International Student & Scholar Services
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is defined by the regulations as "temporary employment authorization for practical training directly related to a student's major field of study." Standard OPT is available for a cumulative maximum of 12 months of employment authorization per higher degree level completed in the U.S. An extension of OPT is available for students with certain STEM degrees and E-Verify employers and can be applied for 90 days prior to the end of OPT.

Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible to apply for OPT, you must:

- ☐ Currently be in the U.S. in valid F-1 status;
- ☐ Have a valid passport and I-94 record indicating F-1 and D/S (duration of status);
- ☐ Have been continuously enrolled full-time for at least one full academic year (fall and spring semester) before your requested OPT start date;
- ☐ Be enrolled full-time at CU Boulder (or be authorized for a Reduced Course Load) in the semester in which you apply for OPT;
- ☐ Have not completed a year of full-time CPT at the current degree level;
- ☐ Have not previously completed a higher degree level in the U.S.;
- ☐ Have not previously been approved for 12 months of OPT at the current degree level or a higher degree level;
- ☐ Have not completed more than a year of full-time CPT at the current degree level or a higher degree level; AND
- ☐ Only pursue employment in your major field of study.

When to Apply for Post-Completion OPT

PLAN AHEAD! OPT applications are processed by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

- **Processing often takes 2- 4 months.**

Post-Completion OPT applications must be received by USCIS:

- No more than 90 days prior to degree completion;
- As late as 60 days after the completion of your degree program or the program end date indicated on your I-20, whichever occurs first; AND
  - ➢ OPT must be completed within 14 months of your degree completion. If you apply for OPT in the 60 days after the completion of your degree, you will likely receive less than 12 months of OPT authorization.

Within 30 days of the date ISSS enters the recommendation for OPT into your SEVIS record.

You cannot apply for OPT if you depart the U.S. during your grace period.

- OPT applications must be filed while you are in valid F-1 status.
- You are not eligible to re-enter the U.S.in F-1 status during your grace period if you do not already have a pending or approved OPT application.

Applying for Pre-Completion OPT or Post-Completion OPT with Thesis/Dissertation Remaining?

- Consult ISSS about the application timeline!

Process for Requesting an I-20 with OPT Request Information

Submit all of your OPT Request Documents to ISSS (Allow a minimum of 5 business days for ISSS processing)

- Drop complete OPT request packet in the ISSS box on the front desk (Monday through Friday 9am - 4:30pm);
- OR sign-in to meet with an ISSS advisor during walk-in advising hours

ISSS Will Review Application Materials & Issue an I-20 Requesting OPT

- ISSS will review your application materials and email you regarding any issues
- ISSS will shorten your I-20 program end date based on your last date of enrollment (if necessary)

ISSS Will Email You to Pick-Up Your I-20 and Application Materials at the Front Desk

- If you would like to meet with an advisor, you must come to ISSS during walk-in advising hours

Documents Required to Request an I-20 for the OPT Application to USCIS

Submit the following documents to ISSS. <u>Color copies are recommended.</u>

☐ **ISSS OPT I-20 Request Form with Advisor Signature**

- You must indicate a requested OPT start date.
- The requested OPT end date will be 1 year from that date minus 1 day (e.g., 5/9/2018 to 5/8/2019).

☐ **$410 Application Fee (Pay by Check, Money Order, or Credit Card)**

- *Credit Card Payment*: Submit the Form G-1450 to authorize a credit card payment
    - Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover

- *Personal Check/Money Order Payment*: Make payable to "*U.S. Department of Homeland Security*"
    - Do NOT abbreviate name to DHS or USDHS; Sign and date the check (month/day/year) on the front of the check (do <u>not</u> sign the back of the check); On the memo line, indicate—OPT and your I-94 number

☐ **Two identical color U.S.-style passport photographs taken within the last 30 days**

- 2" x 2" on plain white or off-white background in accordance with Department of State photo requirements You <u>cannot</u> be wearing glasses, hats, or head coverings unless a personal or doctor's statement is submitted.
- Do not cut, trim, or otherwise alter the photos.
- Do not reuse old photos or photos used in passport/visa applications.
    - If USCIS requests new photos, it will delay OPT application processing.
- Gently write your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo in case they are separated from the application.

