

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Practical Training is authorized employment which is related to a student's field of study. F-1 students who are in legal status can apply for 12 months of regular **Optional Practical Training (OPT)**. Effective April 8, 2008, certain F-1 students with degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) may be eligible for a 17-month extension of regular post completion OPT (please pick-up a separate handout in OISS on STEM OPT Extensions). Students are eligible for OPT upon completion of a specific educational objective or degree level. For example, if you are completing your bachelor's degree now, you may be eligible for another 12-months of OPT after you complete a higher degree (e.g. master's degree). However, you may not receive 12-months of OPT for the same degree level twice.

Some students have already taken advantage of the Curricular Practical Training (CPT) over the course of their studies at NKU. This training is typically used for COOP or internships. However, students who have completed **12 months of full-time CPT** are not eligible for Optional Practical Training. Unlike Curricular Practical Training, you are not required to register for the COOP program to apply for OPT.

Students make a request to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for authorization of Optional Practical Training to begin after their completed course of study. However, students are not eligible to submit an application until 90 days prior to the completion of the academic program and no later than 60 days after the completion of the academic program. Authorization is granted by USCIS in order to permit a student to obtain a job directly related to the major area of study. Before a student can apply, the Office of International Students and Scholars must issue a new Form I-20 and endorse page 3 with a recommendation for approval of OPT. Although no job offer is necessary to apply, students must find employment within 90 days from the OPT start date in order to maintain the F-1 legal status. Remember that all students on practical training are still considered to be F-1 students.

CHECKLIST

NOTE: The following materials must be dropped off at OISS before a new I-20 may be issued to you:

1. Completed Form I-765 (<http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf>)
2. Two passport style COLOR photographs (full FRONTAL face profile). Photo specifications can be found at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/M-603.pdf>)
3. Copies of all the I-20s ever issued to you (even from previous schools)
4. A completed Faculty Advisor Recommendation Form (attached) - give to OISS for issuance of I-20.
5. Copies of your passport name page (with expiration date) and visa page
6. Copy of front and back side of your I-94 (white card usually stapled inside your passport)
7. Copy of any Employment Authorization Document (EAD) previously issued to you (if applicable)
8. An "End of Program Certification" letter from the Registrar's office Tammy Camm, camm@nku.edu, Lee Amundsen, amundsen@nku.edu (Undergraduate Program), Maria Reverman, rieblingm@nku.edu (Graduate Program). Please request the letter via email!
9. A check or Money Order for \$340 made payable to "Department of Homeland Security"

NOTE: A new I-20 issued by OISS recommending OPT (**OISS will create this new I-20 for you AFTER you send ALL of the above documents to our office**)

Mailing Instructions: Once OISS issues you a new I-20, you will be mailing your own application to US Citizenship and Immigration Services along with all of the documents above (including a *copy* of your new I-20 issued by OISS). Item #4 above will stay in your file in OISS.

Tip #1: Send to Nebraska if you live in Ohio and Texas if you live in Kentucky. See attached sample cover letters and addresses where to mail your new I-20 and application materials. You are welcome to use the OISS address on your application Form I-765 so that your OPT card will come to our office.

Tip #2: DO NOT mail any *original* I-20's to USCIS. Only mail copies of your original I-20's within 30 days of the issuance and DSO endorsement of OPT Extension I-20.

Tip #3: It is very strongly recommended that you mail your application materials via certified mail, UPS, FedEx or some other express mail to ensure accurate and timely delivery. Be sure to obtain a tracking number for your mailing.

Important Note: Due to the time that it is taking the Immigration Service Centers to process Optional Practical Training applications, you may submit the OPT application **up to 90 days before your graduation/program end date (last final exam)**. However, you **cannot submit the application later than 60 days after you complete your studies at NKU**.

SAMPLE LETTER for Students who live in OHIO

Date: _____

U.S. CIS Service Center
P.O. Box 87765
Lincoln, NE 68501-7765

Dear CIS Officer:

Enclosed, in support of my request for post-completion optional practical training are the following documents:

- ___ A check/Money Order for \$340 made out to the Department of Homeland Security
- ___ Two photos (meeting new photo requirements)
- ___ Form I-765
- ___ Copy of Student I-20 AB with OPT recommendation
- ___ Copy of front side and backside of I-94, passport name & expiration date page, & visa page
- ___ Copy of Previous Student I-20's
- ___ Copy of last EAD card (if not applicable, mark N/A)
- ___ Certification letter (from Registrar Office) on student's program end date

Your consideration of this request is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Signature of the Student with **Ohio Address listed on I-765 Form**

Enclosures

SAMPLE LETTER for Students who live in KENTUCKY

Date: _____

U.S. CIS TSC
P.O. Box 851041
Mesquite, TX 75185-1041

Dear CIS Officer:

Enclosed, in support of my request for post-completion optional practical training are the following documents:

- ___ A check/Money Order for \$340 made out to the Department of Homeland Security
- ___ Two photos (meeting new photo requirements)
- ___ Form I-765
- ___ Copy of Student I-20 AB with OPT recommendation
- ___ Copy of front side and backside of I-94, passport name & expiration date page, & visa page
- ___ Copy of Previous Student I-20's
- ___ Copy of last EAD card (if not applicable, mark N/A)
- ___ Certification letter (from Registrar Office) on student's program end date

Your consideration of this request is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Signature of the Student with **Kentucky Address listed on I-765 Form**

Enclosures

**Faculty Advisor Recommendation Form
For Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

TO BE COMPLETED BY FACULTY ADVISOR OR DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Note to Advisor:

1. Please review OISS handout "Optional Practical Training" (OPT) prior to completing this form.
2. Upon completion of this form, please return to the Office of International Students & Scholars (University Center Room 366).
3. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact OISS at 572-6517.

TO: Office of International Students & Scholars (OISS)

FR: _____
Advisor's Name (Print)

RE: _____
Student's Name (Print)

This memo serves to confirm that the student above is currently, or was a student in the department of _____ at Northern Kentucky University specializing or majoring in the field of _____.

Please check one:

- Student is applying for practical training while school is in session -- work not to exceed 20 hours per week (*requires special permission from OISS*).
- Student is applying for full-time practical training for the summer vacation period only (*requires special permission from OISS*).
- Student is applying for full-time practical training post-graduation.

Please check one:

- Student completed all course requirements on ___/___/___.
- Student is expected to complete all course requirements on ___/___/___.

Advisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

OISS USE ONLY:

Part-time Full-time Optional Practical Training Recommended from ___/___/___ To ___/___/___

By: _____

Signature: _____