OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING TUTORIAL

Kent State University
International Student and Scholar Services
330.672.7980
isss@kent.edu
Optional Practical Training Tutorial

• It is your responsibility to understand all of the details and requirements of your immigration status.

• Read this entire tutorial carefully in order to completely understand the timelines, eligibility, procedures, and requirements.

• If, after reading this tutorial, you have questions, ask an ISSS Advisor by emailing isss@kent.edu or during walk in advising.

• Do NOT send multiple emails to multiple advisors regarding the same question.
What is Employment

- Employment is any type of work performed or service provided in exchange for money, tuition, or other benefits.
- Remuneration is not required when you are employed on OPT.
- Unpaid internships and volunteer work count as employment for OPT.
What is OPT

• Optional Practical Training is a benefit of F-1 status, for which international students may apply.

• U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) authorizes OPT for 12 months of employment, so that F-1 students have the opportunity to gain practical experience directly related to a completed program of study.
Types of OPT

- **Pre-Completion OPT:** Takes place during your program

- **Post-Completion OPT:** Takes place after you complete your course work
  - This is the most popular option for F-1 international students

- **STEM Extension:** An extension of 24 months is available for certain STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) degree recipients
Post Completion OPT

• This permits you to engage in a practical work experience AFTER you complete your course work

• You must work full time
  • Full time is 21 hours and more per week

• You may apply for one 12-month OPT Authorization per level (Bachelors, Masters, PhD)
  • STEM Extensions may be granted for certain STEM degrees for an additional 24 months
Post-Completion OPT Eligibility

You are eligible for OPT if you:

• Maintained F-1 Status for at least 1 academic year (two academic semesters and summer does not count)
• Are a degree seeking student (non Language Training)
• Completed ALL required coursework for your program
• Completed fewer than 365 days of Full Time CPT if you participated in CPT
• You do NOT need a job offer prior to OPT application
APPLICATION PROCESS & TIMELINE
Understanding the OPT Application Window

• You have a **150 day window** to apply for OPT
• You can start to apply **90 days before** your program end date and up to **60 days after** your program end date on your I-20.
Understanding the OPT Application Window (Graduate Students)

• Doctorate and Master’s level students do not need to graduate in order to apply for OPT.
• You can apply for OPT while working on Dissertation or Thesis as long as you have completed your required course work.
• Graduate students are encouraged to speak to an ISSS advisor to decide OPT application timeline.
• Once your OPT is approved, you will only have until the expiration of your OPT period to remain in the United States.
2 Step Process

• **STEP 1:** You must first request a new I-20 with OPT recommendation from ISSS

THEN

• **STEP 2:** You must submit your application including your new OPT I-20 to USCIS
Application Step 1 – Selecting a Start Date

• When you request your I-20 from ISSS, you will need to identify a valid OPT Start Date.

• Your start date MUST fall within the 60 day grace period following your program end date.
  • Once you have selected your OPT start date, it is very difficult to change and impossible to switch once you have submitted your application to USCIS.
  • If USCIS cannot process your request by the start date, a later date may be issued.

• Waiting to submit your application later in your grace period, may result in less than a full year of OPT.
Application Step 1 – Selecting a Start Date

• **Students on Thesis or Dissertation:**
  • You have more flexibility of when you apply for OPT
  • As long as you have completed all program requirements excluding thesis or dissertation, you may apply for OPT
  • Once you apply for OPT, your program end date will be adjusted to reflect the end of your program
  • We will not be able to extend your program after this happens; therefore, you must prepare to complete all work related to your thesis or dissertation by the end of your authorized OPT period
Application Step 1 – Preparing Your Documents

• In order to submit your request through ISSS, you will need the following documents:
  • Copy of Passport page
  • Copy of most recent U.S. Visa
  • Copy of your most recent I-94
  • Completed Form I-765
  • 2 passport photos taken within last 30 days (with I-94 number written in pencil on the back)
  • An original check or money order for $410 made out to U.S. Department of Homeland Security
  • Any previous EAD cards
Application Step 1 – Getting Your I-94

• Please use the link below to get your most recent I-94

  • https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home
    • You can find this link by googling “get my most recent I-94”

• Please note—Your travel history is not your I-94
Application Step 1 – Completing Form I-765

Check the box marked “Permission to accept employment” above Question 1.