☐ **Form I-765**: Type information into the form, print, and sign in *black* ink. Please review the I-765 instructions.

<p style="text-align:center"><b style="color:red">Do not leave any questions blank. If a question does not apply to you, write "NA" or "None"</p>

- Mark "Initial permission to accept employment" as the reason for completing the form
- Item 1: Enter your full legal name in the applicable boxes. See Part 6 if you require more space to enter your name.
- Item 5: Utilize an address you will continue to receive mail at for <u>at least</u> 120-150 days
    - Do not use the ISSS office address
    - If you move, update your address with USCIS Online Change of Address System
    - 5.a.: If your name is not on the lease or you do not live at the mailing address you are providing, enter the name of the official person living at this address
- Item 13.a: Enter "Yes" if you have been issued a SSN and include it in 13.b.

    Enter "No" if you need to apply for a SSN and complete 14-17.b.
- Item 21.a: Enter your complete I-94 number
    - <u>Electronic I-94</u>—Enter the Admission (I-94) Record Number from your electronic I-94
    - <u>Paper I-94</u>—Enter the complete number found on the upper left corner of your paper I-94 card
- Item 21.c: If you entered your passport number in 21.b, leave 21.c blank.
- Item 22 Enter the date of your last entry to the U.S. This will most likely be the date indicated on your I-94 unless you traveled to Canada, Mexico, or an adjacent island for less than 30 days and did not obtain a new I-94.
- Item 23: Enter the city and state where you last passed through U.S. Customs.
    - Unless you utilized the automatic visa revalidation program or completed preclearance outside the U.S., it should be the port of entry indicated in your electronic I-94 travel history.
- Item 26: Enter your SEVIS number is located on your Form I-20.
- Item 27: Please enter the appropriate eligibility category based on the information below:
    - (c) (3) (A)– Pre-completion OPT: *Requested employment* start day is *prior to* degree completion
    - (c) (3) (B)– Post-Completion OPT: *Requested employment* start date is *after* degree completion or after all course requirements with thesis/dissertation remaining

- Part 3, 7.a: Sign (original ink signature) in the box and date.

- Part 4: Do not complete unless you used an interpreter to complete the I-765

- Part 5: Do not complete unless someone else prepared your I-765 (e.g. immigration attorney).

- Part 6: Complete this section IF:
    - You have been approved for CPT in the past
    - You have been approved for OPT in the past
    - You have used a different SEVIS ID in F-1 status in the U.S.
        - Your SEVIS ID can be found in the top right corner of your I-20. It starts with N00…
        - Example: You attended school in the U.S., left the U.S. to take a break from school, and returned with a new I-20. Your SEVIS ID from your initial attendance is different than your current SEVIS ID.
    - You need extra space to provide any other additional information that would not fit on the previous pages of the I-765
    - If you need to complete section 6 for any of the above reasons, complete item 1
    - For each of the items listed above, complete one box in Part 6.
        - It is recommended that you use Page 3, Part 2, Item 27 for each box that refers to previous CPT, OPT, or a different SEVIS number, as this information is required specific to Category (c)(3)(B) per the I-765 instructions, page 4.
        - CPT: Please list your CPT approvals. We suggest this format: CPT Authorizations (as a title to the section). Employer Name; start date-end date; degree level (bachelor's, master's, or PhD). You can find your CPT details on the I-20 that was approved for each period of CPT. Please also include a copy of each CPT approval I-20 with your application.
        - OPT: Please list your past OPT approvals. We suggest this format. OPT Authorizations (as a title to the section). Start date-end date; degree level (bachelor's, master's, or PhD). Please also include a copy of each OPT approval I-20 with your application.
        - Previous SEVIS ID's: Please list the other SEVIS ID's you have used in the past. We suggest this format: Previous SEVIS ID's (as a title to the section). SEVIS ID: N00…; program start date-program end date; degree level (bachelor's, master's, or PhD). Please also include a copy of a previous I-20 for each different SEVIS number you have had.

