Optional Practical Training

OPT Informational Workshop

NMSU International Student and Scholar Services
What is OPT?

• “Temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major area of study.”

• It provides students in F-1 status an opportunity to gain employment experience for one year following completion of their program of study.
Who can apply for OPT?

- Any student in F-1 status who has been enrolled at a SEVIS-approved university for one full academic year and is completing a degree program.
- You must be in good academic standing and have maintained your F-1 status for the duration of your program at NMSU.
Requirements for OPT

• The work experience or position must be related to your field of study and appropriate to your degree level. (Note that you do NOT need to have a job offer to apply for OPT).

• You are required to work during OPT. You cannot be unemployed for more than 90 days because USCIS may determine you are out of status.
CPT in Final Semester

Please note: CPT will not be approved in a student’s final semester unless: 1) the training/internship is required in the final semester for completion of the degree program; and 2) all students enrolled in this degree program must complete a training/internship in the final semester to satisfy degree requirements. CPT eligibility is determined by the department’s curricular policies and not by the student's desire for employment. A student may be eligible to apply for pre-completion OPT for training/internship authorization in those cases where CPT is not appropriate.
When to apply

• No sooner than 90 days before your program end date. No later than 60 days after your program end date.

• This means if you are graduating on 11 May 2019, you can apply for OPT from 11 Feb until 09 Jul 2019.
How to apply

Step 1

• Pick up an OPT packet. Read and fill out the application form (I-765).

• Get your Academic Advisor’s signature on the OPT Request Form.

Step 2

• E-mail ISSS to set up an appointment. Before you come to the appointment, make sure you have the following documents:

  - Completed OPT application (I-765)
  - Form I-94  [https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/)
  - Passport and entry visa
  - Recent Two (2) passport-sized photos (2”x 2”) with white background.
  - Check or Money Order for $410.00 to U.S. Department of Homeland Security
  - I-20 with OPT request, issued within the past 30 days.
How to apply

Step 3

- Mail your application! You can use U.S. Postal Service (USPS) or FedEx, UPS, or DHL Express. ISSS can help you find the correct address.
Important Things to Remember

After your application has been approved:

- When you are employed, you are required to report your employment to ISSS. If you change employers, you must notify ISSS within 30 days of the new employment.

- You may not work during the 60-day grace period after OPT has ended.*
  *If you are applying for the STEM OPT Extension, and have timely filed your application, you can continue working while the application is pending, for up to 180 days beyond the expiration of the prior Post-Completion OPT EAD.

- OPT will not be approved more than once for the same degree level. OPT will also not be approved for a lower degree level.

- You must notify ISSS of any address changes.

Prior to employment:

- The application must be received within 30 days from the I-20 being issued.

- Notify ISSS when your OPT application has been approved. We will issue you an updated I-20 with the OPT approval. Please also send us a scan of your EAD and approval notice.

- You cannot work until you receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and the start date on the EAD has been reached.

- Please discuss with an International Student Advisor any travel plans while your OPT application is pending or after it has been approved.
Questions?

If you have any questions or would like additional help with the OPT application process, e-mail:

Stephanie Staaden- sstaaden@nmsu.edu
Padma Reddi- padmar@nmsu.edu
Michael Schmelzle- mschmelz@nmsu.edu
ISSS- isss@nmsu.edu