

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING INSTRUCTIONS

THE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION, JUNIATA COLLEGE

Steps to Apply

- 1) Make an appointment to request your updated I20 with OPT Request with the Center for International Education. *Shya Erdman*, Director, International Student and Scholar Services: Email: international@juniata.edu or sme100@juniata.edu
- 2) The Center for International Education will need to prepare a new I-20 document with the request for OPT notated on page 2.
- 3) Complete the online application: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>; Applications must be completed within 30 days of the OPT request in SEVIS.
- 4) Provide the Center for International Education with your Receipt Number and a copy of the Notice of Action when received.

Documents Needed

- 1) Updated and signed I20 noting your OPT request start and end dates.
- 2) I-94 Admission Record. Save the form from the Customs & Border Patrol website: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html>
- 3) Copy of Passport
- 4) Copy of Visa
- 5) Digital passport-style photograph. See USCIS site(<https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/alerts/new-photo-policy-helps-prevent-immigration-fraud-through-enhanced-identity-verification>) for updated photo policy (12/12/2025).
- 6) Credit or debit card for filing fee of \$470.

Premium Processing is available for an additional fee of \$1,685. This fee is in addition to the base I-765 fee and guarantees a **30-business-day** processing time for certain employment authorization applications.

**The premium processing fee will increase to \$1,780 on 3/1/2026.

Important Reminders

- Provide CIE with a copy of your receipt number after you have submitted your application online.
- A **NOTICE OF ACTION** should be mailed to you within two weeks of sending your application. This Notice of Action will tell you when USCIS has received your application and how long it will take to process.
Please give the CIE a copy of this notice.
- You can check the status of your case online by using the Receipt Notice on your NOTICE OF ACTION (in the top left corner). Type in EAC and the numbers without dashes or spaces. <https://egov.uscis.gov/>
- The EAC will be mailed directly to the student at the address you provide on the application.
- The Center for International Education requires a copy of the **Notice of Action** and the **Employment Authorization Card**.
- You will be granted a total of twelve months of practical training at the undergraduate and master's level.
- Use it or lose it! Once the EAC authorization has been granted, the specific time period granted is what is subtracted from your total of twelve months.
- Once the application has been made, you cannot cancel the application for practical training if the Service Center has already made a decision.

- You *SHOULD NOT* leave the USA after the completion of studies until the EAC has been issued! You will need the EAC, a signed I-20 document, and a job offer letter to re-enter the US!
- You cannot begin to work until the EAD has been received!
- The longer you wait, the longer it will take to process!

Optional Practical Training Responsibilities

These responsibilities require your compliance by law to maintain your F-1 status.

- Only work in a position directly related to your major and within the dates that you have been authorized on your EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION CARD.
- Department of Homeland Security regulations state, "During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment..." [8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(E)]. You are required to report interruptions of OPT employment to our office [8 CFR 214.2(f)(12)(i)].
- You are required to report the following information to our office:
 - Change of name (You must bring proof of your updated passport noting the change)
 - Change of address
- Students are required to report updates and changes in employment to their DSO as soon as possible. SEVP recommends that students report changes within 10 business days of the change to avoid situations where a DHS official may determine the student is out of status. Provide the CIE:
 - ✓ Name of the employer
 - ✓ Start date of employment
 - ✓ Mailing address and email address for the employer

SEVP's states that the following activities are considered allowable employment on both pre-completion and standard post-completion OPT, provided that the job is directly related to the student's program of study. While a student engages in such activity during a period of post-completion OPT, he or she is not considered "unemployed":

- Regular paid employment in a position directly related to the student's program of study.
 - i. For post-completion OPT, the work must be for at least 20 hours per week
 - ii. Students may work for multiple employers, as long as it is directly related to the student's program of study.
- Payment by multiple short-term multiple employers. SEVP says that "Students, such as musicians and other performing artists, may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration. The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration."
- Work for hire. SEVP says, "This is also commonly referred to as 1099 employment where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. If requested by DHS, students should be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company."
- Self-employed business owner. SEVP says, "Students on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. The student should be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to his or her degree program."
- Employment through an agency. SEVP says, "Students on post-completion OPT must be able to provide evidence showing they worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency."
- Volunteers or unpaid interns. SEVP says, "Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns, where this practice does not violate any labor laws. The work should be at least 20 hours per week

for students on post-completion OPT. A student should be able to provide evidence, acquired from the student's employer, to verify that he or she worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment."

- It is strongly recommended that you keep a record and supporting evidence of all your OPT-related activities such as:
 - Details of job searches: correspondence with prospective employers, interviews, etc.
 - Employment information: dates, name/location of employer, position, part/full-time
 - Volunteer work: dates, name/location/type of volunteer work, part/full-time. Please note that federal law requires that a volunteer may not assume a normally paid position or displace a U.S. worker.

- Beginning a new course of study or transferring U.S. schools automatically terminates OPT employment.
- Obtain a P/DSO's (someone in the Center for International Education) endorsement to travel every six months.
- Employment authorization is automatically suspended in the event of a strike or other labor dispute involving work stoppage at the place of employment [8 CFR 214.2(f)(14)].

If you have any questions about Optional Practical Training responsibilities, please contact staff in the Center for International Education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE ON OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

I have read and understand my F-1 student status responsibilities while I am on Optional Practical Training.

Signature

Name (please print)

Today's date