1. Definition of OPT

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is defined as “temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major of study”. You may be authorized up to 12 months of OPT per educational level. If a student begins a new academic program at a higher level, the student is then eligible for another 12 months of OPT. For example, if a student completed OPT after a Bachelor’s degree, and then enrolled for a Master’s program, the student is eligible to apply for OPT after completing the master’s program.

Please Note: Students in certain qualifying majors may be eligible for an additional 24 months of OPT in addition to the regular 12 month OPT. Those majors are: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). For more information please refer to the OPT 24 month Extension Instructions for STEM Degree Holders on our website.

2. Eligibility Requirements

To qualify for OPT you must:

- Be enrolled for at least one full academic year and
- Be in valid F-1 status and
- Be in good academic standing and
- Seek employment in your area of study

A job offer is not required to apply for OPT, but the student is expected to work or be actively seeking employment in the student’s area of study after the Employment Authorization Card (EAD) is issued.

3. Types of OPT

- Pre-completion OPT (Before completion of studies): Limited to 20 hours a week (part-time) while school is in session and student still has coursework to complete, or full-time during summer vacations. (For more information, please inquire with the International Student Advisor)

- Post-completion OPT (After completion of studies)

4. Application Procedure

All students are required to attend an OPT workshop prior to completing the application. These workshops are held during the semester and dates and times are listed on the website and also available from our office. After attending the workshop follow the steps below to apply for OPT.

Step One - Submit the following to International Services:

1. Completed Optional Practical Training Request Form
2. Completed Form I-765. Type the information on the form, do not hand write. Once complete, print the form and sign in blue ink. This form is available at [http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf)
• Under item #3, list your own address. If you are moving or have had past difficulty in receiving mail at your current address, you should find a friend who will accept your mail, or obtain a U.S. post office box.

• Under item # 10: A-Number or I-94 number, enter your I-94 number unless you have an A-Number from your previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

• Under item 16, enter the code that applies to the type of OPT you are requesting:
  - For pre-completion OPT enter (c) (3) (A)
  - For post-completion OPT enter (c) (3) (B)

**Step Two**- Once your OPT application is processed and OPT I-20 issued, you will receive an email to pick up the I-20.

**Step Three**- Mail your application to USCIS. The application must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the date the I-20 was issued (the date next to the IS staff member’s name on the first page of I-20). Mail the application with the following documents:

• **$410.00** fee in the form of a check or money order payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security. If you are using a personal check, it must list the account holder’s name and address on it.

• **Two color pictures passport style** – see instructions
  On the back of the pictures, write in pencil, your full name and your SEVIS ID number

• **Form G-1145** - Recommended but not required. This form will allow you to receive an email/text when your application is received by USCIS. Type in the information online and print and sign, do not hand write it. The form is available at www.uscis.gov/g-1145

• **Form I-765** - Typed and signed in blue ink

• **Photocopy of OPT I-20**. Sign in blue ink and make a copy of all pages

• **Photocopies** of all previous I-20s issued by MSU and all other schools attended (make clear copies making sure that any date/visa stamps on the I-20s are clearly visible). Do not staple the copies.

• **Photocopy** of any previous Employment Authorization cards, if applicable

• **Photocopy** of Biographical page(s) of passport - page(s) with your name, date of birth, picture, and passport expiration

• **Photocopy** of I-94 card - front and back (make clear copy making sure the date/visa stamp is clearly visible)
  OR electronic I-94 printout

• **Photocopy** of F-1 visa stamp OR **photocopy** of change of status approval notice

**Note:** Do not send any dependent I-20s with the application

**Step Four** – Mail the application to the address below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For U.S. Postal Service deliveries (priori mail): Send certified mail, return receipt requested</th>
<th>For express mail and courier deliveries (RECOMMENDED: Send certified mail, with a tracking number)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USCIS</td>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO Box 660867</td>
<td>Attn: AOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas, TX 75266</td>
<td>2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suite 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lewisville, TX 75067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Be sure to make a complete copy of your application for your records (including the check) before mailing the application.
5. OPT Filing Window

A student applying for post-completion OPT will be able to file up to 90 days prior to program completion date.

6. Selecting Dates for OPT

If you are applying for post-completion OPT, you are given a 60-day grace period following the completion of your studies. Completion of studies is the last day of finals.

