OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) PACKET

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is employment that allows international students to apply their classroom knowledge in a work environment. OPT is a 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 United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
- Pre-completion OPT will be counted toward the 12-month allowance (see Post-Completion OPT below)
- Part-time Pre-Completion OPT will count ½ 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
- 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 <u>SEVP Policy Guidance</u>.

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

- Authorized by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (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 <u>SEVP Policy Guidance</u>.

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 to apply for Post-OPT
- Employment must be related **directly** to your major/field of study
- Student must receive an updated I-20 with OPT recommendation
- OPT application decision is made by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
- Student must **NOT** have already completed OPT at the current or higher level

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 for OPT

STEP 1: Complete and Prepare the Following Forms

- Schedule an appointment with an academic counselor and **file your petition for graduation**
  - For Pre-Completion OPT, talk to your F-1 Advisor
- Complete the OPT Request Form
- **Plan ahead and apply early!**

STEP 2: Attend an OPT Workshop and Complete the OPT Canvas Course

- Attend an OPT workshop. Check our Events page www.pasadena.edu/international/events for upcoming employment events.
- Email your F-1 Advisor for OPT Canvas invite

STEP 3: Prepare OPT Application Documents for Online Filing

Required Documents	
Application Fee	Pay by credit card or debit card
U.S. Passport-style (2x2) color photo	1 digital photo
Form I-765	Complete online
Recent I-94 (port of entry record)	Download at I-94 - Official Website (dhs.gov)
I-20s	Prepare copies of all I-20s issued to you. You must sign every I-20
OPT I-20	To be issued by your F-1 Advisor
Passport	Prepare a copy of your valid passport ID page
F-1 visa	Prepare a copy of your F-1 visa page (inside your passport) or change of status approval receipt
EAD	Prepare a copy of all previously issued Employment Authorization Document (EAD) (if applicable)
ISC's OPT Request Form	Complete ISC's Optional Practical Training (OPT) Request Form – **This is only for ISC. Do not upload**

To file by mail, see your F-1 Advisor

STEP 4: Book an Appointment with your F-1 Advisor to Review Documents

- If everything is in order and your F-1 advisor determines that you meet all eligibility requirements for OPT, your advisor will issue an updated SEVIS Form I-20 with an OPT recommendation
- You will receive an email with your OPT I-20

STEP 5: Reminders Before You Apply

- You must first receive your OPT I-20 from your F-1 Advisor **before** submitting your OPT application materials via the USCIS online application portal.
- Submit your online 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.
  - Applications received by USCIS later than 30 days from the issuance date on page 1 of your OPT I-20 will be **denied**.
- USCIS **must** receive your completed OPT application materials **before** your 60-day grace period ends.
  - The 60-day grace period begins after your "program end date" listed on page 1 of your OPT I-20.
  - Applications received by USCIS **after** the 60-day grace period will be **denied**.
- **Incomplete** applications will be **denied** by USCIS.

STEP 6: Submit your application to USCIS Online

- **Create** an account with USCIS at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/create-account
- **Select Form I-765** to apply for OPT – this will redirect you to the online Form I-765
- **Choose the correct type of OPT -** Pre-OPT or Post-OPT
- **Complete** all appropriate boxes
- **Name** each document with your name and document type (ex. Larry LANCER – I94)
- **Upload** required documents (evidences)
- **Pay** application fee online
- **Submit** your OPT application
- **Receive** an application receipt notice
- **Check** application status via your *MyUSCIS* account.

 ** Premium processing service is available for OPT application for additional cost.

To file by mail, see your F-1 Advisor
 If you are requesting premium processing service by mail, you must also file Form I-907.

STEP 7: After You Apply to USCIS via the Online Application

- Processing times for OPT applications by USCIS may range from 3 to 5 months
- If you paid for premium processing service, you may receive a decision faster
- Get your I-797 Receipt Notice digitally via your *MyUSCIS* account
- You can check your application status from your *MyUSCIS* account or online at www.uscis.gov
    - Click on "Check your Case Status"
- If your OPT application is approved, your EAD card will be mailed to the U.S. mailing address that you provided on your I-765 Form
- You **cannot** start work until you are approved by USCIS

Note: Do not contact USCIS multiple times as it will slow down the process. Please note that the application is under your name and ISC staff **cannot** contact USCIS on your behalf.

STEP 8: After You Receive OPT Decision from USCIS

- You will receive a decision from USCIS via your *MyUSCIS* account and by mail
- Once OPT has been approved, you **cannot** cancel. You will have to use it or lose it
- You will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) mailed directly to you at the address on Form I-765.
    - **Email a copy of your EAD to your F-1 Advisor**
- You may begin your employment **after** you receive your EAD card
    - Check your employment start date on your EAD card
- You **cannot** accumulate more than **90 calendar days** of unemployment during the 12-month period of Post-Completion OPT
- You must create the **SEVP OPT Student Portal** to report your employment
    - You will receive a unique link from the Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP) to the email you listed on your Form I-765 on the start date of your EAD card
- Immediately after you obtained a job offer, report the following information to your SEVP OPT Student Portal within 10 calendar days:
    1. Explain 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 the Period of Your 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.

Employment

- Report employment and keep track of your OPT by reporting changes to ISC and the SEVP OPT Student Portal
- Employment during Post-Completion OPT **must** be full-time (20+ hours per week)
  - If you are employed for **less** than 20 hours per week, you will **still accrue** unemployment days
  - **Maximum** unemployment days allowed is **90 calendar days**
- You must be employed full-time and not have accrued more than 90 calendar days of unemployment days in order to maintain your F-1 status
- You can purchase the **optional** PCC international student insurance by directly contacting PCC's international insurance provider
- 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 change your status, you must contact your F-1 Advisor
- If you begin a new degree program at another institution during your authorized period of OPT, you will lose any OPT time remaining on your EAD
- Once you are transferred out, your OPT will automatically end
- You will be required to stop employment once your I-20 record is transferred from PCC to the new institution

Travel During Post-Completion OPT

- Request travel signature from your F-1 Advisor.
- Travel signature is only valid for **6 months** during OPT
- Travel is **not recommended** while USCIS is processing your OPT application
- Student must have a valid passport and valid F-1 visa
- 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 documents:** unofficial transcript and your job offer letter from your employer

After Your Post-Completion OPT Ends

You have a 60-day (calendar days) grace period after the expiration date on your EAD card to decide what's next. 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.

- You may transfer to another U.S. institution or stay at PCC to study a new major
- You may depart the U.S
- You may change your status, if eligible

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):
Describe your proposed employment and how is it 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?   ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**

Have you been authorized for OPT before?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
If YES, at what degree level?   ☐ **Associate**   ☐ **Bachelor**   ☐ **Master**   ☐ **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):**

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):**