**Question 1.** Write your family name first, followed by your given name.

**Question 3.** You must write the address where you would like your EAD card mailed. If you are moving soon or have trouble receiving mail, you may use the Office of Global Education address. Use “106 Van Campen Hall” and write “OGE” in the (Apt. Number) field. Then type “Kent, OH 44242” in the appropriate fields.

**Question 5.** You must write the name of the city where you were born, followed by the state or province, if any, and lastly the name of your birth country.

**Question 9.** If you have an SSN card, select “yes” and fill in the number. Skip to question 14.

**Question 10.** If you would like to simultaneously apply for your SSN with your EAD, then select “yes” for Question 10 AND Question 11. Then fill in questions 12.a. – 13.b.
Application Step 1 – Completing Form I-765

Question 14. Fill in the number from your I-94.

Question 15. Select “no”

Question 17. This is the airport where you went through U.S. customs and were admitted to the United States, even if you had another connecting flight afterward. You can check your travel history from the I-94 website -- https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home

If you drove across the U.S. border, list the U.S. port of entry.

Question 18. If you entered the U.S. in F-1 status, write “F1 Student.” If not, write the appropriate status in which you entered the country.

Question 19. If you entered the U.S. in F-1 status, write “Student.”

Question 20. (c)(3)(B) – this must be exactly as it appears. Lower case “c” and uppercase “B”

Sign your name in the “Certification” area and type your telephone number and the date you completed the form.
I am applying for:

- ☑️ Permission to accept employment.
- ☐ Replacement (of lost employment authorization document).
- ☐ Renewal of my permission to accept employment (attach a copy of your previous employment authorization document).

1. Full Name
   - Family Name: Brooker
   - First Name: Meggie

2. Other Names Used (include Maiden Name)
   - Family Name
   - First Name
   - Middle Name

3. U.S. Mailing Address
   - Street Number and Name: 106 Van Campen Hall
   - Apt. Number: OGE
   - Town or City: Kent
   - State: OH
   - ZIP Code: 44242

4. Country of Citizenship or Nationality: United States

5. Place of Birth
   - Town or City: Kent
   - State/Province: OH
   - Country: USA

6. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 01/01/1997

7. Gender
   - Male
   - Female

8. Marital Status
   - Single
   - Married
   - Divorced
   - Widowed

9. a. Has the Social Security Administration (SSA) ever officially issued a Social Security card to you?
   - Yes
   - No

   NOTE: If you answered “Yes” to Item Number 9.a., provide the information requested in Item Number 9.b.

9. b. Provide your Social Security number (SSN) (if known)

10. Do you want the SSA to issue you a Social Security card?
    (You must also answer “Yes” to Item Number 11., Consent for Disclosure, to receive a card.)
    - Yes
    - No

   NOTE: If you answered “No” to Item Number 10., skip to Item Number 14. If you answered “Yes” to Item Number 10., you must also answer “Yes” to Item Number 11.

11. Consent for Disclosure: I authorize disclosure of information from this application to the SSA as required for the purpose of assigning me an SSN and issuing me a Social Security card.
    - Yes
    - No

   NOTE: If you answered “Yes” to Item Numbers 10. - 11., provide the information requested in Item Numbers 12.a. - 13.b.

Father’s Name
- Family Name: Brooker
- Given Name (First Name): Flash
**C** 3  B

20. Eligibility Category. Go to the Who May File Form I-765? section of the Instructions. In the space below, place the letter and number of the eligibility category you selected from the instructions. For example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii), etc.

22. (c)(26) Eligibility Category. If you entered the eligibility category (c)(26) in Item Number 20. above, please provide the receipt number of your H-1B principal spouse's most recent Form I-797 Notice of Approval for Form I-129.