Your OPT beginning date must be between the date you completed studies and the end of 60 days following completion of studies.

For example, if you complete studies on May 10, 2017, then the last day that you may request to start your OPT will be July 9, 2017. If you have previously used any OPT, then please check with an International Student Advisor for your beginning and ending dates.

7. Points to Remember

- Once the application is mailed to USCIS it is not possible to change the start and end dates of the OPT.
- You will require a valid Social Security Number (SSN) to work in the US. If you do not have a Social Security Number contact an International Student Advisor.
- If you are working on campus, you must stop on campus employment by final exams (even if you get a letter from payroll stating otherwise).
- You have a 60 day grace period after the end of your OPT. You are not allowed to work during this 60 day grace period. During this time you may prepare to leave the US, transfer to a new degree program and get a new I-20, or change your status. If you are transferring to another degree program at Montclair State University or at another institution, you must contact an International Student Advisor to obtain a new I-20 or to get your SEVIS record released to another institution. Note: This must be done within the 60 day grace period. After that your SEVIS record is automatically terminated.
- Once OPT has been granted you cannot cancel it.
- If during your OPT you choose to begin a new degree program full-time, whether at Montclair State University or at another institution, you must obtain an I-20 for that degree program. You will lose your remaining OPT time. You are required to cease employment upon receiving a new I-20 for the new degree program, or when your SEVIS record is released from Montclair State University to another institution.

8. Types of Employment allowed while on OPT

All OPT employment must be in a job that is related to the student's degree program. This employment may include:

- Paid employment - Students may work part time or full time in their field of study
  - Multiple employers – Students may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be in their field of study
  - Short-term multiple employers (performing artists) – Students, such as musicians and other performing artists may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). The student must maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration.
  - Work for hire – 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.
  - Self-employed business owner – Students on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. In this situation, the student must work full time. 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 field of study.

- Employment through an agency – 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.

- Unpaid employment – Student 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 for students on post-completion OPT. 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.

9. Reporting Requirements while on OPT

During post-completion OPT you are still considered to be in F-1 status. This means that you are required to report to International Services:

- Any change of your name or your address within 10 days.
- Name and address of your employer
- Any interruption of employment or a change in employer name and address

Visit www.montclair.edu/international and complete the on-line ‘OPT Student Report Form’

10. Reporting Changes in Employment to International Services

Students are encouraged to report changes in employment to International Services as soon as possible. It is recommended that students report changes within 10 business days of the change to avoid situations where it may be determined the student is out of status. The following table suggests the best way to report employment or a change in employment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Job</td>
<td>• Name of the employer&lt;br&gt;• Start date of employment&lt;br&gt;• Mailing address for the employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change to a new job</td>
<td>• Name of the previous employer&lt;br&gt;• Ending date of the employment with the previous employer&lt;br&gt;• Start date of employment&lt;br&gt;• Mailing address for the employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple short-term gigs in one period with less than 10 days between gigs</td>
<td>• Report at the beginning of the first gig and indicate “Multiple short term gigs”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work for hire (start)</td>
<td>• Indicate “Self-employed work for hire”&lt;br&gt;• Indicate the start date of the contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work for hire (ending more than 10 days between the end of one contract and the beginning of another contract or a new job</td>
<td>• Indicate “Self-employed work for hire”&lt;br&gt;• Indicate you have no current contract&lt;br&gt;• Ending date of the last contract worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 days of unemployment</td>
<td>• Indicate “unemployed”&lt;br&gt;• Ending date of last job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed business owner (start)</td>
<td>• Indicate “Self-employed business owner”&lt;br&gt;• Indicate date went into business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed business owner (end)</td>
<td>• Indicate “Self-employed business owner”&lt;br&gt;• Indicate date business closed or student no longer worked for the business full time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student decided to exit the United States and complete his or her F-1 status prior to the end date of OPT</td>
<td>• Indicate “Completing OPT and exiting the United States”&lt;br&gt;• Date of exit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Limited Periods of Unemployment to Maintain Status
During post-completion OPT F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students may have up to 90 days of unemployment. Each day during the period when OPT authorization begins and ends that the student does not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment.

12. Travel during OPT
If you wish to travel abroad during OPT you must have the following documents with you in order to reenter the US:

1. Valid OPT I-20 which must be signed by an International Student Advisor at International Services
2. Valid Employment Authorization Card (EAD)
3. Valid passport
4. Valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport
5. Valid employment letter. This letter from your employer must be on company letterhead and must state type of work, salary information, statement that the employment is temporary, and that the student will be employed after returning from travel.

