

NORTH PARK UNIVERSITY POST-COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) INFORMATION SHEET

This information sheet is for F-1 students who wish to apply for one year of Optional Practical Training after graduating from North Park. OPT allows a student to seek work in a position which is **directly related to her or his major area of study**. A total of 12 months of full-time OPT is available after completing each academic level.

Applying for OPT

- To apply for OPT, please make an appointment with an International Office staff member. Bring the following documents with you to the appointment:
 - The attached Authorization for Optional Practical Training sheet signed by your academic advisor. The program completion date must be an exact date (month/day/year), but it might not be the same date as your graduation date.
 - Two copies of the attached Acknowledgment form completed and signed by you.
 - Valid passport and I-94 form (small white card stapled into the passport).
 - Completed Application for Employment Authorization (Form I-765) and all supporting documents (see the “Submitting your OPT application” section, below)
- During your OPT appointment
 - An International Office staff member will prepare an I-20 form for you to submit with the OPT application.
 - Your passport photo page and I-94 form will be photocopied and returned to you.
 - Please let us know if you engaged in CPT, because this information must be reported on your application. **Failure to include CPT information on form I-765 may result in a delay in issuing your EAD card.**
 - The International Office staff member will go over the document checklist with you to ensure that all documents are correct, signed, and included in the OPT application package. **You are responsible for sending the OPT application** to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (see below).

Submitting your OPT application

You may apply for post-completion OPT no sooner than 90 days before and no later than 60 days following the program end date printed on your I-20 form. You must file the OPT application within 30 days of the date when an International Office staff member recommends OPT in SEVIS.

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAIL THE OPT APPLICATION TO USCIS. It is our strong recommendation that you use send the OPT application by Certified Mail, so you will receive a receipt of delivery to USCIS. Use the following address when sending by US Postal Service:

USCIS
P. O. Box 21281
Phoenix AZ 85036

Be sure to include the following documents in the envelope you send to USCIS:

1. The **SEVIS I-20** that was prepared for your OPT, signed in blue ink by you on page 1 and by an International Office staff member on pages 1 and 3.
2. **Form I-765**, signed by you in blue ink, showing an address where you can receive mail for the next 4 months, telephone number, and today's date. If you do not know where you will be living for the next four months, you may list the International Office as your mailing address.
 - Download this form from <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf>
 - If possible, type the form I-765 online and print it so the optical scanner will recognize all characters. At item #16, write **(c) (3) (B)** for post-completion OPT.
 - **Sign the form I-765 in blue ink, and be sure that the signature at the bottom of the page does NOT touch the line.**
3. Two passport-sized **photographs** (available at most drug stores)
 - You must submit two identical color photographs of yourself taken within 30 days of filing your application. They must have a white to off-white background, be printed on thin paper with a glossy finish, and be unmounted and unretouched. The passport-style photos must be 2" by 2". They must be in color with full face, frontal view. Head height should measure 1" to 1 3/8" from top to bottom of chin, and eye height is between 1 1/8" to 1 3/8" from bottom of photo. Your head must be bare unless you are wearing a headdress as required by a religious order of which you are a member. Using pencil or felt-tip pen, lightly print your name and your admission (I-94) number, if known, on the back of each photo.
4. Photocopies of your valid **passport** and both sides of your **I-94 card**.
5. **Application fee** in the amount of \$380, payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security." Payment in the form of a personal check is preferred, but you can use a bank check or money order if necessary
6. **OPTIONAL:** If you have previously been authorized by USCIS for off-campus employment, you must include a copy of your **most recent EAD** (employment authorization document).
7. **OPTIONAL:** You may enclose **Form G-1145** (E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance) to receive an e-mail or text message that your application was received. Download this form from <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf>.

After Applying for OPT

- You can expect the OPT application process to take up to four months. If your application is approved, USCIS will send you an Employment Authorization Document wallet card (EAD). The EAD contains your photo and shows the beginning and ending dates of eligible employment. You may begin work only after you receive the EAD. As soon as you receive the EAD, please bring the card to the International Office so it can be photocopied for your file.
 - **Please Note:** USCIS regulations allow a student to choose an **employment start date** for OPT within 60 days following completion of studies. However, the **employment end date** must be within 14 months following completion of studies. If there is a delay in approval of OPT, the EAD may show an employment start date later than 60 days after completion of studies. The employment end date will still be within 14 months after completion of studies, so it is possible the total time authorized for OPT could be less than 12 months. The best way to avoid delay in approval of OPT is to apply as early as allowed before program completion date.

