What You Should Know about Optional Practical Training (OPT): Application Process and Reporting Requirements
International Student Services at Reed College

F-1 students may qualify for Optional Practical Training, or OPT, which allows you to engage in temporary employment to gain practical experience in your field of study. Your OPT can be used before you graduate (pre-completion) or after you graduate (post-completion). OPT is available for a cumulative maximum of 12 months per educational level. A one-time extension of 17 months (for a total of 29 months) is available to certain STEM degree recipients.

Important things you should know about your OPT:
• You must apply for this work authorization benefit
• You must have been enrolled full-time at Reed for at least one academic year
• Your work must be directly related to your course of study
• You must be employed full-time (defined as 20 hours (or more)/week) if working during breaks or post-graduation
• Volunteer or unpaid work qualifies as work, however, you should be sure to keep records of your hours/dates worked and ask for documentation from your employer or volunteer coordinator to verify your employment
• You cannot apply for OPT any earlier than 90 days prior to your program end date
• Your employment start date must be within 60 days of your program end date/graduation
• You can be unemployed for up to 90 days while on OPT (this includes weekends)

Process for applying for Optional Practical Training

1. Make an appointment to apply for OPT with your DSO, the Assistant Dean of Students for International Student Services.

2. Collect and prepare the documents needed, including:
   - Completed form I-765
     • See “Instructions for I-765, Application for Employment Authorization found at: http://www.uscis.gov/i-765
     • Use (c)(3)(A) for pre-completion OPT
     • Use (c)(3)(B) for post-completion OPT
   - I-765 filing fee
     • $380 check payable to the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security
   - Copies of all past I-20s
   - Two passport photos (this must be recent photos)
   - Copy of your passport
   - Copy of your visa
   - Copy of past EAD card(s)
     • Only if you've participated in OPT in the past
   - Printed copy of your electronic I-94 record
   - Completed form G-1145 form
     • If you want to receive an email and/or text confirming receipt

3. At your meeting with the DSO, the above documents will be reviewed and you will determine your employment start date (must be within 60 days of your program end date).
date/graduation). The DSO will recommend you for OPT in SEVIS and you will receive a new I-20, one that endorses your application for Optional Practical Training. You will sign the new I-20 and make a photocopy. You will keep the original and send the copy along with your application.

4. Mail the checklist of materials above, including your new I-20 (make sure you have signed the new I-20), to the USCIS Lockbox within 30 days of receiving your OPT endorsed I-20. **Warning:** Your application could be denied if your application is not received by USCIS within 30 days of the DSO’s signature on your I-20.
   • If you plan to live outside of Oregon, double check the correct lockbox address here: http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses#Lockbox%20Addresses

**USCIS Phoenix Lockbox**

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:

USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For Express mail and courier deliveries:

USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034

**Important Reporting Requirements while on OPT:**

Before you graduate, be sure to send ISS your:
   1. New address
   2. Non-Reed email address

Throughout the time you are on OPT, you must report the following
   1. Change of address
   2. Change of name
   3. Change of employer, including the start date of employment and mailing address of the employer
   4. Any interruptions in employment

If you decide to leave the U.S. and complete your F-1 program, please send the DSO the date you are departing the U.S.

**Travel and Re-Entry on OPT**

Travel outside of the United States while awaiting approval for OPT or while on OPT can be tricky and should be approached with caution. Please consult with ISS before traveling internationally. In general:

   • If you have both an EAD card and a job, you should not experience difficulty reentering the United States.
• If either of the above two conditions are missing, i.e.: you don’t yet have your EAD, or you are unemployed, you are assuming risk.

When traveling internationally, you should always:
• Travel with your EAD card, in addition to your OPT endorsed I-20 with a travel signature, your passport (with at least six month’s validity) and your F-1 visa (which should be renewed if it is expired)
• Travel with a letter verifying employment from your employer

**What Happens at the end of your OPT?**

Once your employment end date comes, you have a few options:

1. Depart the United States. You have a 60-day grace period. This time is to be used to prepare for your departure and you cannot work during this time.

2. Transfer your F-1 program to another school. If you have plans to transfer to a graduate school in the U.S., contact ISS for assistance in transferring your SEVIS record to your new school. This must be completed during the 60-day grace period following your employment end date.

3. If applicable, you can apply for a 17-month STEM OPT extension (only for those who majored in a STEM field at Reed). Contact ISS for more information regarding the process for the STEM OPT extension, but do so at least three or four months prior to your OPT end date.

4. Change your status. Most commonly, this means that an employer has offered to sponsor your H-1B visa. You will work with your employer and legal counsel to apply for this work authorization.

Please don’t hesitate to contact International Student Services with any questions regarding your OPT work authorization!

International Student Services  
503.517.5538  
iss@reed.edu

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I confirm that I received this information and have read and understand the information above, including what is required of me to report to International Student Services throughout my time on Optional Practical Training.

Print Name: ____________________________________________

Signature: ____________________________________________ Date: __________________