



1033 SPRINGFIELD AVENUE, CRANFORD, NEW JERSEY 07016

CRANFORD CAMPUS
(908) 709-7000

ELIZABETH CAMPUS
(908) 965-6000

PLAINFIELD CAMPUS
(908) 412-3599

SCOTCH PLAINS CAMPUS
(908) 709-7000

ATTENTION: DO NOT e-file your OPT application via USCIS' website, until you receive an updated Form I-20 with OPT recommendation from international services.

F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an employment benefit that allows you, as an F-1 student, to gain practical, professional experience in your field of study. Unlike Curricular Practical Training (CPT), OPT does not require you to register for an internship, practicum, or fieldwork course. You may use OPT either before or after completion of studies, on a part-time or full-time basis, and you do not need to have a job offer prior to submitting your application.

Eligibility Requirements for OPT

- You must be in valid F-1 status, with an unexpired I-20, electronic I-94 or I-94 card marked "F-1 D/S"
- You must have completed at least one academic year of full-time study in lawful status by the time your OPT period starts
- You do not need to have a job offer to apply for OPT; however, you must have the intention of pursuing professional employment in your field of study. Under OPT, you may not accept employment that is not directly related to your field of studies, as it appears on your Form I-20
- You must be physically present in the U.S. at the time you submit your application
- You must be in good academic standing and making normal progress towards completion of your degree
- You must not have been approved for 12 months of OPT in the past at the current degree level
- If you have completed your program, the USCIS must receive your application within 60 days of completion, and you must not have left the U.S. during those 60 days. If you leave the U.S. within your 60-day grace period prior to submitting the application for OPT, you are no longer eligible to apply

How Long Does OPT Last

OPT is limited to a total of 12 months per degree level. Any OPT granted prior to completion of studies, or for a previously completed degree at the same degree level, will be deducted from that total. For example, if you did 3 months of full-time, pre-completion OPT you will have 9 months available for post-completion OPT. Or, if you did 12 months of OPT after completing an Associate of Arts degree, you will not have any OPT eligibility left if (after completing your OPT) you immediately enter another Associate of Arts degree program.

Part-time OPT (20 hours or less per week) is deducted from the available OPT at one-half the full-time rate. For example, 6 months of part-time OPT is counted as equivalent to 3 months of full-time OPT.

You may become eligible for another 12 months of OPT if you move to a higher degree level. For example, if you used 12 months of OPT following completion of your Associate degree, you will be able to establish eligibility for another 12 months if you enter a bachelor's program.

When Can I Use My OPT

You use your OPT:

- Prior to completion of your program (Pre-completion OPT)
- After completion of your program (Post-completion OPT).

When Should I Apply for OPT

Pre-Completion OPT: You can submit an application for Pre-completion OPT at any point during your studies, provided that you have been lawfully enrolled full-time for at least one academic year. As a rule, it is best to apply for OPT at least 3-4 months before you want to start working. We do not recommend applying for pre-completion OPT unless you have an offer of employment. Any time authorized for pre-completion OPT is deducted from your 12 months eligibility even if you do not find employment.

Post-Completion OPT: The earliest you can apply for post-completion OPT application is 90 days prior to completion of your program.

The latest you can apply for post-completion OPT is 60 days after completion of studies. You must allow International Services 10 business days to process your application. The USCIS will deny any application that is received after 60 days of completion of your program.

Completion of Program: Your program completion date is the last day of your last semester. Be sure to consult the Union County College Academic Calendar for this information. Program completion date is NOT the day Commencement or graduation date.

