OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) is legal F-1 employment authorization which enables you to gain a maximum of 12 months of professional work experience in your field of study, “Pre-Completion OPT” (before graduation) and “Post-Completion OPT” (after graduation).

**Both types of OPT must be recommended by the International Student Services Office and authorized by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) before you may begin working or re-enter the U.S. from another country after graduating. You can refer to USCIS regulation [8 C.F.R. 214.2 (f) (10) (ii)] for additional information.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE 12- MONTH OPT BENEFIT

As an F-1 student, you can be authorized for a maximum period of 12 months per educational level. You become eligible for another 12 months of practical training when you change to a higher educational level. It will be important for you to plan how you wish to “spend” your OPT. For example, when you complete the Associate’s degree you are entitled to 12 months of OPT and when you complete the Bachelor’s degree you are eligible for another 12 months of OPT. However, you will not be eligible for another 12 months of OPT if you complete the Associate’s degree and then do another Associate’s degree.

OPT is calculated on a daily basis. Part-time employment (less than 20 hours per week) is deducted at one-half the full-time rate. For example, four months of part-time OPT is deducted as two months from the total combined twelve months.

The International Student Services Office staff can help you to plan how you’d like to use this benefit!

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

You are eligible for OPT if you:

1. Are currently in your final semester while maintaining F-1 status and, have be attending school full-time for one academic year (two semesters).
2. No job offer is required for either Pre or Post-Completion OPT.
3. Have not previously used your full 12-months OPT benefit on the same academic degree level.
4. Have not used 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training.

APPLICATION PROCESSING

OPT APPLICATION PROCESSING IS A LENGTHY TWO-STEP PROCESS WHICH CAN TAKE AS MUCH AS 90 DAYS! TO MAKE SURE YOUR EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION DOCUMENT (EAD) IS READY TO BEGIN WORK OR TRAVEL, FILE YOUR APPLICATION EARLY!
♦ It is important that you consider the processing time when planning your start date with your employer or make travel plans!

♦ If you are applying for Post-Completion (OPT), you can file your application as early as 90 days **before** you have completed your program.

♦ **Deadlines:** You can apply for OPT before you have completed your studies or you have to apply within 60 days of completing your final semester at BMCC.
  
  **If you have missed these deadlines, in order not to violate your F-1 status:**
  
  o leave the USA within 60 days after the completion of your studies;
  
  o be admitted to a new program of study or
  
  o have an application pending for change of status to some other nonimmigrant status or adjustment of status to permanent resident.

**Step 1: Obtain an OPT Recommendation from International Student Services.**

(1) File your complete application with the International Student Services Office. Be careful to follow the instructions below so we can process your application as quickly as possible.

(2) Your OPT recommendation will be ready for you to pick up within one week.

**Step 2: Apply to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services for your Employment Authorization Document (EAD).**

(1) Mail your OPT Recommendation along with the appropriate documents to the USCIS by priority mail **and certified mail return receipt requested**, following the instruction you have requested, from the International Student Services Office.

PLEASE NOTE:
You must have your EAD (Employment Authorization Document) in your possession before you can begin working or travel and re-enter the U.S. from another country following graduation.

**IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY:** Should you suddenly get a job or need to travel, you may request “Expeditions” or Emergency processing of your application by submitting a letter from the employer or photocopy of an airline ticket or reservation with your application. **We cannot guarantee that USCIS will respond to your request.**

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**HOW TO COMPLETE YOUR OPT APPLICATION**

Complete and submit all of the documents attached to these instructions to the International Students Services Office:

1. **OPT Request Form**

2. **Form I-538:** ONLY FOR LIBERAL ARTS MAJORS - Complete Section A, items 1-8, sign and date. (Form can be downloaded from USCIS website: [http://uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/index.htm](http://uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/index.htm)).

  **Item #3:** *Student Admissions Number* is the number from your Form I-94 Arrival/Departure record. It is also found on your I-20. It is **not** your college identification number.
Item #4: Date first granted F-1 status is the date you first entered the U.S. as an F-1, or were granted F-1 a change to F-1 status. It is found on the first I-20 you ever had.

Item #5: Level of education being sought is Associate’s, Bachelor’s, Master’s etc.

