



**ARKANSAS STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

**International Student Services**

PO Box 2230, State University AR 72467

Phone: 870-972-2329

[www.astate.edu/international](http://www.astate.edu/international)

Program completion date \_\_\_\_\_

60 days after program completion date \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to request my OPT begin on \_\_\_\_\_

**\*OPT may start any time between the dates indicated in Line A and Line B. The start date may not be earlier than Line A and not later than Line B.**

**If you plan to file for your OPT online, please email the immigration advisor for the checklist and to set up an appointment.**

**DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION UNTIL YOU HAVE MET WITH THE IMMIGRATION ADVISOR AND HAVE RECEIVED YOUR OPT I-20.**

	<u>Completed</u>
Read all rules and regulations regarding OPT	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pay \$100 Initial OPT Fee through Marketplace: <a href="https://secure.touchnet.net/C20019_ustores/web/store_cat.jsp?STOREID=55&amp;CATID=125">https://secure.touchnet.net/C20019_ustores/web/store_cat.jsp?STOREID=55&amp;CATID=125</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete Form I-765 ( <a href="http://www.uscis.gov">www.uscis.gov</a> , click on "Forms")	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete Form G-1145 ( <a href="http://www.uscis.gov">www.uscis.gov</a> , click on "Forms") (ONLY IF MAILING)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain 2 passport style photos (read about requirements on USCIS website if filing online)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Payment- \$410 (Credit/Debit, Bank Account if online, G-1450, personal check or money order to Department of Homeland Security for amount if mailing)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make copies of all immigration documents (I-94, visa, passport, (CPT I-20s if applicable)) If filing Online, please put these documents in a file folder on laptop to use during application process.	<input type="checkbox"/>



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## Post Completion OPT Rules and Regulations

### **1. Who is eligible to apply for post completion (standard) OPT?**

-F-1 student who has been enrolled in a bachelor's, masters or doctoral program for at least 1 academic year.

-Students engaged in full time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for one year are not eligible for OPT.

-English as Second Language students (ESL) are not eligible to apply for OPT.

-Students are eligible to split OPT between two consecutive degree levels as long as they have not applied and been approved for all their OPT on the first degree level. Students who move to a higher educational level forfeit the OPT at the previous level.

### **2. When should I apply?**

Students may apply no earlier than 90 days before the program completion date. The Student Immigration Advisor will set the program completion date as the graduation date. Students' OPT application must be received by USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) no later than 60 days after the program completion date. Students should keep in mind that USCIS can take 60-120 days or longer to approve work authorization.

### **3. How do I apply for OPT?**

Students should complete the OPT checklist located on the A-State International Student Services website. Once all steps are completed the student should make an appointment with the Immigration Advisor to request OPT. All documents should be brought to the meeting. Incomplete application or missing documents will require the student to reschedule the meeting until they have completed application packet. If filing online, please bring laptop to go over the application.



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### **4. What is my "program completion date"?**

A student is considered "finished" by immigration regulations when they have finished all coursework necessary for program completion (excluding thesis, dissertation or equivalent). The DSO usually sets the program completion date as the day of graduation. Students are considered finished whether or not they walk at the graduation ceremony.

### **5. What if I still have to do thesis or take my comprehensive exam?**

Students who have completed all coursework necessary for graduation (including internships) but are required to do thesis, dissertations hours or equivalent (such as a comprehensive exam) may choose to apply for pre-completion or post-completion OPT.

#### **A. Pre-Completion OPT:**

- Students must still be registered in full time hours according to their status (registering for or dissertation hours)
- Students will follow the same procedures to apply for OPT through USCIS

#### Advantages of doing OPT as Pre-Completion:

- Unemployment is not counted towards the 90 days of unemployment requirement
- Students have the flexibility to change their program end date as they define thesis.
- Students are allowed to work full time.

#### Disadvantages of doing OPT as Pre-Completion

- Students are not eligible for the 24 month STEM Extension.
- Students are not eligible for the cap-gap extension.
- When students complete their thesis or dissertation work, they will have to apply again for post-completion OPT. This can cause a gap in work between pre-completion OPT and post completion OPT.



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### **B. Post-Completion OPT**

- Students who choose this option should confer with their academic advisor to understand if they will be conferred a degree if their thesis or dissertation has not been completed. By not being conferred a degree, students may have difficulty finding jobs.

#### Advantages of doing OPT as Post-Completion

- Students can work full time
- Students can apply for STEM Extension if degree is applicable
- Students are eligible for the cap-gap extension

#### Disadvantages of doing OPT as Post-Completion

- Unemployment is counted towards the 90 days of unemployment requirement.
- Students cannot change their program of study date. This means if the student has completed opt but he/she has not finished his/her thesis.

### **6. What kind of work can I do while on OPT? Do I have to have a job offer before I apply?**

No offer of employment is required to apply for OPT. Students may secure employment in a job that is directly related to their field of study. If a student works multiple jobs, all jobs must be directly related to the field of study.

Types of employment allowed:

-**Regular paid employee:** Must work at least 20 hours per week.