23. (c)(35) and (c)(36) Eligibility Category
   a. If you entered the eligibility category (c)(35) or (c)(36) in Item Number 20. above, please provide the receipt number of the Form I-140 beneficiary's Form I-797 Notice of Approval for Form I-140.

   b. Have you EVER been arrested for and/or convicted of any crime?  □ Yes □ No

   NOTE: If you answered "Yes" to Item Number 23.b., refer to Item Number 5., Item H., or Item I. in the Who May File Form I-765 section of these Instructions for information about providing court dispositions.

Certification

I certify, under penalty of perjury, that the foregoing is true and correct. Furthermore, I authorize the release of any information that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services needs to determine eligibility for the benefit I am seeking. I have read the Who May File Form I-765 section of the Instructions and have identified the appropriate eligibility category in Item Number 20.

Applicant's Signature

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy)  

Telephone Number  

Signature of Person Preparing Form, If Other Than Applicant

I declare that this document was prepared by me at the request of the applicant and contains the best knowledge and belief of the person preparing the same.
Application Step 1 – Writing the Check

• This is the correct way to fill out a check to USCIS:

  US Department of Homeland Security
  $410.00
  Four hundred ten dollars and 00/100

  Your Signature

• DO NOT WRITE OR SIGN ON BACK OF CHECK
Application Step 1– Money Orders

• Money Orders are just as effective as checks
• Be sure to keep your receipt—just in case
Application Step 1– Passport Photos

• These can be taken at a local business such as CVS, Walgreens, or other businesses with photo centers. Let them know that you need 2 passport photos

• The photos must be identical and taken within the past 30 days

• We do not recommend taking your own photos to submit as part of your application.

• Write your I-94 number on the back of each photo in pencil
Application Step 1– Submit your Request to ISSS

• You **MUST** have your new I-20 with OPT recommendation from the ISSS office to submit as part of your application to USCIS.

• Submit the OPT I-20 Request Form
  • Found under the Guides and Forms section of the ISSS website ([www.kent.edu/isss](http://www.kent.edu/isss))
  • Please scan all documents into 1 pdf document
    • The library can assist you with this if you need help
Application Step 1

• Once you have submitted your request through the ISSS website, an advisor will review your application.

• Please allow up to 10 business days for processing your request. Do NOT email or call prior to 10 business days—this will delay your processing.

• An advisor will send an email to communicate:
  • If more information is required OR
  • When your new I-20 is ready for pick up
Application Step 2—Submitting Your OPT Application

• Once you have picked up your new I-20 from the OGE, REVIEW the information on your I-20

• In most cases, it should be as below:
  • On page 2 of your I-20 in the Employment Authorization Box check for the following:
    • Type = “Post-Completion OPT”
    • Full/Part Time = “Full Time”
    • Status = “Requested”
    • Start Date = Your Requested Start Date
    • End Date = 1 Year After Your Requested Start Date

• Remember! You are 100% responsible for your OPT application
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<td>FULL/PART-TIME</td>
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**CHANGE OF STATUS/CAP-GAP EXTENSION**

**AUTHORIZED DROP BELOW FULL COURSE OF STUDY**

**TRAVEL ENDORSEMENT**

This page when properly endorsed, may be used for reentry of the student to attend the same school after a temporary absence from the United States. Each certification signature is valid for one year.

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Application Step 2– Submitting Your OPT Application

- You will receive an OPT Checklist with your new I-20 for your convenience

- Ensure that all required materials are in your packet/envelope and all forms completed accurately

- USCIS MUST receive your application within 30 days of your new I-20 being created

- Mailing instructions are included on your OPT Checklist
  - We highly recommend you select the tracking option for your packages
Application Step 2– Submitting Your OPT Application

• USCIS has a low tolerance for application mistakes

• Please double check all of the documents that you are sending in your application

• Your application is 100% your responsibility
  • We will do our best to assist you as much as possible
Understanding USCIS and Processing Times

• Once USCIS has received your application– it will take approximately **90 days** for your application to be processed.

• Currently, there is no process in place to have your application expedited prior to **90 days** (even if you have a job offer already).

