

Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Information and Application Procedures



Allen Long · xlong@drury.edu · Bay 130 · (417) 873-7506

Last reviewed: September 18, 2026

Overview

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment authorization that lets eligible F-1 students gain practical work experience after completing their academic program. The employment must be directly related to your major area of study.

Post-completion OPT is normally authorized for up to 12 months and is generally full-time. International Support Services (ISS) determines whether you are eligible for an OPT recommendation, enters that recommendation in SEVIS, and issues an OPT-recommended Form I-20. USCIS makes the final decision on your Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization.

This document covers **standard post-completion OPT** only. It does not cover pre-completion OPT or the 24-month STEM OPT extension.

Who is eligible?

To be eligible for post-completion OPT, you generally must:

- Be maintaining valid F-1 status at the time of application.
- Have completed at least one full academic year of lawful full-time study in F-1 status.
- Be completing a degree program at Drury University.
- Request employment that is directly related to your major area of study.
- Have remaining OPT eligibility at the current educational level.
- Not have been authorized for 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) at the current educational level.

Consult ISS early if you have had a reinstatement, a previous SEVIS record, prior CPT or OPT authorization, or a change of education level. These cases require additional review.

Program completion date

Your program-completion date is the date you finish all academic requirements for your degree, including coursework, thesis or dissertation work, practicum, internship, and examinations. It is not necessarily your commencement, graduation ceremony, or degree-conferral date.

Critical filing deadlines

USCIS must receive your Form I-765 application:

- No earlier than **90 days before** your program-completion date;
- No later than **60 days after** your program-completion date; and
- Within **30 days** after ISS enters the OPT recommendation in your SEVIS record.

All three deadlines apply. A Form I-765 received after any applicable deadline may be denied.

Submit your OPT request to ISS early enough for review before your intended USCIS filing date. ISS recommends submitting your completed Drury OPT request at least **14 DAYS** before your desired filing date.

Do not submit Form I-765 to USCIS until ISS has reviewed your request, entered the OPT recommendation in SEVIS, and issued your OPT-recommended Form I-20.

Application procedure

1 Plan your completion date and OPT timeline.

Confirm your program-completion date with your academic advisor or program director, then choose a requested OPT start date. It must fall after your program-completion date and within the filing window above.

2 Complete the request form.

Fill in the student portion of the Drury OPT Request and Academic Certification form in this packet, then ask your academic advisor or program director to complete the academic certification confirming your program-completion date.

3 Submit your request to ISS.

Submit the completed form and any supporting documents to ISS. ISS will review your request and may ask for additional information before entering an OPT recommendation in SEVIS.

4 Receive your OPT-recommended Form I-20.

If eligible, ISS will enter the OPT recommendation in SEVIS and issue a new Form I-20 showing the OPT recommendation on page 2. Review the Form I-20 carefully. The date ISS enters the OPT recommendation in SEVIS starts the 30-day USCIS filing deadline.

5 File Form I-765 with USCIS.

After receiving your OPT-recommended Form I-20, file Form I-765 with USCIS online or by mail. Follow the current USCIS instructions for eligibility category (c)(3)(B), post-completion OPT, and use the fee, form edition, filing location, and evidence requirements in effect at the time you file.

FILING ONLINE

To file online, create or sign in to your USCIS online account, select "File a Form Online," and choose "Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization."

For standard post-completion OPT, select eligibility category (c)(3)(B) — Post-Completion OPT. If this is your first post-completion OPT application at this educational level, select "Initial permission to accept employment."

Complete the application carefully using information from your passport, Form I-94, current and prior Forms I-20, and any prior Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Upload the required evidence, review your answers, sign electronically, pay the current USCIS filing fee, and submit the application.

IMPORTANT Do not submit Form I-765 until ISS has issued your OPT-recommended Form I-20. USCIS must receive your application within 30 days after ISS enters the OPT recommendation in SEVIS and within the overall post-completion OPT filing window.

USCIS filing checklist

Your submission generally includes the items below. USCIS requirements change, so verify the current Form I-765 instructions before filing.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Completed Form I-765, current form edition. | ☐ Current USCIS filing fee, paid by an accepted method. |
| ☐ Copy of your OPT-recommended Form I-20 from ISS. | ☐ Copy of your passport identity page. |
| ☐ Copy of your most recent Form I-94. | ☐ Passport-style photograph meeting current USCIS requirements. |
| ☐ Copies of any prior Employment Authorization Documents (EADs). | ☐ Copies of any prior Forms I-20 showing CPT or OPT authorization. |
| ☐ Documentation of any previous SEVIS ID numbers. | |

USCIS resources

- Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
- USCIS OPT information for F-1 students: <https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/optional-practical-training-opt-for-f-1-students>
- USCIS online account: <https://my.uscis.gov/>
- Form I-94 record: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>

After you file Form I-765

- Keep copies of everything submitted to USCIS, including your OPT-recommended Form I-20 and USCIS receipt notice.
- Monitor your USCIS online account and case status.
- Notify ISS promptly if USCIS issues a Request for Evidence, rejection, denial, or other notice related to your application.
- Update your mailing address with USCIS if it changes while your application is pending.
- Do not begin OPT employment until USCIS approves your application, you receive your EAD, and the EAD start date has arrived.

