basic information to help you prepare for employment in the US.

**See attached information for specifications about photographs and carry it with you when you have your photo take so that it is done properly.**

## **While you are on OPT . . . . . you are still considered an F-1 student**

1) Remember to report all address changes to ACCHS via the registrar within 5 days of moving to your new residence. Your address must describe where you live. It cannot be a PO Box or an office address.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT FAILURE TO KEEP YOUR US ADDRESS CURRENT CAN JEOPARDIZE YOUR STAY IN THE US.**

2) Make sure ACCHS has a photocopy of your EAD card on file

3) Before you travel, remember to:

- make sure your passport is valid at least 6 months into the future
- make sure your I-20 has been signed for travel within 6 months. If you need a new travel signature, bring or send your I-20 to ACCHS with a copy of your EAD card
- make sure that your visa stamp is valid. If your visa is not valid for re-entry make preparations to renew your visa while overseas at the US embassy or consulate. Please note: ACCHS cautions F-1 OPT travel if a new visa stamp is needed. Please speak to a DSO before traveling.
- carry your EAD card and proof of employment for the EAD time period with you. Proof of employment can include a letter from your employer, recent pay stubs, or if you have not yet obtained a job, carry proof of an interview or a job search.

4) Remember to depart the United States within the 60 day grace period that follows your last day of OPT. If you plan on changing your status we recommend that you begin this process before your OPT is expired. If you are transferring to another school, make sure to contact ACCHS so that your records may be electronically transferred BEFORE the end of your authorized stay.

PLEASE NOTE: Many international students can go to Mexico or Canada for less than 30 days on an expired US visa. However, if your US visa stamp will be valid upon re-entry to the United States, you should be able to travel to Canada or Mexico without any problem after you obtain any necessary visas to these countries. ACCHS DOES NOT RECOMMEND THIS FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE SUBJECT TO SPECIAL REGISTRATION.

5) If you are subject to Special Registration

- make sure to use official ports of departure to exit the US and leave yourself time at airports and land crossings to complete the exit interview even if traveling to Mexico and Canada.
- make sure to comply with each required visit to BCIS as necessary. **You will receive instructions at the port of entry if additional visits are needed.**

6) Please check the ACCHS web site or call for immigration updates.

