

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR STUDENTS IN F-1 STATUS

DEFINITION OF OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

USCIS defines Optional Practical Training as an employment opportunity available to an F-1 student who has been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year.

At SLCC you are eligible for OPT after graduation:

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) ELIGIBILITY AND CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

Participation in part-time CPT does not affect your eligibility for Optional Practical Training.

JOB ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be considered for Optional Practical Training, the work must be directly related to your major field of study and it must be appropriate for someone with your level of education (A.A., A.S., or A.A.S.). Students graduating in General Studies do not qualify for OPT. You do not need to have a specific job offer to apply for Optional Practical Training but be aware that you cannot recover portions of the Optional Practical Training period that you may have spent searching for employment. For example, if you were to spend two months out of your allowed 12 months of OPT unemployed; you will only be able to work for the remaining 10 months. The work may be full-time or part-time, and may occur anywhere in the United States. Also, you have an aggregate of 90 days unemployment; after this date your OPT will be terminated and you will have lost any remaining time.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible to apply for OPT, you must have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis in a Service-approved college, university, conservatory, or seminary for one full academic year, and you must submit your application up to **90 days** prior to your program completion. **Be sure to see an academic advisor for a “degree audit” to make sure that you have completed all requirements for graduation.** Also, be aware that you must apply for graduation the semester before you are scheduled to graduate.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

The following deadlines are recommended if you are applying for Optional Practical Training:

Graduation in December (Fall Semester): by the first week of October
Graduation in May (Spring Semester): by the first week of February
Graduation in August (Summer Term): by the first week of July

HOW TO APPLY FOR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

To obtain the **International Student Advisor** endorsement for Optional Practical Training, you should submit the following documents for processing:

1. Letter from academic/department advisor recommending employment and stating graduating semester.
2. Receipt from graduation office showing you have applied for graduation from the College.
3. Complete form I-765 Form: Mark (c) (3) (B) for item #16 – For Post Completion OPT. More information available at: www.uscis.gov
 - a. You may also e-file at: <http://www.uscis.gov/e-filing-i-765>
4. Copies of all previous I-20s
5. Copy of passport, and visa. (Copy of driver's license if you have one.)
6. I-94 card (copy of front & back) You may print out a copy at: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/request.html>
7. Two identical color photos (see below for instructions)
 - a. **PHOTO SPECIFICATIONS**
 - b. Photos must be taken no earlier than 30 days before submission to USCIS.
 - c. They should be un-mounted, printed on thin paper, glossy, and un-retouched.
 - d. They should show a full color frontal view (head facing camera).
 - e. Head should be bare unless a headdress is required by a religious order.
 - f. The photo should not be larger than 2 X 2 inches, with the distance from the top of the head to just below the chin about 1 1/4 inches.
 - g. Your name and admission number must be printed on the back of each photo.
8. Money order for \$410 (payable to: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services)
9. Upon receipt of all of the above documents, the International Student Advisor will evaluate your eligibility. If you qualify for Optional Practical Training (OPT), the necessary documents will be prepared as quickly as possible. If approved, the OPT Endorsement will be added to your new SEVIS I-20. The student will mail, or e-file, the documents to the USCIS Service Center. Please show your I-20 and other pertinent documents to your employer, as they should make copies for their files.
10. After you receive your approval for OPT you will need to submit the following information to our office each time there is a change in your employment.

1. Employer's Name
2. Employer's EIN
3. Employee's Job Title
4. Employee's Start Date
5. Employee's End Date
6. Full or Part Time Employment
7. Employer's Address
8. Supervisor's Name
9. Supervisor's Phone
10. Supervisor's email

All Opt Application documents are sent to:

Mailing Addresses for I-765

USCIS Phoenix Lockbox

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:

USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For Express mail and courier deliveries:

USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034

USCIS will authorize OPT employment and issue an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). The student may not begin Optional Practical Training **until the date indicated on his or her EAD card**. An F-1 student authorized to engage in practical training is required to report any change of name or address, or disruption of such employment to the International Student Advisor within 10 days for the duration of the authorized training.

EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION

When you begin work, you and your employer must complete a form entitled "Employment Eligibility Verification" (Form I-9), which the employer retains. Your employer should also make a copy of your SEVIS I-20 and EAD card. If you do not already

have a Social Security number you must obtain a written offer of employment and apply for a Social Security number. It usually takes 3-4 weeks to get the number.

TERMINATION OF PRACTICAL TRAINING

Authorization to engage in practical training employment is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school, begins study at another educational level, or has an aggregate of 90 days of unemployment.

TAX CONCERNS

All international students are required to file a tax return. Your earnings are subject to applicable federal, state and local taxes. Students must file a tax return on or before April 15 of each year. Students may be entitled to a refund of taxes withheld from their wages if the amount of tax owed is less than the amount withheld.

TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE U.S. DURING OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

An F-1 student who has a valid EAD for OPT and a valid F-1 visa may travel and return to the United States to resume employment after a temporary (less than five months) absence. The student must have the Form I-20 signed for travel within the last six months, present an unexpired EAD, and be returning to resume employment.

A NOTE OF CAUTION

While USCIS regulations provide a variety of opportunities for you to be employed during your time in F-1 status, working improperly or without authorization is a serious violation of your status. You should therefore consult with the **International Student Advisor** before taking up any employment. It is your responsibility to comply with all USCIS regulations that apply to F-1 students.

International Student Services provides advising and counseling regarding your employment responsibilities. If you fail to comply, you may not be eligible for benefits normally granted to F-1 students.