Employment requirements

While on post-completion OPT:

- Your employment must be directly related to your major area of study.
- You may work for more than one employer if each position is directly related to your major.
- You must work at least 20 hours per week in qualifying employment to avoid accruing unemployment time.
- You may not accrue more than 90 days of unemployment during the initial 12-month period of post-completion OPT.
- Unemployment begins accruing on the OPT start date listed on your EAD.

Reporting requirements

Report qualifying employment and any change to the following **within 10 days**:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| • Residential address. | • Mailing address. |
| • Telephone number. | • Employer name. |
| • Employer address. | • Employment start date. |
| • Employment end date. | • Employment status, including loss of employment. |

Use the SEVP Portal when it is available to you. Contact ISS for anything the portal cannot update, including legal-name changes, SEVIS record corrections, and other changes requiring DSO action.

Travel during OPT

Traveling while your OPT application is pending carries risk, particularly after your program-completion date. Consult ISS before making travel plans. Admission to the United States is decided by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and is never guaranteed.

Before traveling, confirm you have the documents your situation requires: a valid passport and F-1 visa, a Form I-20 with a current travel endorsement, your EAD if approved, your USCIS receipt notice if the application is pending, and evidence of qualifying employment.

STEM OPT extension

Students with a qualifying STEM degree who are employed by an E-Verify employer may be eligible to apply for a 24-month STEM OPT extension. STEM OPT has separate eligibility, application, employer, Form I-983, and reporting requirements.

Contact ISS at least **90 DAYS** before your current OPT EAD expires if you may be eligible for STEM OPT.

Important reminders

- OPT is employment authorization, not an extension of your F-1 visa stamp.
- If your visa stamp has expired and you travel outside the United States, you may need to apply for a new visa before returning.
- The OPT application and EAD are personal immigration documents. You are responsible for filing Form I-765 accurately and on time.
- USCIS processing times vary. ISS cannot expedite a USCIS decision.
- Keep ISS informed of changes that affect your F-1 record or OPT employment.

CONTACT YOUR DSO

Allen Long

Director of International Admission

International Support Services (ISS) | Bay 130

900 N. Benton Ave., Springfield, MO 65802

EMAIL xlong@drury.edu

PHONE +1 417-873-7506

WEB international.drury.edu/allen

FORM

Drury OPT Request and Academic Certification

Complete this section and submit it to International Support Services (ISS) using the process listed above.

1 Student information

STUDENT NAME

DRURY ID

SEVIS ID

DRURY EMAIL

PERSONAL EMAIL

DEGREE LEVEL

MAJOR / PROGRAM OF STUDY

EXPECTED PROGRAM-COMPLETION DATE

REQUESTED OPT START DATE

REQUESTED OPT END DATE

2 CPT and OPT history

Have you previously been authorized for CPT or OPT at your current educational level?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes — Complete the information below & attach copies of the relevant Forms I-20 and EADs, if available.

PREVIOUS CPT AUTHORIZATION DATES

CPT TYPE

- ☐ Part-time CPT ☐ Full-time CPT

PREVIOUS OPT AUTHORIZATION DATE

PREVIOUS OPT AUTHORIZATION END DATE

Do you currently have an employment offer?

- ☐ No. (An employment offer is not required for post-completion OPT.)
- ☐ Yes. Employer name (optional): _____

3 Student certification

I certify that the information in this request is complete and accurate. I understand that:

- I must file Form I-765 within the required USCIS filing window and within 30 days after ISS enters the OPT recommendation in SEVIS.
- I may not begin post-completion OPT employment until USCIS approves my application, I receive my EAD, and the EAD start date has arrived.
- My OPT employment must be directly related to my major area of study.
- I must report required address, employer, employment, and other updates within 10 days.
- I may not accrue more than 90 days of unemployment during the initial 12-month post-completion OPT period.
- OPT does not extend my F-1 visa stamp. I will consult ISS before international travel.

STUDENT SIGNATURE

DATE

4 Academic advisor / program director certification

I confirm that the anticipated program-completion date listed below is accurate based on the student's current academic plan.

STUDENT NAME

PROGRAM / MAJOR

EXPECTED PROGRAM-COMPLETION DATE

Program completion is the date the student completes all required coursework, thesis/dissertation, practicum, internship, examinations, and other academic requirements. It is not necessarily the commencement, graduation, or formal degree-conferral date.

ADVISOR / PROGRAM DIRECTOR NAME

TITLE / DEPARTMENT

EMAIL

SIGNATURE

DATE

ISS USE ONLY Do not write below this line

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ F-1 status and OPT eligibility reviewed. | ☐ Program-completion date confirmed. |
| ☐ Prior CPT/OPT history reviewed. | ☐ Student advised of USCIS filing deadlines. |
| ☐ OPT recommendation entered in SEVIS. | ☐ OPT-recommended Form I-20 issued. |
| ☐ Student advised of employment, reporting, unemployment, and travel requirements. | |

ISS ADVISOR / DSO

DATE