Item #7: Describe the proposed employment for practical training in your description of the type of employment you are looking for (or have located). You must show that it is directly related to your major and appropriate for the degree level you are pursuing/have pursed.

Item #8: List all previously authorized practical training—indicate the starting and ending dates of any previously authorized Curricular or Optional Practical Training.


Item #3: Address in the United States. Indicate an address that will be valid until you receive the EAD card from USCIS. The US Postal Service will not forward mail from USCIS; it will be returned to Immigration. If you are planning to move during your application processing time, you may want to list a friend or family’s member’s address.

Item #9: Social Security Number: This is not your college identification number. If you don’t have a social security number, leave it blank. International Students Services will give you authorization and instructions for obtaining a social security number when your OPT is recommended.

Item #10: Enter the same “admission number” from your form I-94 unless Immigration previously assigned you an “A-number.”

Item #11 - indicates if you have ever applied for Hardship Employment or Practical Training before (excluding Curricular). If yes, enter where and when you applied, and whether it was granted or denied. You will need to attach a photocopy of the Form I-20 or EAD card that contains that employment authorization to the application.

You're Certification - sign; indicate your telephone number and the date.

4. Two Photographs (Green Card Type): Two passport-style color photos with a white background taken no earlier than 30 days before submission to USCIS. They should not be mounted, glossed nor retouched. Your head should be bare unless you are wearing a headdress as required by a religious order to which you belong. The photo should not be larger than 2 x 2 inches, with the distance from the top of the head to just below your chin about 1 and ¼ inches. Lightly print your name & I-94 # on the back of each photo in pencil.

5. $380.00 fee: In the form of a money order payable to the “U.S. Citizenship and Immigration and Services or USCIS.”

6. SEVIS I-20 from BMCC: The ISSO must endorse a new SEVIS I-20 form. Once endorsed, you will send the front and back of BMCC’s SEVIS I-20 with your package.

7. Photocopies of all of your previous I-20s, including language schools (both sides), current form I-94 (both sides), visa, personal pages of passport.

8. Airline ticket or reservation: (photocopy) for “expeditious” handling due to travel only.

Revised/ updated by JS 5/31/13
OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING REQUEST FORM

Name__________________________________________________________ Today’s Date ____________________________

♦ Local Address___________________________________________________________________________________________________
Street   City   State   Zip Code

Phone_________________________ SEVIS # ______________________________ BMCC ID#________________________

Major_________________________      Passport Expiration Date______________________________________________

I am in F-1 Status and have attended school full-time for at least two consecutive semesters. I am requesting authorization for optional practical training employment that is directly related to my major and commensurate or consistent with my educational level.

♦ Note: Indicate an Address in the United States. Indicate an address that will be valid until you receive the EAD card from USCIS. The US Postal Service will not forward mail from USCIS; it will be returned to Immigration. If you are planning to move during your application processing time, you may want to list a friend or family’s member’s address.

I AM APPLYING FOR THE TYPE OF OPT INDICATED BELOW:

I. ________ POST COMPLETION OPT
Post –Completion OPT is recommended for full-time employment for a 12-month period (unless you have requested differently) minus any previously authorized period of OPT.

I am graduating in: ( ) May
( ) July-Completion in summer Session ___
( ) August-Completion in summer Session ___
( ) December

I am requesting OPT from _____________________________ to _____________________________.

We can recommend your OPT to begin as early as the day after the last day of classes and no later 12 months following your start date. USCIS (Immigration), however; can authorize you OPT to begin on any date within the 60 day period after you completed your studies and to end no more than 12 months later.

II. ________ PRE-COMPLETION OPT

( ) FULL-TIME (Only available during vacation period or after completion of all course requirement excluding the thesis or its equivalent).

( ) PART-TIME (Less than 20 hours per week)
DATES: FROM _____________________________ TO _____________________________.
III. _________ “EXPEDITIOUS” or EMERGENCY PROCESSING IS REQUESTED!

If you can prove that you have unexpected employment or travel plans, we will try to assist you in every way to get the fastest EAD processing possible. We cannot guarantee success.

♦ You must include either a letter from your prospective employer or a photocopy of your airline ticket or reservation with this application.

CHECK LIST OF ALL THE DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR AN OPT PACKET.

REMEMBER! INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS RESULT IN PROCESSING DELAYS WITH ISSO!!

