Optional Practical Training:
Application & Checklist
University Center for International Education
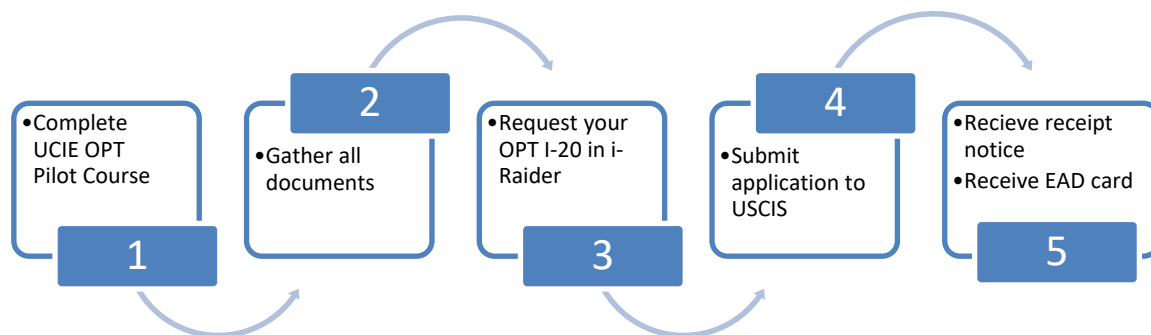3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, E190 SU
Dayton, OH 45435
Ph: (937) 775-5745

OPT (Optional Practical Training) is a benefit of F-1 student status that allows you to work off-campus in your field of study to gain practical experience. OPT after you graduate is referred to as post-completion OPT. Post-completion OPT extends your F-1 status even though you are no longer an enrolled student. It also extends the F-2 status of any dependents who are with you.

In this guide, you will find:
- OPT application process
  - Timeline overview, and choosing a start date
  - Checklist of necessary documents
  - How to apply with USCIS
  - Paying OPT Fee
- Requirements to maintain status during OPT (including SEVP Portal)
- Travel during OPT
- Frequently asked questions
- **Read this packet entirely before applying for OPT in i-Raider**
  - https://i-raider.wright.edu/

Our office is not able to review your OPT application package. You are responsible for reviewing and uploading these items to USCIS.

Optional Practical Training:
Application & Checklist
University Center for International Education
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, E190 SU
Dayton, OH 45435
Ph: (937) 775-5745

APPLICATION PROCESS

- Complete UCIE OPT Pilot Course **1**
- **2** Gather all documents
- Request your OPT I-20 in i-Raider **3**
- **4** Submit application to USCIS
- Recieve receipt notice
- Receive EAD card **5**

1. **Complete the UCIE OPT Course in Pilot with a score of 100%.**
   - To access the course, log into Pilot and self-register for OPT Workshop.
2. **Gather all documents.** Use the Checklist to be sure you have everything you need.
3. **Complete the Post Completion OPT form in i-Raider at:**
   - https://i-raider.wright.edu/
   - After receiving the Request for OPT I-20 Form, UCIE will issue an OPT I-20.
     Please allow for 7 business days to process this request – we will email you when it is ready. You cannot do Step 4 until you have your OPT I-20 from the UCIE office.
4. **Apply to USCIS for OPT authorization. You will upload documents to uscis.gov from the attached Checklist**. Keep in the mind the following:
   - **Please submit an online I765 application at**: https://www.uscis.gov/i-765
   - Submit your application on time! USCIS must receive your application within 30 days of the OPT recommendation in SEVIS.
   - Also, USCIS must receive your application no later than the 60th day after completion of your program requirements.
   - Filing later may result in the loss of eligible time on OPT. Students are eligible for 12 months of OPT which must be taken within 14 months after you finish your program requirements.
5. **Receive your receipt notice.**
   - Upon electronic submission at uscis.gov, you will receive an immediate receipt of filing. The receipt notice includes a tracking number that can be used to track the progress of your OPT application online. To check the status of your case, visit: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/
6. **Receive your EAD card.**
   - Your card should arrive to the UCIE 3-4 months after USCIS receives your application. If you did not use the UCIE address for deliver, please upload a copy of your card in i-Raider

If you receive any other communications from USCIS while your OPT application is being processed, share these communications with your UCIE advisors immediately. We can help you determine if any action must be taken.