-**Contracted employment:** Must provide proof of contracts, times and duration.



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**-Self-employed business owner:** Must work full-time, have proper business licenses and the business must be directly related to the student's field of study.

**-Employment through an agency:** Must provide proof they have worked 20 hours per week at the agency.

**-Volunteering or Internships:** Allowed as long as labor laws are not compromised. Must work at least 20 hours per week. May use this option to stay in status if having difficulty finding paid employment.

**-Multiple employers (such as artists, musicians etc.):** Must keep a detailed list of all employment. Allowed 10 days between paid performances or work in between multiple employers.

### **7. When can I start working?**

Students can only begin work after they have received the Employment Authorization Card (the EAD card) for USCIS. Students may not begin working until the start date on the card has commenced even though if they receive the card early.

### **8. How do I choose a start date?**

The student should choose a date that is at least 1 day after the program completion date and up to 60 days after the program completion date. Students should keep in mind that USCIS processing times and the job search process when choosing a start date.

### **9. What if I can't find a job right away?**

Students on post completion OPT cannot exceed 90 days of continuously accrued unemployment. Students who are outside the US and not working also accrue days of unemployment. Students who exceed the allotted days of unemployment may be considered out of status and can lose future F-1 benefits. Students who switch jobs are allowed 10 days of unemployment between jobs that do not count towards accruing unemployment.

### **10. How long can I work while on OPT?**



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Students are allowed 365 days of employment. If a student engaged in pre-completion OPT, this counts against the total days available for post completion OPT.

### **11. Do I have to let the school know when I find a job?**

Yes. Students must provide the DSO with the employer's name, address, and other relevant information. Students must also report any changes in employment within 10 days of the change. In addition, students must also report their current residential address. If a student moves, they must report the move within 10 days. Students **must** use the OPT Reporting form found on the university's website.

### **12. What if I want to travel outside of the United States?**

If a student has filed the I-765 but have not been approved yet for OPT, travel outside of the US is permitted but not recommended. The student must carry their I-797 Receipt Notice, valid/signed I-20, passport, visa and other relevant immigration documents. If a student is approved while outside of the US, they cannot re-enter unless they have a job offer and have received the EAD card.

If a student has applied for OPT and been approved, travel outside of the US is also permitted. The student must carry the EAD card, valid/signed I-20, passport, visa and employment offer letter. If a student has been approved for OPT but does not have a job offer, they cannot re-enter the United States.

### **13. What is a STEM Extension?**

Students who graduated from A-State with a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics are eligible for a one-time 24-month extension of their OPT status. Majors must have the appropriate CIP code associated with the major as defined by the Department of Homeland Security and the Arkansas Higher Education Board. It has to be an e-verified employer.

### **14. What happens when I'm finished with OPT?**



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Students have 60 days after the end of their OPT to do one of the following:

- Transfer to a new school and receive a new I-20. The start of the new school may not be more than 5 months from the end of OPT.
- Leave the United States.
- Start a new program at the current university and receive a new I-20.

If a student does not do one of the above 3 things, after 60 days the students record will automatically terminate itself. The student will then be considered out of status and will have to file for reinstatement.



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### **Optional Practical Training I-765 Form Instructions**

**Revised: March 2023**

Students can find the most current I-765 form at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) Click on “Forms,” scroll down to form and select I-765 “Application of Employment Authorization.”

Below are the most common questions students have while filling out the form:

The mailing address section- this is the address you would like your EAD card to be mailed or relevant issues regarding your OPT application to be sent to. Please note that it has two spaces. The first space is for street address and apartment #, the second space is for the town or city, the state and country, and the zip code. This must be an address you can receive mail after you graduate so make sure you put an address that will work once you graduate. If it is a friend or relative’s address, please make sure you have their permission before putting the address.

*Example:*        2222 Johnson Avenue, Apt #D7

Jonesboro AR 72401

USCIS and the Social Security Administration now work together to issue Social Security cards at time of applying for EAD card. If you already have one, skip this question. If not, fill out the corresponding information.

Place of your Last Arrival or Entry into U.S.-

You will need to put the airport abbreviation of your last port of entry into the United States. Ex. NYC, LAX, HOU, DAL





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### Eligibility Category-

If you are applying for:

- Pre-Completion OPT your code is ( C ) ( 3 ) ( A )
- -Completion OPT your code is ( C ) ( 3 ) ( B )
- For STEM Extension your code is ( C ) ( 3 ) ( C )

Final Note: Be sure to sign the I-765 in a black ink pen. No other colors or digital signatures are allowed.

**Link to Form** on [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov):

<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>



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## **Optional Practical Training**

### **G-1145 Form**

**Revised: March 2023**

G-1145:

E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance, only used if mailing application

**Link to form** on [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov):

<https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>



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## **Optional Practical Training**

### **G-1450**

The G-1450 is a form for students to pay fees for any USCIS form through a USCIS Lockbox. There is no additional fee to use it and the information is destroyed after the amount is deducted from the credit card. This is only if a student wants to mail an application.

***Instructions on how to use it and link to the form through [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov):***

<https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450>