OPT APPLICATION PROCEDURE

STEP 1: Attend an F-1 Employment Workshop

STEP 2: Complete the OPT Application Form and email it to international@ucc.edu. In order to submit the application properly, you will need to:

- Complete the OPT application Form
- Complete Form I-765; It's best to type your information into the form, print it, then sign it.
- Provide a copy of your most recent I-94 electronic record

STEP 3: Prepare additional documents for the OPT application:

- Photocopy of the most recently issued I-20s with the recommendation for OPT.
- Two passport-style photographs (name, date of birth, I-94 card number and SEVIS number written on the back) Photos must be taken within the last 30 days and cannot have previously been used for a passport, visa, or other US government-related application.
- A check or money order for \$410 made payable to the US Department of Homeland Security. Write your SEVIS ID on check/money order. Do NOT send your money order separate from the application the money order is for. Your money order should be included with your other application materials.
- A completed Form G-1145.
- A photocopy of your F-1 visa (except for citizens of Canada and Bermuda)
- A photocopy of your passport identification page, clearly indicating your passport name, nationality, date of birth, and the passport expiration date
- Photocopies of any previously issued Employment Authorization Document (EAD), if applicable

STEP 4: Pick up your Form I-20. Once your request has been processed, you will receive an email notification from international services informing you that your I-20 is ready for pick up.

STEP 5: Review your Form I-20 for accuracy. Make sure all of the information on the form, including the requested date of employment is correct. Notify international services immediately of any errors.

STEP 6: Mail your application to the USCIS. Chicago Lockbox:

U.S. Postal Service (USPS):

USCIS

Attn. I-765 C03

PO Box 805373

Chicago, IL 60680

FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:

USCIS

Attn: I-765 C03

131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor

Chicago, IL 60603-5517

STEP 7: Track Your Application. Once the USCIS receives your application, they will send you an electronic notification within 2 to 3 weeks and a paper notification within 3 to 5 weeks. You can then check the request status using the Receipt Number on the USCIS website.

Be sure to notify International Services if:

- you do not receive both receipts within these timelines
- you notice any mistakes on your EAD
- you get a denial or request for more information from USCIS

STEP 8: Provide a copy of the EAD to International Services

STEP 9: Report your employment status to International Services. Students on Post completion OPT are required by the U.S. government to report their employment status and employer information. While you are on post-completion OPT, you cannot be unemployed for more than 90 days. If you fail to report your job information or if you are unemployed for 90 days while on OPT, the government will end your F-1 OPT and terminate your SEVIS record. You would then need to leave the US immediately.

PROCESSING TIME:

International Services– up to 7 business days

USCIS – up to 90 business days

H1B Cap-Gap

The time between the end of F-1 status and the beginning of H-1B employment is referred to as the cap gap. The cap-gap extension 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.

If a student is on OPT and eligible for a cap-gap extension, their F-1 status will automatically extend, and they will be eligible to work while their H-1B is pending approval. For further details take an F-1 employment workshop.

If a student is not on OPT and eligible for the cap-gap extension, their F-1 status will automatically be extended but they will not be eligible to work until their H-1B status is approved. For further details take an F-1 employment workshop.



1033 SPRINGFIELD AVENUE, CRANFORD, NEW JERSEY 07016

CRANFORD CAMPUS (908) 709-7000 ELIZABETH CAMPUS (908) 965-6000 PLAINFIELD CAMPUS (908) 412-3599 SCOTCH PLAINS CAMPUS (908) 709-7000

F-1 EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION APPLICATION/REPORTING FORM

ID Number: _____ Major: _____ Program Start Date: _____ Program End Date: _____

Last Name First Name Middle Name

U.S Address:

House Number Street City State Zip Code

Telephone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

This is a request for:

___ Pre-Completion OPT ___ Post-Completion OPT ___ Report Initial Employer ___ Report Change in Employer

Requested Employment Start Date: _____ Requested Employment End Date: _____

___ Part-Time (up to 20 hours/week) ___ Full-time (Over 20 hours/week)

If you are reporting initial employment:

Employer: _____ Address: _____

Your Title: _____ Start date: _____

Name of Supervisor: _____ Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

If reporting Change in Employer:

Previous Employer: _____ Address: _____

End Date: _____

New Employer: _____ Address: _____

Title: _____ Start date: _____ End Date: _____

Name of Supervisor: _____ Phone Number: _____ Email: _____