• Checking the status of your application– use the following website with your receipt number:
  - [https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do](https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do)
Understanding USCIS and Processing Times

After 90 days

• If you have not received a response from USCIS after 90 days, please email isss@kent.edu for further assistance

• Be prepared to include your receipt number and information in the email (Form I-797C)
Understanding USCIS and Processing Times

Travelling with Pending OPT Application:

We do **NOT** recommend that you travel outside of the U.S. with a pending OPT application.

- When your OPT application is PENDING (meaning you have mailed your application but have not received an EAD card), you may travel outside the United States and you may return **before** the program end date on your I-20.

- If your OPT is APPROVED, you must present the EAD card and a job offer letter at the U.S. port of entry. If you do not have these documents, there is a greater risk you will be denied re-entry.
Next Steps
Finding a Job

• Your next step is to find a job.

• **Unpaid internships and volunteer work count as employment for OPT**

• There are many places that you can search for jobs that will hire international students.

• We recommend that you begin with the Career Exploration and Development Office
  • [https://www.kent.edu/career](https://www.kent.edu/career)
  • Look for career fairs and online tools for job searches
  • Did you know the Career Exploration and Development Office is in OGE on Thursday 10:00 am. – 12:00 p.m.
    • [https://www.kent.edu/career/appointmentsdrop-ins](https://www.kent.edu/career/appointmentsdrop-ins)
**Finding a Job**

Remember your job must meet the following requirements for Post-Completion OPT

- **Any employment, internship, or other practical training experience you accept while on OPT** must be **directly related to your major field of study**.
  - For example, a computer science major must work, volunteer, or intern in a position directly related to computer science.

- **You must work** **Full Time (21 hours/week or more)** if you are on Post-Completion OPT
  - You can have more than 1 job that adds up to 21 hours/week or more. Both must be directly related to your major.
Authorized Unemployment

• You are not required to have a job at the time of application for OPT

• All F-1 students granted OPT, are authorized to have **90 days** of unemployment during the entire length of approved OPT.
  • Day 1 is the start day on your EAD card
  • This includes any period between jobs
  • Avoid using all 90 days at the beginning of your OPT period

• **You are responsible for calculating and tracking your authorized unemployment days.**
Starting Work

• **You may not start working** until you have physically received your EAD card **AND** the start date has arrived or passed.

• You are allowed to interview, accept a position, and complete any paperwork before you have an EAD card, but you may not actually report to work until you have the EAD card.

• Your EAD card will be sent to the mailing address indicated on your Form I-765.
Responsibilities on OPT – Reporting Work

- You are responsible for reporting all Employer Information to ISSS

- You should complete the “OPT Employer Information Form” every time you begin, quit, or change jobs
  - This form can be located on the ISSS website under the OPT Guides and Forms
  - [https://www.kent.edu/globaleducation/optional-practical-training-opt](https://www.kent.edu/globaleducation/optional-practical-training-opt)

- You must submit all reports within 10 days of the change
Responsibilities on OPT – Address Updates

• You are responsible for reporting all changes in your address

• If you move, please update your address through Flashline within 10 days of the move
  • Update your “local” address
  • http://www.kent.edu/globaleducation/how-update-addresses-flashline-2016
Responsibilities on OPT – Travelling on OPT

• After your OPT has been approved AND you have begun working you will need the following with you when travelling:
  • Passport
  • Visa
  • I-20 with travel signature—travel signatures on OPT are valid for up to **6 months**
  • EAD Card
  • Offer Letter from Employer
  • Any recent pay stubs (optional but highly recommended)
Troubleshooting
I didn’t Graduate. Now What?

• Contact ISSS immediately – you may come to the next walk-in advising OR email isss@kent.edu

• If your application was approved by USCIS and you received your EAD, you can begin OPT part-time (max 20 hours per week) until you complete the course or capstone.

• If your application is still pending, you need to contact USCIS and withdraw your application. You can reapply 90 days before your new program end date.
Thank you for completing the OPT Tutorial!