☐ **Current I-94 Record**
- Electronic I-94: Download copy from the Customs and Border Protection I-94 website.
- Paper I-94 Card: Include photocopies of the front and back of your I-94 card

☐ **Clear (color) copy of your valid passport ID page(s) and any renewal, extension, amendment, or correction pages**

☐ **Clear (color) copy of most recent U.S. entry visa or change of status I-797 approval notice** (Exception: Canadians)

If applicable: ☐ **Clear copies of the front and back of any Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) issued previously by USCIS and photocopies of any related I-20s issued for the I-765 application**

Optional: ☐ **Form G-1145**: Place this form on the top of your application if you would like to receive an email/text message when USCIS accepts your application at the Lockbox

![CU International Student & Scholar Services - University of Colorado BOULDER logo]

ISSS OPT I-20 Request Form

Student Information and Attestation

Name: _____
       LAST Name   First Name

Student ID #: _____

Contact Information During OPT:

    Email Address: _____ Phone: _____

Have you completed one year in status (fall & spring semester)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

List Your Academic Major(s): _____

Requested OPT Work Authorization Dates (start must be within 60 days of your last enrollment):

    Start (mm/dd/yyyy): _____   End (mm/dd/yyyy): _____

Attestation: I understand that during the OPT authorization period I must report the following to ISSS within 10 days of the change via the *OPT Information Update Form*:
- Any legal name change or change of citizenship;
- Any changes to my physical address;
- The name and address of my employer, employment start date, job title, supervisor's information, and explanation of how employment is directly related to my major field of study;
- Any interruptions and terminations of employment or days of unemployment; and
- Any change of status.

I also understand the following:
- On-campus presence is required in my final term;
- Post-completion OPT requires that I finish all required degree coursework by the end of the current term;
    - Undergraduate or a graduate students in a non-thesis option: I confirm that I expect to graduate this term;
- My I-20 end date will be shortened (if necessary) to reflect my last date of enrollment;
- I will not be eligible for on-campus employment including assistantships or CPT after my last date of enrollment;
- To work on OPT, I must have a job in my major, the EAD in my hand, and it must be within the authorization period noted on the card;
- In addition to reporting address changes to ISSS, I must also report address changes to USCIS within 10 days of the change using the Online Change of Address System; and
- Accumulating more than 90 days of unemployment during the OPT authorization period means that I am out of status.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Academic Advisor Verification (Advisor signature required on next page)

Academic Advisors: **Indicate the student's degree level, program type, and complete all additional fields in the program type section**.

Student Degree Level: ☐ BS / BA / BFA   ☐ MS / MA   ☐ PhD

Degree Program Type:

☐ *Undergraduate Student* (**Undergraduate Business School Students: Obtain signature from Kelli Stevens**.)

   The student will complete enrollment for degree on the following date: _____ (e.g., end date of term or session, last day of enrollment), and does not need additional course work to complete the degree if course work is successfully completed in the final semester noted below—

   ☐ Spring ☐ Summer ☐ Fall / Year of Completion: _____ (YYYY).

☐ *Graduate Student No Thesis Option*—**Please enter when the student will complete the degree below.**
The student will complete enrollment for degree on the following date: _____ (e.g., end date of term or session, last day of enrollment) and does not need additional course work to complete the degree if course work is successfully completed in the final semester noted below—

☐ Spring ☐ Summer ☐ Fall / Year of Completion: _____ (YYYY).

☐ *Graduate student with Thesis/Dissertation Option*—**Please complete <u>all</u> fields below**.

- Student <u>completed the necessary course work</u> for the degree:
    ☐ Spring ☐ Summer ☐ Fall / Year of Completion: _____
    (YYYY)
- Student will <u>complete/ completed enrollment</u> for the degree on _____ (indicate date: mm/dd/yyyy).
- Student will <u>defend/defended the thesis/dissertation</u> on _____ (indicate date: mm/dd/yyyy).
- Student is <u>scheduled to graduate</u> ☐ Spring ☐ Summer ☐ Fall / Year of Completion: _____
    (YYYY)

Academic Advisor Information

Advisor Name: _____   Department _____

Email: _____   Phone: _____

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Advisor Notes (including specific grades required for completion if applicable):