Optional Practical Training:
Application & Checklist
University Center for International Education
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, E190 SU
Dayton, OH 45435
Ph: (937) 775-5745

TIMELINE OVERVIEW: CHOOSING A START DATE

You get to choose the start date for your OPT authorization, within the 60-day grace period following your program completion date. Your OPT approval may take three months (or maybe more) to be processed by USCIS, so you need to plan ahead. Here is an overview of the timeline that affects your decision:

Earliest date you can apply to USCIS	*Program End Date*	*Latest date your application can be received by USCIS*
☐	☐	☐
90 days	*60 days*	

- The OPT start date must be within 60 days of the completion of your degree/coursework requirements. * If you have a firm job offer, it may be wise to choose an earlier start date. If you do not, it may be wise to choose a later start date.
- You may apply for OPT up to 90 days before and 60 days after completing your degree requirements. We encourage you to apply as early as possible.

* **Master's and Ph.D. students**: If you have completed all required coursework and are working only on thesis/dissertation research, you may be able to apply for OPT while completing your research, if interested.

CHECKLIST

Once you've received the OPT I-20 from UCIE, prepare and submit the following list of items to USCIS:

☐	**Copy of OPT I-20**	*UCIE will create this after you submit the Request for OPT I-20 in i-Raider*
☐	**USCIS Form I-765**	*Apply online at www.uscis.gov/i-765. Download our Guide to Completing the I-765 to make sure you fill it out properly (find this on the UCIE website).*
☐	**Upload a 2x2 inch full-face passport-style photo**	o *The photos must be identical and color with a plain background.* o ***They must be no more than 30 days old when the I-765 is filed at USCIS.*** o *Head should be positioned directly facing the camera.* o *Photo should capture from slightly above top of hair to middle of chest.* o *Eyeglasses should be worn if normally used. Include headpieces if worn daily for religious purposes; they should not obscure or cast shadows on the eyes or face.* o *Upload photos when asked in the online application at uscis.gov*
☐	**Fee for I-765**	*Refer to I-765 instructions at www.uscis.gov/i-765 for most recent fee amount. Pay online at uscis.gov during the application via credit/debit card*
☐	**Copy of your passport pages showing biographical info and expiration date**	*If the photo in the passport is not clear or varies widely from your current appearance, a clear copy of another form of identification, such as a state-issued driver's license or identification card will also have to be sent.*
☐	**Copy of most recent F-1 visa**	
☐	**Copy of I-94**	*Go to https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov to print your I-94*
☐	**Copies of your previous I-20s**	*If you ever used CPT, these I-20(s) are most important. Include as many previous I-20s as you have. (You kept them all in a safe place, right?)*
☐	**Copy of previous EAD, if applicable**	

Optional Practical Training:
Application & Checklist
University Center for International Education
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, E190 SU
Dayton, OH 45435
Ph: (937) 775-5745

REQUIRMENTS WHILE ON OPT

You are subject to the following requirements while on OPT. Failing to comply may result in difficulties if you apply for any future immigration benefits, such as H-1B. Read carefully.

What kinds of employment are allowed during OPT?

- **Employment must be related to your major**. If the relationship between the job and a student's field of study is called into question by USCIS in the future, the responsibility is on the student to demonstrate the relationship. The *most common* types of employment allowed during standard OPT (not STEM OPT) include:
  - **Paid employment**. Students may work part time (at least 20 hours per week when on post-completion OPT) or full time in a job related to their field of study.
  - **Multiple employers**. Students may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the student's degree program.
  - **Self-employed business owner**. Students may start a business and be self-employed. In this situation, the student must work full-time (at least 20 hours/week). The student must be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to the student's degree program.
  - **Unpaid employment/internships**. Students on the initial 12-month OPT may work as volunteers or unpaid interns, where this does not violate any labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week. These students must be able to provide evidence from the employer that the student worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.

When may I begin working under OPT?

OPT authorization is demonstrated by the Employment Authorization Document (otherwise known as the "EAD card"). **You cannot begin working before having the EAD card in hand. Also, you may only work during the dates listed on the card.** If approved, USCIS will mail this card to the address listed on the I-765. Your authorized dates of employment will be on the EAD card.

What are my responsibilities for reporting?

You are required to report the following information to DHS while on OPT:
1. When you start a new job.
2. When you change addresses.
3. Periods of unemployment.

You must report any/all of these items within 10 days from the change in the SEVP Portal. You can then request an updated I-20 in i-Raider.