__________ $380.00 fee in the form of a money order payable to the “U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services or USCIS.”

__________ TWO GREEN CARD TYPE PHOTOS ON WHITE/LIGHT BACKGROUND (with my name & I-94 # printed in pencil on the back).

__________ FORM I-538 (only for Liberal Arts major).

__________ FORM I-765 Signed with 2 additional copies (please Google INS form I-765 pdf).

*Please read instructions for Form I-765*

__________ FORM G-1145 (please Google INS G-1145 pdf).)

__________ SEVIS I-20 ID with the OPT recommendation from BMCC (the original document).

__________ THREE PHOTOCOPIES OF ALL PREVIOUS I-20s-Including language schools, current I-94 CARD (both sides), VISA, AND PERSONAL PAGES OF PASSPORT.

__________ GRADUATION AUDIT from the Registrar’s Office.

FOR ISSO STAFF:

OPT packet complete ___
OPT packet incomplete ___
ISSO staff initials ________
Date Reviewed _________

When your application packet has been reviewed by one of the International Student Services Staff, make photocopies for your records and send by priority mail and certified mail return receipt request to:

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service
UCIS Dallas Lockbox
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES:

o Submit your EAD work authorization and place of employment to ISSO as soon as you receive a response.

o Expect EAD Work Authorization Card within 90 Days, if not received within this time frame consult with an ISSO representative.

o Immigration regulation allows ONLY 90 days of unemployment during OPT period.
# F-1 Student Job Aid for All Non-STEM OPT Applications

**Note:** This checklist is intended to serve as general guidance on the OPT application process. Your school may have special requirements that are not covered on this checklist. You should always speak with an international advisor at your school regarding OPT or any other benefit associated with your F-1 status.

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<th>Step</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Completed</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>If you believe you are eligible for OPT and would benefit from practical training in your field of study, request a recommendation for OPT from an international advisor who is a Designated School Official (DSO) at your school. Your DSO has to recommend you for OPT in SEVIS and provide you with an updated Form I-20 showing the recommendation. You will submit that Form I-20 with the application for employment authorization.</td>
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| 3.   | Gather all immigration documents and other supporting materials to submit with the application for employment authorization, including the following:  
  - Form I-94 - photocopy of both sides  
  - Valid passport - photocopy of photo page, renewal page if original has expired, and pages showing amendments such as name changes, corrections, etc.  
  - Visa (if applicable) - photocopy of visa page  
  - Photocopies of all Forms I-20 you have been issued  
  - Photocopies of any previous employment authorization documents (EAD)  
  - Two identical photographs (photograph instructions are found on the Form I-765 instructions under Required Documentation)  
  - $340 fee (check or Money Order payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security) |           |
| 4.   | Schedule a meeting with your DSO to receive the updated Form I-20 with OPT recommendation, and to review your application to ensure you have properly completed the Form I-765 and have all of the required supporting documents. |           |
| 5.   | Make a photocopy of all application materials.                                                                                                                                                          |           |
| 6.   | File the Form I-765 and supporting documents listed in item 3 with the appropriate USCIS Service Center (depending on where you live).                                                                   |           |

**Important OPT Reminders:**

- For pre-completion OPT, you can file the Form I-765 up to 90 days before being enrolled for a full academic year, as long as the OPT will not begin until after you have completed a full academic year. If you have been enrolled for a full academic year, you can file the Form I-765 up to 120 days prior to the requested OPT start date.
- For post-completion OPT, you can file the Form I-765 up to 90 days before your program end date and no later than 60 days after your program end date.
- The Form I-765 must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the date your advisor made the OPT recommendation in SEVIS (see page 1 of the printed Form I-20 for the date).
- If you move and do not provide USCIS with your new address, your EAD will be returned to USCIS. To change your address, submit an online Form AR-11 to USCIS, and ask your DSO to update SEVIS.
- Your OPT employment must be directly related to your field of study and cannot begin until you have the EAD card in hand (and the start date has arrived).
- F-1 status is dependent upon full-time employment or volunteer service while on post-completion OPT. You cannot accrue more than 90 days of unemployment while on post-completion OPT. If you are close to 90 days, consult with your DSO.
- You will need to continue to update your DSO with address changes and changes in employment while on post-completion OPT.