- While you are on OPT, you are still in F-1 visa status under the I-20 issued by North Park. Before traveling outside the U.S. during OPT, your I-20 must be signed by an International Office staff member. During OPT you must present both a signed I-20 and your EAD to reenter the US after traveling abroad. **Unless it is absolutely necessary, you should not travel outside the US before you receive the EAD.**
- Students on OPT are under F-1 visa regulations of the US government and health insurance requirements of North Park University. **While on OPT you must have adequate health insurance.** The health insurance offered to F-1 students at North Park is available to students on OPT. While you are on OPT, please be sure to provide the International Office with proof of adequate health insurance or enroll in school-offered insurance.

Employment and Unemployment While on OPT

EMPLOYMENT

- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) gives specific guidelines about the nature of employment you may have while on OPT. OPT employment must be related to your degree program. Post-completion OPT may be full time (40 hours per week) or part time (at least 20 hours per week). Paid employment may include:
 - **Multiple employers**—student may work for more than one employer, but all work must be related to student’s degree.
 - **Short-term multiple employers (gigs)**—if student’s degree is in performing arts, he/she may work for several gigs. Maintain a list of all employers, dates, and duration of the gigs, and be prepared to provide evidence of all gigs.
 - **Work for hire**—an individual provides a service based on a contractual, rather than an employment, relationship. Students must keep records and be prepared to show the duration of the contract periods and the name/address of the contracting company.
 - **Self-employed business owner**—students on OPT may start a business and be self-employed, and work in this case must be full time. The student must prove that he/she has proper business licenses and is engaged in a business related to his/her degree.
 - **Employment through an agency**—students who choose this option must be able to prove they worked an average of at least 20 hours/week while employed by the agency.
- Post-completion OPT may also be unpaid (volunteer) employment. Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns, as long as the employment doesn’t violate labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week, and student must be able to prove that he/she worked that number of hours during the volunteer employment period.
- SEVP recommends that students maintain evidence for each job, whether paid or unpaid, concerning the position held, the duration of the position, job title, job description, and supervisor contact information. If it is not clear from the job description that the work is in the student’s field of studies, SEVP highly recommends that the student request a signed letter from the employer, stating how the student’s degree is related to the work performed.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Students on post-completion OPT have up to 90 days of unemployment. ICE counts as time unemployed each day during the period when OPT is authorized that the student does not have qualifying employment. Note: If a student on OPT travels outside the U.S. while unemployed, the time spent outside the U.S. will count as days of unemployment.

STUDENT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

All students on OPT are required to report their activities to the North Park International Office. SEVP recommends e-mail as the preferred method to report changes to the Designated School Official (DSO). You must report any of the following within 10 days: new job, end of job, multiple short-term gigs, work for hire, start of a new self-employed business, end of a self-employed business, change in U.S. home address, or decision to leave the U.S. prior to the end date of OPT. If you have not yet found a job, report to the International Office that you are actively seeking employment. The DSO will immediately report your information to SEVP.

CONSEQUENCES OF EXCEEDING 90 DAYS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

A student who exceeds the allowable days of unemployment while on post-completion OPT has violated his or her status unless he or she has done one of the following:

- Applied to continue his/her education by a change of education level or transfer to another school;
- Departed the U.S.
- Taken action otherwise to maintain status.

DSOs do not determine if a student has exceeded the limit of days of unemployment while on OPT. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will determine if the student has violated F-1 status by exceeding the allowable days of unemployment. If DHS determines that the student has exceeded the allowable days of unemployment, the student may be denied future immigration benefits that rely on the student's valid F-1 status. Additionally, ICE/SEVP may examine SEVIS data for an individual, a selected group, or all students on post-completion OPT and terminate a student's record if it fails to show the student maintained the proper period of employment. In such cases, the student will be given an opportunity to show that he or she complied with all OPT requirements, including maintaining employment.

