Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training (OPT) allows a student to work off-campus in a job related to their major, but it is not required for course credit. The student finds his/her own employment and the employment is not monitored by TCC.

IMPORTANT: USCIS APPROVAL from the TEXAS SERVICE CENTER is REQUIRED.

Eligibility
The student must have maintained F-1 status for a minimum one academic year in the degree program specified on the I-20.

Key Aspects
1- The employment must be directly related to the student’s field of study.
2- The OPT employment can only be part-time (20 hours a week) during the student’s studies, but may be full-time during school vacations or summer break.
3- The OPT employment must be full-time after student’s graduation.
4- Post-graduation OPT is 12 months, but must be completed within 14 months of graduation.
5- The student may not begin work until s/he has received the EAD (Employment Authorization Document) card.
6- If a student transfers to another college, the OPT is automatically terminated.
7- If a student falls out of status, the OPT automatically terminates.
8- The DSO recommendation for OPT is noted on the SEVIS form I-20 on page 3.
9- If the student leaves the US while on OPT, the student will need the endorsed I-20, the EAD card, passport and visa.
10- If a student does a full-time CPT it counts against OPT. Part-time CPT does not count against OPT eligibility.
11- If a student does part-time OPT before graduation, it will reduce the time available for OPT after graduation.
12- A student becomes eligible for another 12 months of OPT for each change to a higher educational level. Therefore a student will again become eligible at the following degree levels: Bachelor degree, Master degree, PhD.

How to apply
1- A post-graduation OPT application can be filed up to 90 days before graduation and up to 60 days after graduation.
2- A pre-completion OPT application can be filed up to 90 days prior to being enrolled for one full academic year.
3- Schedule appointment with the International Advisor (595-7478) and bring the following documents:
   • Completed I-765, which you may download from www.uscis.gov/forms. (C 3 A for pre-completion, C 3 B for Post completion)
   • Two (2) passport style photos
   • Photocopies of previous EADs, if applicable
   • Check or money order payable to the “USCIS” for $380
   • Submit a copy (both sides) of your I-94 card
   • Do I-20
Application continued:
The International Advisor will review the application and if all criteria is met, will complete a “Request for OPT” I-20 for OPT to include with the above documents that will be mailed to The Texas Service Center.

The Center will not approve an EAD more than 120 days prior to start date of employment. If the student does not receive a receipt notice from the Texas Service Center within 30 days, contact the International Student Services Office.

Once you receive a receipt from the Texas Service Center, you may use your receipt number to monitor your request. Using your receipt number, go to www.uscis.gov and click on “Check Case Status” in the lower right hand corner.

Please bring or mail a copy of your Employment Authorization (EAD) to the International Student Services Office as soon as you receive it in the mail. If it has been more that 90 days since we mailed your application and you have not received an EAD card, you may go out on the USCIS website at www.uscis.gov and click on “Schedule an Appointment” to make an InfoPass appointment with a local USCIS office and request an interim EAD card. This will be mailed to you.

Travel while OPT is pending is permissible as long as you take a copy of the I-765 receipt notice, passport, visa, I-94 and current I-20. If you travel without the I-765 receipt notice, you may not be allowed back in the U.S. What is the I-765 receipt? It is a one page form that tells you that your application is pending with CIS. 

NOTE: If your OPT has been approved and you depart before you get a job, your OPT ends and you cannot reenter the U.S. If you have a job, you may travel and reenter to resume work at the same job. Take a letter (on company letterhead) from your employer with you to verify employment.

To report a change of address, call (214) 381-1423. You will need to be very patient and remain on hold. Eventually you will get to talk to an Information Officer. The automated status number is available 24 hours a day. Don’t forget to notify the TCC International Office of any address change also. To obtain OPT status information call the same number before 8:00 am and after 4:00 pm.

If your plans for OPT change and you decide not to do it at that time requested on your application, contact the International Student Advisors immediately! We will contact the Texas Service Center requesting that your request be cancelled. If not, once your OPT has been approved, you may not be eligible at a later time.