If you do not have all of the documents listed above or plan to leave the US while OPT is pending, it is not advisable to travel. Contact an International Student Advisor for further guidance.

13. H-1B Cap-Gap Extension and OPT Work Authorization until October 1
Duration of F-1 student status and work authorization will be extended for a student on post-completion OPT who is the beneficiary of a timely filed H-1B petition requesting a start date of October 1 of the following fiscal year. This applies to all students, not just students in STEM majors. The extension of status and work authorization would automatically terminate upon the rejection, denial, or revocation of the H-1B petition filed on the student’s behalf.

Contact International Services for to file for the H-1B Cap-Gap Extension.
14. Guidelines for Passport Style Pictures

You will need to submit two color passport style pictures with your OPT application. Make sure the pictures are in color against a plain white background or off-white background. See below examples of good passport style pictures.

**Good Picture Composition**

![Good Passport Style Picture Composition Example]

**Local Photo Studio in Montclair**

**Photo Cullen**
551 Valley Road #A
Montclair, NJ 07043
(973) 746-1234
OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) REQUEST FORM

Part 1: To Be Completed by Student

Name:_________________________ CWID:_________________________
Last Name __________________ First Name __________________
MSU Email address:________________________________________ Phone:_________________________
Alternate Email address:_____________________________________(we will contact you using this email while you are on OPT)
Current Address:___________________________________________
Level of Studies currently pursuing: Bachelor’s _____ Master’s _____ Ph.D _____ Certificate _____
Major:_________________________ Concentration:_________________________
Are you currently a Graduate Assistant on campus? Yes _____ No _____
Type of OPT (check one): _____Pre-completion OPT _____Post-completion OPT
OPT Beginning date:_______________OPT Ending date:_______________(See section on ‘Selecting Dates for OPT’) List the date you participated in the mandatory OPT workshop:_________________________
Describe your proposed employment and how it relates to your major. Give a short description of what type of job you will be seeking and/or job title:
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

List all previous CPT authorizations you have been granted. Include start date, end date, and whether it was part time or full time:
______________________________________________________________

List all previous OPT authorizations, even if you never worked:

OPT Degree Level:_____________________ EAD Start Date:_____________________ EAD End Date:_____________________

Part 2: To Be Completed by Academic Advisor

No. of credits student registered for the current term:_____________________

I anticipate that the above named student will complete all requirements for the current program of study on or about:

Please indicate year: _________ Fall ___________ Spring ___________ Summer ___________

___________________________________________________________
Advisor’s Name & Title

___________________________________________________________
Advisor’s Signature
What follows are the requirements of the U.S. government for maintaining F-1 status during post-completion OPT. By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand these requirements.

- You may work only within the start and end dates listed on your EAD.
- Your F-1 status on OPT is dependent on employment. You may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment between the start and end dates listed on your EAD.
- You must be working at least 20 hours per week.
- You must check with IS if you are unsure whether your proposed employment is authorized.
- Engaging in full-time and/or matriculated study while on OPT is considered a violation of your F-1 status. You must be issued a Change of Level I-20 before you can begin study in a new program, and this will terminate your OPT.
- You are required to report the following information to IS within 10 days of any change:
  - Change of your legal name
  - Change of your email address or phone number
  - Change of your residential/mailing address. If you residential/mailing addresses are different, you are required to report both.
  - New employment (even if you are working for multiple employers)
  - Change of the name and/or address of your employer
  - Any interruption of employment.

Signature: ____________________________ Printed Name: ____________________________ Date: ________________

**Part 4: I-20 Delivery/Pickup Options**

I-20 Delivery/Pickup Options

- Pickup in person*
- A friend/relative* will pick up for me his/her name is: ____________________________
  - * A photo ID is mandatory at the time of pickup
- Use eShip Global (expedited and tracked) to receive my I-20. Visit https://study.eshipglobal.com/ to request express shipping
- Mail by regular mail (not expedited, not tracked) to the following address:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street Address</th>
<th>Unit #</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Zipcode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[8] Tel: 973-655-6862 | Fax: 973-655-7726 | email: intserv@mail.montclair.edu | website: www.montclair.edu/international