

Office of International Programs
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Bryn Mawr, PA 19101-2899
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OPT APPLICATION

TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT:

Name: _____
(First) (Last)

Degree Program (circle one): Bachelor's Master's Doctorate

Primary Major: _____ Secondary Major: _____

Minor: _____

I request to apply for Optional Practical Training. Please circle:

- Pre-Completion OPT Part-time
- Pre-Completion OPT Full Time
- Post-Completion OPT

Start Date: ____/____/____ End Date: ____/____/____
(Month/Day/Year) (Month/Day/Year)

If you received OPT authorization from USCIS for your CURRENT education level, indicate the approval date and the start and end dates on your EAD(s):

_____/_____
(Month/Day/Year) (Month/Day/Year)

Describe your proposed employment and explain how it relates to your major: DO NOT SAY: "Seeking an entry level position that is appropriate for my skills and experience"

Under the regulations of Department of Homeland Security effective April 8, 2008 (8 CFR Part 214.2 f(12)(i)), all F-1 students authorized by USCIS to engage in OPT are required to report to SEVIS the information listed below

- Any legal change of name
- Change of address
- Employer's name and address for the duration of OPT
- Interruption of such employment for the duration of OPT

I acknowledge that I understand the reporting requirements in the above-stated provision of law. In order to maintain timely compliance, I agree that, while I am on OPT, I will report the above information to the Office of International Programs via email at oiip@brynmawr.edu. I also understand that OIP is required, by law, to update the reported information on my SEVIS record.

Signature of Student: _____ Today's Date: ____/____/____
(Month / Day / Year)

Optional Practical Training

As a student in F-1 status, you are entitled to 12, and in some special circumstances, 29 months of optional practical training (see page 3). You may obtain authorization for optional practical training either before or after completion of a course of study, and all authorized practical training will be counted toward your 12-month limit. If you seek a higher degree, you will be eligible for another 12-month of optional practical training.

Please note that optional practical training requires authorization from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS)/Vermont Service Center, which typically takes about three months—sometimes longer to obtain. Keep in mind that it is illegal to begin to work in anticipation of being granted permission to do so; you must first have permission.

Working without the proper authorization is a serious violation of your student status. If you fail to comply with your responsibilities, you may not be eligible for benefits normally granted to F-1 students and, in some situations, may be subject to deportation. Therefore you should consult with the Office of International Programs prior to accepting any employment in the U.S.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for optional practical training you must:

1. Have been in student status for at least one academic year;
2. Currently maintain a full-time program of study and valid F-1 status; and
3. Intend to work in a job directly related to your major area of study.

Available Time Periods

If you meet the above eligibility requirements, you may have optional practical training (OPT) authorized in any of the following periods:

- During annual vacation and other times when school is not in session, if you intend to register for the next semester
- While school is in session, provided training does not exceed 20 hours per week
- After completion of all course requirements for the degree (excluding thesis or equivalent)
- After completion of the course of study; must be completed within 14-month period following the completion of study

You do not have to have a job offer to receive practical training authorization. In most cases, however, you might not want to apply without a job offer or firm job prospect because periods of optional practical training cannot be rescinded once the period requested has begun. If you have requested a period of optional practical training but do not work, that period is still deducted from your 12-month total.

Timing of Application

For pre-completion OPT, you may file an I-765 with USCIS up to **120** days before the proposed OPT date if you have completed a full academic year. For post-completion OPT, you may file your application with USCIS up to **90** days before program completion date.

Once your OPT application is submitted, there is nothing the Office of International Programs can do to help expedite the process. Thus it is a good idea to plan ahead as you cannot begin to work until you receive your Employment Authorization Document.

Application Procedures

To apply for Optional Practical Training, please bring the following items to the Office of International Programs:

1. A letter or an e-mail from your dean or academic adviser stating the following:

YOUR NAME is a student in good standing and is maintaining a full-time program of study, which she expects to complete in MONTH/YEAR. I recommend that YOUR NAME be granted practical training for PERIOD [exact or approximate dates, e.g., 'summer '2010) for employment related to her studies in YOUR MAJOR FIELD.

2. Locate Form I-765 at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf>. Complete and print. If you are applying for **pre-completion** optional practical training, put down the code **(c)(3)(A)** on item 16 of the I-765 form. For **post-completion** optional practical training, the code is **(c)(3)(B)**.
3. Two identical color passport photographs (<http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765instr.pdf>) Photographs may be taken at the Rite Aid Drug Store at 701 Lancaster Avenue in Bryn Mawr (Phone: 610-527-3603). You should print your name and SEVIS ID # lightly in pencil on the back of the two photographs. .
4. All previously issued and current Form I-20s (OIP will issue you a new I-20 for practical training and make a copy for your application to the Texas Service Center)
5. A personal check of \$380 payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security” or “USDHS”
6. A photocopy of the front and back of your I-94 card (white card, usually stapled in your passport)
7. A photocopy of your passport information page (and the page including your photograph, if different)
8. A photocopy of the visa page in your passport (except Canadian citizens, who have no visa)
9. If you have had a previous period of Optional Practical Training, a photocopy of your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) authorizing your previous practical training
10. If you would like to receive an email or text message notifying you of receipt of your application to the Texas Service Center, complete Form G-1145 at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf>

After reviewing these documents to confirm your eligibility, the Office of International Programs will update your information in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and process a new Form I-20 recommending the requested period of part-time or full-time optional practical training. You then submit your application by mail to the Texas Service Center for processing. You will receive a Notice of Action (receipt) with your case number. You can then track your case on-line at <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard.do>

If your case is approved, you will receive an Employment Authorization Document.