OPT Extensions

- *CAP GAP EXTENSION*: This is a period in which an eligible F-1 student's status is automatically extended to bridge the gap between the end of F-1 status and the start of H-1B status. Whether or not you have applied for OPT, if you are the subject of an H-1B petition for employment, you may be eligible for a Cap Gap automatic extension of F-1 status. Please see the International Office for more information.
- *STEM EXTENSION*: ICE has designated certain areas of study as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). F-1 students who have completed a degree in a STEM field and are currently engaged in post-completion OPT may apply for a 17-month *STEM Extension* if they have a job or a job offer from an E-verify employer. Only a few of North Park's bachelor's degrees are designated as STEM fields; North Park does not grant graduate degrees in any of the STEM areas of study. Please see the International Office for more information.

North Park University

Acknowledgment of Optional Practical Training Responsibilities

To the F-1 student: This acknowledgment form is part of your application for Optional Practical Training. Please fill in your name, your NPU ID number, and the start and end dates and proposed employment for OPT. If you are not sure about dates or employment, an International Office staff member will help you fill out this information. Read this form carefully and sign both copies. Keep one copy and bring one copy to your OPT appointment.

To be completed by the student:

Student's Name: _____ NPU ID# _____

Requested OPT Start and End Dates: From _____ to _____

Proposed OPT Employment _____
(If you already have a job offer, write the employer's name here. If you don't yet have a job offer, write the type of work you will be seeking while on OPT.)

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have applied for Optional Practical Training (OPT) at North Park University, Chicago, Illinois, and I have been advised of the following OPT regulations and agree to abide by these regulations.

1. I must submit my OPT application no sooner than 90 days before and no later than 60 days after the Program End Date listed on my I-20 form. Additionally, I must file the application within 30 days of the date when the International Student Advisor recommends OPT in SEVIS.
2. Upon receipt of my OPT authorization card (EAD), I must provide the International Office (IO) with a copy of the card.
3. I must notify the IO within 10 days of any address change while on OPT.
4. I must provide the IO with the name, address, and contact information of my employer.
5. I must notify the IO within 10 days of any change in my employment status.
6. If I fail to notify the IO of any requested information within the permitted time period, the failure will be recorded in SEVIS and my F-1 status will be jeopardized.
7. I must check regularly the e-mail address I have provided the IO, to assure that I receive updates and information that may affect my F-1 status.
8. If I am unemployed for a total of 3 months or more during authorized OPT, I am considered out of status.
9. I understand that upon completion of OPT I have 60 days to leave the US or begin a new program of studies. I must follow transfer procedures in SEVIS when I begin a new program of studies.

I certify that I agree to comply with the above-listed regulations. I also certify that all information provided on this form is current and will remain current and updated until I complete my OPT authorization period.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Current Email Address: _____

North Park University

Acknowledgment of Optional Practical Training Responsibilities

To the F-1 student: This acknowledgment form is part of your application for Optional Practical Training. Please fill in your name, your NPU ID number, and the start and end dates and proposed employment for OPT. If you are not sure about dates or employment, an International Office staff member will help you fill out this information. Read this form carefully and sign both copies. Keep one copy and bring one copy to your OPT appointment.

To be completed by the student:

Student's Name: _____ NPU ID# _____

Requested OPT Start and End Dates: From _____ to _____

Proposed OPT Employment _____

(If you already have a job offer, write the employer's name here. If you don't yet have a job offer, write the type of work you will be seeking while on OPT.)

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have applied for Optional Practical Training (OPT) at North Park University, Chicago, Illinois, and I have been advised of the following OPT regulations and agree to abide by these regulations.

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I certify that I agree to comply with the above-listed regulations. I also certify that all information provided on this form is current and will remain current and updated until I complete my OPT authorization period.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Current Email Address: _____

North Park University Authorization for Optical Practical Training

To the F-1 international student: This authorization form is part of your application for Optional Practical Training. Because you are applying for Post-Completion OPT, we need confirmation from your academic advisor that you are on track to graduate. Complete the top part of this form yourself; you and your advisor will complete the bottom part of the form together. Bring the signed form to your OPT appointment in the International Office.

To be completed by the student:

Name: _____ NPU ID #: _____

Proposed OPT Employment: _____

(If you already have a job offer, write the employer's name here. If you don't yet have a job offer, write the type of work you will be seeking while on OPT.)

To be completed by the student's academic advisor:

- The above named student is a candidate for a (check one):
 - Bachelor's Degree
 - Master's Degree
- The student's degree is in the field of: _____
(student's undergraduate major or graduate program)
- The student is in good academic standing and is making normal progress toward the completion of the degree.
- The student is expected to complete her or his studies on: _____

Advisor's Name: _____

Advisor's Title: _____

Advisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____