



International Student Center

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) PACKET

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study. At PCC, eligible students can apply to both **Pre-Completion OPT (before graduation)** or **Post-Completion OPT (after obtaining degree)**.

Pre-Completion OPT: Any OPT completed before graduation or obtaining a degree

- Authorized by USCIS
- Pre-completion OPT will be counted toward the 12-month allowance (see Post-Completion OPT below)
- Part-time Pre-Completion OPT will count $\frac{1}{2}$ and full-time Pre-Completion OPT will count full. For example, if you are authorized for 2 months of part-time pre-completion OPT, you will only have 11 months remaining to use following the completion of your program of study. If you are authorized for 2 months of full-time pre-completion OPT, you will only have 10 months remaining to use following the completion of your program
- Part-time work (20 hours or less) during Fall and Spring semesters, or full-time work (40 hours) during Winter and Summer semesters allowed **in your major or field of study**
- You do not need to secure employment while applying for Pre-Completion OPT
- No unemployment restrictions. If you do not secure employment after your Pre-Completion OPT is authorized, it will still be counted towards your 12-month OPT allowance
- Must report employer, dates of employment and type of employment to ISC and USCIS
- Employment during pre-completion OPT may include paid employment, multiple employers, short-term multiple employers (performing artists), work for hire, self-employed business owner, employment through an agency or consulting firm, and unpaid employment
 - For more information about types of employment allowed while on OPT, refer to section 7.2.1 on SEVP Policy Guidance.

Post-Completion OPT: Any OPT completed after graduation or obtaining a degree

- Authorized by USCIS
- Students can qualify up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization after completing degree
- If you have completed any pre-completion OPT, your 12 months will be shortened depending on the length of authorization that was previously given
- If you have completed OPT at a higher degree level, you will not be eligible to apply at a lower degree level
- Unemployment restrictions: 90 days of unemployment
- Student must work a minimum of 20 hours per week **in your major or field of study**
- Must report employer, dates of employment and type of employment to ISC and USCIS
- Employment during post-completion OPT may include paid employment, multiple employers, short-term multiple employers (performing artists), work for hire, self-employed business owner, employment through an agency or consulting firm, and unpaid employment
 - For more information about types of employment allowed while on OPT, refer to section 7.2.1 on SEVP Policy Guidance.



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OPT Eligibility Requirements

- Student must have maintained valid F-1 status
- Student must have completed one year as a full-time student
- Student must not have accrued 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
- Student must have applied for graduation with the academic counselor

When to Apply

- **Pre-Completion OPT:** Up to 90 days **before** reaching your one-year of academic study as a full-time student
- **Post-Completion OPT:** Up to 90 days **before** degree completion date (last day of the semester) or up to 60 days **after** degree completion (last day of the semester)
- USCIS must receive the complete OPT application packet **within 30 days of the OPT I-20 issue date.** **The date of when the OPT I-20 was issued is located on page 1 of your OPT I-20**
 - NOTE: Post-Completion OPT Students - If you depart the U.S. during your 60-day grace period before U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services receives your OPT application, you will lose your OPT eligibility

How to Apply

STEP 1: Complete and Prepare the Following Forms

- Schedule an appointment with an academic counselor and **file your petition for graduation**
- [Complete the OPT Request Form](#)

STEP 2: Attend an OPT workshop or watch the recorded video

- Attend an OPT workshop through our Events page www.pasadena.edu/international/events
- View a pre-recorded video of how to file for OPT www.bit.ly/PCCInternationalVideos

STEP 3: Prepare OPT Application Documents

- Do not staple your documents. Use paperclips
- [Application Fee](#) to U.S. Department of Homeland Security. A check or money for the application fee must be made payable to "**U.S. Department of Homeland Security**". View the most updated fees www.uscis.gov/i-765
- Two identical U.S. passport-style color photos taken within 30 days of application. Write down your name and I-94 number in pencil on back of the photos. Put **both** check and passport photos in a plastic bag
- Original Form G-1145. Download at www.uscis.gov/g-1145
- Original Form I-765. Download at www.uscis.gov/i-765 (type and sign the form)
 - Instructions on how to complete the I-765 form can be downloaded at www.uscis.gov/i-765
- Recent I-94 admission record. Download at www.cbp.gov/i94 OR a copy of paper I-94 (front and back)
- Copy of your OPT I-20 and copies of all the I-20s you have ever had. You must sign every I-20



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before making a copy

- Copy of passport picture page
- Copy of F-1 visa or I-797 Approval Notice for F-1 if you changed status in the U.S.
- Copy of previously issued Employment Authorization Document (EAD) (if applicable)
- [ISC's Optional Practical Training \(OPT\) Request Form](#) – This is only for ISC

STEP 4: Book an Appointment with an ISC Educational Advisor to Review Documents

- If everything is in order and the ISC advisor determines that you meet all eligibility requirements for OPT, the advisor will issue an updated SEVIS Form I-20 with an OPT recommendation
- You will receive an email with instructions on how to pick-up or receive your OPT I-20

STEP 5: Mail your OPT application

- Mail your application **within 30 days of the OPT I-20 issue date**. The date of when the OPT I-20 was issued is located on page 1 of your OPT I-20
- Mail your application to the appropriate USCIS Lockbox depending on the mail carrier you choose
- Make copies of your application materials for your records before mailing your application
- Please check the USCIS website (<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses>) to find the correct mailing address. Make sure to click on "Foreign Students" on the accordion drop-down and look at OPT.

STEP 6: After you apply

- Processing times for OPT applications by USCIS may range from 2 to 3 months
- You will receive the **I-797 Receipt Notice** via mail in about a month after you submit your application to USCIS. This form confirms USCIS has received your application
- You can check your application status online at www.uscis.gov go to "Check your Case Status"

When can I start working?