SEVP Portal: This website from the Department of Homeland Security is a tool that F-1 students can use to fulfill their OPT reporting requirements directly. You will be able to take responsibility for the accuracy of your employment records. You will also be able to view and make corrections to your employment history and contact information as stored in SEVIS.

Optional Practical Training:
Application & Checklist
University Center for International Education
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, E190 SU
Dayton, OH 45435
Ph: (937) 775-5745

<u>**Who can use the SEVP Portal?**</u>
- During post-completion OPT (first 12 months), you can use the SEVP Portal for all reporting requirements.

<u>**How can you create your SEVP Portal account?**</u>
- After your OPT has been approved by USCIS, you will receive an email with instructions to create your SEVP Portal account. DO NOT DELAY IN CREATING YOUR ACCOUNT.
- This email will come from do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov. If you do not see the email, check your spam or junk mail folder.
- This email will be sent **only** to your WSU email address in your SEVIS record.

It is recommended that students maintain evidence for each job: the position held, duration of that position, the job title, contact information for the student's supervisor or manager, and a description of the work. Note: the SEVP Portal does not currently include the option to reprint your I-20.

After updating your employer information in the SEVP Portal, please submit an OPT update request in i-Raider.

TRAVEL ON OPT

If your EAD card **has not** been issued by USCIS, and you do not have a job or a job offer, you may leave and then re-enter the U.S. to continue to look for employment. There is some risk in this scenario. In order to have the best chance of re-entering the U.S. without problems, prepare the following documents:
- Passport valid for six months after you plan to re-enter the U.S
- Valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport
- I-20 with a travel signature no older than six months
- I-765 receipt notice (Form I-797)

If you need to apply for a new F-1 visa when your post-completion OPT application is pending, you should also be sure to have your I-765 receipt notice (Form I-797) in addition to the usual documents required for a visa application.

If your EAD card **has** been issued by USCIS and you have a job **or** a job offer, you may leave and re-enter the U.S. in order to begin or resume employment. If your EAD card has been issued and you leave the U.S. **before** getting a job or a job offer, your OPT ends and you cannot re-enter the U.S. as an F-1 student.

After USCIS has issued an EAD card, in order to have the best chance of re-entering the U.S. without problems, prepare the following documents:
- Passport valid for six months after you plan to re-enter the U.S.
- Valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport
- I-20 with a valid travel signature no older than six months
- EAD card
- Evidence that you already have a job in the U.S. or that you have a job offer.

Optional Practical Training:
Application & Checklist
University Center for International Education
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, E190 SU
Dayton, OH 45435
Ph: (937) 775-5745

If you need to apply for a new F-1 visa, you should also be sure to have your EAD card and evidence that you already have a job in the U.S. or that you have a job offer in addition to the usual documents required for a visa application.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long can I remain in the US after my OPT expires?
You may only work until the expiration date on your EAD card but you may remain in the US for 60 days after your OPT ends. This is known as a "grace period" and will permit you to prepare to depart the US, transfer to a new institution, start a new degree program, or to apply for a change of status.

If you decide to transfer or start a new degree program at the end of your OPT, you must transfer within the 60 day grace period. You must also start your new degree program within the next 5 months or the next available start date, whichever is sooner.

Only in the case that your employer has filed a timely H-1B petition requesting an employment start date of October 1 will you be permitted to remain legally in the US and continue working. Your permission to continue working and remain legally in the US will automatically end upon the rejection, denial or revocation of the H-1B petition.

Do I have to pay taxes while working on OPT?
Yes. You must pay state *and* federal income taxes.

Do I need a new Social Security Card?
If your SSN card says "**Valid for Employment with CIS Authorization**" you *WILL NOT* need to get your Social Security Number card changed. If it says "**Not Valid for Employment**" you *WILL* need to get it changed. If you need to get your Social Security card changed, take your OPT card, a job offer letter, I-20, passport and a picture ID with you to a local Social Security office.

Can I take classes while on OPT?
If you begin study at another education level, your OPT authorization is terminated with the notification of a new degree program in SEVIS or with a transfer of your SEVIS record to another institution. If you are pursuing work in your major field of study and wish to take a class or two, there should not be a problem with this, provided that you do not begin a new education level. The purpose of OPT is to allow F-1 students to gain experience in their field of study prior to or after completion of program requirements.