

Applying for Optional Practical Training (OPT)

What is optional practical training?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is available to F-1 students who have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis in a USCIS approved college, university, conservatory, or seminary for one full academic year. OPT has a cumulative maximum of 12 months per degree sought. OPT does not require a job offer, BUT the job should be directly related to your field of study.

Plan Ahead!!!

1. In order to be eligible for OPT you must apply within 60 days of your date of graduation.
2. It takes approximately **90 to 120 days** to process a request for OPT and an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). You cannot begin working until you have received your EAD.

The Application Procedure

1. Take some time to read over this information packet. It has a lot of important information to help you through the application process.
2. Compile all of the necessary documents.
3. Make an appointment with your international student counselor.
4. Arrive at your appointment with all of the documents on the application checklist. If you arrive late or without your documents, you will need to reschedule.

Application Checklist

- Form I-765****, the Application for Employment Authorization, marked with the code:
(c)(3)(A) for pre-completion OPT
(c)(3)(B) for post-completion OPT
(c)(3)(C) for a 17-month STEM OPT extension.
at item 16 (*Please make sure to use Form I-765 Rev. 9/31/11 version.*)
- GGU's OPT Application Form** (This document is used by GGU and is not required by the USCIS)
- A check or money order in US currency payable to "Department of Homeland Security" in the amount of \$340.**
- Obtain 2 full frontal/passport style photos** - A sample picture is provided at the end of this packet. Please note the change in style from photos previously requested.
- A copy of both sides of your Form I-94**
- A copy of the visa page of your passport**
- A copy of the biographical information pages of your passport**
- An updated SEVIS I-20** (provided by your international student advisor)
- A copy of all of your previous I-20s**
- A copy of any previous Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) you may have used.** (If this is your first application for work authorization you will not have an EAD.)

Please bring your **passport** to your appointment with the international student counselor!

**Form I-765 is included in this packet of information it is also available on-line at:
<http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf>

Important Information About OPT

❖ There are Four Types of OPT

1. *Vacation Period Practical Training:* You may work full or part-time in a job related to your field of study during the breaks between semesters if you are currently enrolled and plan to register for the next term.
2. *While School is in Session:* You may work up to 20 hours per week during the academic year in employment related to your field of study.
3. *Thesis Practical Training:* You may work full or part-time in employment related to your study when all course requirements are completed for the degree and you are working on your thesis.
4. *Post-Completion Practical Training:* When all the work for a degree has been completed, you may work full or part-time.

❖ Can I use more than one type of OPT?

Yes, but you only have 12 months of OPT per degree level sought. Part-time OPT is deducted from the 12 month total at a rate of 50%. For example, if you use 6 months of part-time optional practical training, then this is equivalent to using 3 months of full-time optional practical training. You will need to file a new application and pay the \$180 fee for each period of OPT your request.

❖ When should I apply for OPT?

All requests for OPT must be received by the California Service Center before the date of your graduation. Your date of graduation is the date you complete all of the requirements for your program of study. Your graduation date is *not* the date of your graduation ceremony or the date you receive your diploma.

Requests for employment authorization require a minimum of 90 days to process. Sometimes it can take as many as 120 to 140 days for the California Service Center to process your request. You will need to plan ahead!

❖ What kind of work can I do under OPT?

You should engage in work that is directly related to your field of study. The type of work you do should be commensurate with the degree level you have earned.

❖ When do I become eligible to apply for OPT?

You must have been enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year.

❖ If I plan to use my OPT after I graduate, when do I need to begin working?

All optional practical training must be completed within 14 months following completion of study. In other words, you may request an OPT start day within 60 days of your date of graduation. OPT does not require that you have a job, but if you remain in the US on OPT after graduation you should be looking for employment.

❖ **Where do I mail my application?**

We recommend that you send your application by US certified mail or with delivery confirmation. You should mail your entire application packet to:

US Department of Homeland Security
US Citizenship and Immigration Service
California Service Center
P.O. Box 10765
Laguna Niguel, CA 92607-1076

❖ **How can I learn the status of my application?**

Check Your Application Status online at: <https://egov.immigration.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp> or by calling: 1-800-375-5283. You will need to have your 13-character application receipt number. It is a 10 digit number preceded by the letters "WAC."

❖ **When can I begin working?**

You must receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from the California Service Center before you begin working. The first day that you may begin work is the start date indicated on your EAD.