For Pre-completion OPT

- May begin once you receive authorization from USCIS
- While participating in pre-completion OPT, there is no unemployment restriction. In other words, you may be authorized for pre-completion OPT even if you never actually work. However, the time for which you are authorized will be deducted from your 12-month allowance, whether you work or not
- The date that you request as the start date does not necessarily mean it is the start date that will be approved. Therefore, **you must have the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) in your possession and the start date on the EAD must be reached before you may start working**
- If you change your address while your OPT application is pending, submit the changes to USCIS at <https://egov.uscis.gov/coa/displayCOAForm.do> **as soon as possible**.
- You must also update your address on your LancerPoint account and report the changes to ISC within 10 days of the change

For Post-Completion OPT



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- May begin once you receive authorization from USCIS and any time up to 60 days after completion of all your degree requirements
For example, if you will finish all degree requirements by June 15th, then the last day that you may request to start your period of OPT will be August 14th
- The date that you request as the start date does not necessarily mean it is the start date that will be approved. Therefore, you must have the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) in your possession and the start date on the EAD must be reached before you may start working
- Once you have completed all degree requirements, **you may not work in any capacity** until you have received your EAD. **This includes on-campus employment**
- If you change your address while your OPT application is pending, submit the changes to USCIS at <https://egov.uscis.gov/coa/displayCOAForm.do> **as soon as possible**.
- You must also update your address on your LancerPoint account and report the changes to ISC within 10 days of the change

After you receive OPT approval from USCIS

Documents will be mailed to you from USCIS and you will receive email notifications on how to create your SEVP OPT Student Account. Once OPT has been approved, it is difficult to cancel. You will have to use it or lose it.

- Student will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) mailed directly to you at the address on Form I-765. **Provide a copy of your EAD to ISC via email iso@pasadena.edu**
- Student **cannot accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment during the 12-month period of post-completion OPT**
- Create the **SEVP OPT Student Portal** account to report your employment. You will receive a unique link from the Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP) to the email you listed in your I-765
- Once you obtain a job offer, report the following information to ISC via email and update your portal account:
 1. Explanation how your job is related to your major
 2. Employer's name and telephone number
 3. Supervisor's name and contact information
 4. Employer's address including city, state, and zip code
 5. Employment start date and your job title
 6. If your employment is full-time (20 hours or more per week) or part-time (less than 20 hours per week)

During your period of Post-Completion OPT

You are still considered to be in F-1 student status. Although you do not have to register for 12 units, you must still follow all other F-1 student status rules.

- You must keep ISC informed of any changes in your name, address, or any other information about your stay in the U.S. Failure to report any changes to ISC may jeopardize your legal status in the U.S.
- If you travel outside the U.S., you must obtain a travel signature from an ISC advisor in the International Student Center. Travel signatures are valid only for 6 months during OPT
- If you change your status, you must submit a copy of the approval Notice (Form I-797) to the ISC
- If you begin a new degree program full-time at another institution and during your authorized period of OPT, you will lose any OPT time remaining on your EAD



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- You will be required to stop employment upon release of your SEVIS record from PCC to the new institution or upon issuance of a new Form I-20 for a different program
- Once you are transferred out, your OPT will automatically cancel
- Report employment and keep track of your OPT by reporting changes to ISC and the SEVP OPT Student Portal

After your Post-Completion OPT Ends

You have a 60-day grace period after the expiration date on your EAD to take one of the below actions. There is no option to extend the OPT on an Associate's degree. When the 12 months have been completed, you must seek another visa status if you wish to remain in the U.S. to continue employment

- You may transfer to a new degree program
- You may depart the U.S
- You may change your status, if eligible

Travel during Post-Completion OPT

You may travel outside the U.S. during your OPT but you must receive a travel signature from ISC. Travel signatures on OPT I-20 are valid for 6 months

- Student must have a valid passport
- Student must have a valid F-1 visa
- Student must have an OPT I-20 with a travel signature (signature is valid for 6 months during OPT)
- Student must have the EAD card or I-797 Approval Receipt Notice
- Regulations only permit you to re-enter the U.S to resume OPT employment
- We do not advise you to travel if you have not secured employment
- Recommended: unofficial transcript, a job offer letter from an employer, and EAD or I-797 Receipt Notice



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OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) REQUEST

FOR STUDENT TO COMPLETE	
Last Name:	First Name:
PCC ID#:	Date of Birth (month/day/year):
Cell Phone #:	City of Birth:
PCC Email Address:	@go.pasadena.edu
Major:	

OPT Start Date (month/day/year):	OPT End Date (month/day/year):
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Describe your proposed employment and how it is related to your field of study. This information will be added to your SEVIS (immigration) record and is used by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to make a decision. What you write here does not limit you to work only in those organizations/with those populations, etc. Use additional pages if needed.

Have you been authorized for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) before? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you been authorized for OPT before? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If YES, at what degree level? <input type="checkbox"/> Associate <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> Master <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate

I have read the information regarding OPT and understand the responsibilities required for maintaining F-1 status during pre or post-completion OPT and during my period of OPT authorization.

Signature of Student:	Date (month/day/year):
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FOR ACADEMIC COUNSELOR TO COMPLETE

I recommend this student for **OPT** and certify that they have petitioned for graduation. The expected date of degree completion* is _____ (month/day/year). *Date of degree completion is the date when the student completes his/her Associate degree requirements

Academic Counselor's Name:	Academic Counselor's Signature:	Date (month/day/year):
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For office use only: Initials: _____ Date: _____ Units: _____ SEVIS: _____ BANNER: _____ Request Log: _____ SARS: _____ Email student: _____
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