Please note that the post-completion optional practical training application must be received by the Texas Service Center no later than 60 days after commencement. **This is an absolute deadline; the Texas Service Center will not grant any extensions.** After this deadline you are ineligible to submit an Optional Practical Training application to OIP and/or the Texas Service Center and must leave the country. To avoid possible deadline problems and delays in processing time, you should submit your post-completion optional practical training application well in advance.

Reporting Requirements

Please note that while you are on post-completion optional practical training, you must report the following events to the Office of International Programs **within 10 days**:

- A change in residential or mailing address
- Legal name changes
- Changes in employer, giving the employer name and employer address
- Loss of employment

In addition, you must send a validation report every six months to the Office of International Programs at oiip@brynmawr.edu. The report must include:

- Your name
- SEVIS identification number
- Current mailing and residential address
- Name and address of current employer
- Date you began working for the current employer

Cancellation of Optional Practical Training

If you apply for post-completion OPT before your program end date and subsequently fail to complete the requirements for your program, please contact the Office of International Programs immediately.

Once your authorized practical training application has been adjudicated, Vermont Service Center will not cancel any authorized period. Inability to find an appropriate job or loss of a job does not allow you to take back or adjust a practical training authorization.

Cap-Gap Relief for Students with Pending H-1B Petitions

Many employers file H-1B Temporary Professional Worker petitions on behalf of students in post-completion OPT after it expires. Due to the cap on the number of H-1B petitions accepted in a given federal fiscal year (October 1 to September 30), you will have to stop working and/or depart the U.S. until your employer's H-1B petition is approved. This period is known as the "cap gap".

However, if your employer files a timely H-1B Temporary Professional Worker Status petition for you, your F-1 post-completion OPT is automatically extended to bridge the gap between the end of F-1 status and start of H-1B status. If your employer's H-1B petition is denied or withdrawn, your employment authorization ends 10 days after the date of the withdrawal or denial and you will have a 60-day grace period to leave the country or take other steps to maintain status.

17-month STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math) Extension of Optional Practical Training

To be eligible for an additional 17-month extension of OPT, you must:

1. Complete a degree with the following majors: Astronomy (H), Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Geology, Mathematics, or Physics
2. Work or have a job offer from an employer enrolled in E-Verify program at least 20 hours per week

If you are eligible for the 17-month STEM extension, please follow the procedures outlined in the **Application Procedures** section in Page 2. In addition, please bring either a copy of your unofficial transcript or diploma showing the level and program of study.

Limits on Periods of Unemployment

Students on post-completion OPT may have up to **90** days of unemployment. If you receive a 17-month STEM OPT extension, you are permitted another 30 days of unemployment for a total 120 days over your entire post-completion OPT period.

Exceeding the period of unemployment while on post-completion OPT is considered a violation of your F-1 student status.

Travel Abroad While on Post-Completion Practical Training

If you are on post-completion practical training and travel abroad with the intention of reentering the U.S. in F-1 status, you must have **all** of the following:

1. a valid passport,
2. a valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport,
3. your original Form I-20 endorsed for reentry by the Office of International Programs within the last six months,
4. your original practical training Employment Authorization Document issued by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services,
5. proof that you have a job in the U.S. appropriate for practical training (such as a letter from your employer describing your job).

If you do not have all of these documents you should not travel abroad without first consulting with the Office of International Programs. An expired F-1 visa poses a particular problem; it may be difficult or impossible to renew your F-1 visa while you are on practical training.

Taxes

In general, F-1 students who have been in the U.S. in less than five years are exempt from social security (FICA) and Medicare taxes. You should be sure to bring this to the attention of your employer because many employers are not familiar with this provision of the tax laws. If you need more information about the F-1 social security and Medicare tax exemption, please see Internal Revenue Service Publication 519 U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens (available for downloading at <http://www.irs.gov/>).

Students in F-1 status are subject to all other taxes that may apply: federal, state and local (but check Publication 901 U.S. Tax Treaties to see if your country is one of the few that has a tax treaty with the U.S. allowing students to exclude a limited amount of earned income from federal taxation (available for downloading at <http://www.irs.gov/>). Also, you may be able to treat a period of post-completion practical training as an extended business trip and substantially reduce your federal taxes by deducting "travel expenses" (amounts for housing, transportation and a per diem food allowance) from your income. Consult with an accountant or tax attorney to see if you can deduct travel expenses in your circumstances.