❖ **Can I continue using my optional practical training and begin a new degree program?**

No. If you begin full-time study at another educational level, your OPT will be terminated. Students using OPT are allowed to take classes on a part-time basis. You should consult with an international student counselor before enrolling in classes.

❖ **How does OPT affect my ability to travel outside of the U.S.?**

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), an Office of the US Department of Homeland Security, recently revisited its policy concerning reentry for students on OPT. Based on this new interpretation we advise students to travel outside the US only if they can establish that they are currently employed in the US or have a valid offer of employment.

Students on OPT should plan to present the following documents at the US Port of Entry:

1. A valid EAD
2. An official letter of employment or offer letter
3. A current I-20 with a travel signature on the third page, dated within the last six months
4. A valid F-1 visa
5. A passport valid for at least six month

❖ **Can I cancel my OPT application?**

Once your application for OPT has been approved it may not be cancelled. If you decide you would like to cancel your application **before** authorization has been granted, you may submit a request to the California Service Center to cancel your request. International Admissions and Advising Services can assist you with canceling your application.

❖ **I lost my EAD card, how do I get a new one?**

You will need to apply to the California Service Center for a new card. You will need to submit a copy of your original application as well as a new \$340 application fee. If you have a copy of your lost EAD card you should submit this as well. You may continue working with the same company while your request is being processed.

❖ **I applied for my EAD more than two months ago and I am scheduled to work very soon. Can I get paid by the company at a later date for the short period that I did not have my EAD?**

No! Working without a work permit is a serious violation of your immigration status, and could be grounds for deportation.

Note: Students who have been authorized for 12 months of OPT are eligible for another 12 months of OPT when they change to a higher educational level.



International Admissions and Advising Services

GGU's OPT Application Form

Student Information

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

GGU ID#: _____ SEVIS ID#: _____

Degree Program: _____

OPT Dates

Please provide us with the start and end dates you would like to request for your OPT. The start date must be within 60 days of your graduation. The USCIS considers the date of your graduation to be the last day of your last class. You should be aware that you will not be able to begin work before the start date that you have requested AND you have received your EAD card. Your international counselor can assist you with selecting the most appropriate date.

Beginning Date: _____ End Date: _____

Do you wish to apply for part-time or full-time OPT?

Part-time Full-time

Please read carefully and initial each item.

I understand the following requirements while I am on OPT and agree to the following:

I am responsible for reporting any changes/updates to my personal information as listed below, to my GGU International advisor (DSO).

- _____ address change within 10 days of change. (Update address through GGU4You)
- _____ employer's name and address as soon as I get a job.
- _____ any periods of unemployment while on OPT.
- _____ early departure. (Leaving the U.S. prior to completion of OPT)
- _____ I have been informed of traveling guidelines after applying for OPT and fully understand the risks involved.

GGU International Admissions and Advising office (IAA) **strongly** suggests that you send a photocopy of your Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) to the IAA office immediately after you receive it.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Photo Requirements

The easiest way to obtain the appropriate photo is to go to a local pharmacy or copier service and request passport pictures. The Copy Shoppe and Walgreens are both located near GGU's San Francisco campus and offer this service.

5 Steps to Successful Photos

- ☑ The picture should show the full front view of the face with the eyes open.
- ☑ Make sure photo presents full head from top of hair to bottom of chin; height of head should measure 1 inch to 1-3/8 inches (25 mm to 35 mm)
- ☑ The photo should be taken against a plain white or off-white background
- ☑ Make sure there are no distracting shadows on the face or background
- ☑ Have a natural expression

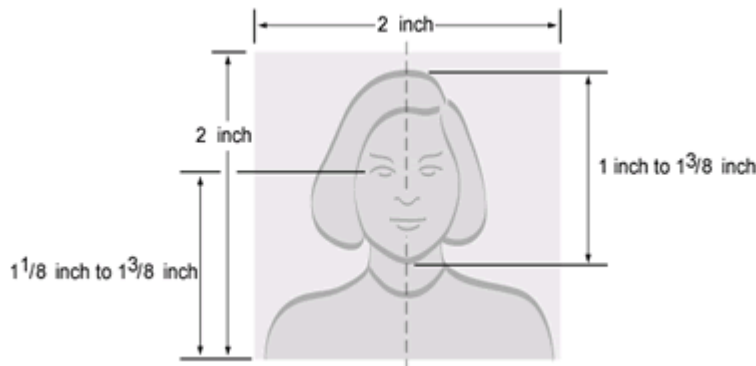


Figure 2. Head Position & Placement

Well-Composed Photos

