OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) CHECKLIST

The Office of International Services and Engagement (OISE) recommends we review your completed OPT documents before you submit your online OPT application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Please gather all of the following documents before submitting the Pre-OPT Review Form: https://laverne.edu/oise/pre-opt-review-form/

OPT REQUEST FORM
- This form must be completed and approved by your academic advisor **before** submitting it to the OISE.
- Your OPT start date must be within 60 days after your program completion date.

CREATE YOUR ONLINE USCIS ACCOUNT
- Sign up for an USCIS account: https://myaccount.uscis.gov/
- This is a multi-step verification, they will verify your email, and require a second verification.

DIGITAL U.S. STYLE PASSPORT PHOTO
- 2x2 inches (51 x 51 mm) color photo that meets USCIS specifications
- Want to scan an existing photo? Must be a photo taken within the last 30 days and it must not have been used in any other applications. Also, picture must be scanned at a resolution of 300 pixels per inch (12 pixels per mm)
- To check if an image is eligible, use the photo tool found here: https://tsg.phototool.state.gov/photo
- If you don't know where to go, an option is: Claremont Photo, 241 Harvard Ave., Claremont, 91711

COPY OF PASSPORT PHOTOGRAPH PAGE

COPY OF FRONT AND BACK OF ANY PREVIOUS EAD CARDS (if applicable)

COPIES OF PREVIOUS I-20s WITH CPT OR OPT INFORMATION (if available)

DIGITAL COPY OF YOUR I-20 WITH OPT RECOMMENDATION
- OISE will issue you an OPT I-20 after you submit your OPT Request Form.
- Must be issued within the last 30 days for post-completion OPT.
- I-20 must be signed by an OISE advisor and by you (digital or handwritten signature).
- All 3 pages of the I-20 must be saved as a single document.

COPY OF MOST RECENT I-94
- Use this link to obtain your I-94 and select "Get Most Recent Form I-94": https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home

MUST HAVE CREDIT CARD/DEBIT CARD OR ACH to pay online filing fee ($410)

HELPFUL HINTS:
1. Rename all files with LAST NAME (all CAPS), First Name and the name of the document (Example: Mouse Mickey Digital Photo.pdf)
2. 6 mb max file size
3. Use Jpg, jpeg—for your digital photo
4. Use Jpg, jpeg, pdf, tif, tiff—for all other documents

SUBMIT ALL OPT DOCUMENTS TO THE OISE FOR FINAL REVIEW
Fill out the Pre-OPT Review Form and upload all the documents listed on this checklist. Once all your documents have been reviewed by our office, we will issue an OPT I-20 to you. After you have been issued the OPT I-20, we will schedule your OPT Final Review where we will assist you in filing your application online (approximately 1 hour).

AFTER OPT IS APPROVED
Once your OPT is approved and you receive your EAD card, please notify our office by emailing us a copy of your EAD card (front and back) so that we can issue you an OPT Approved I-20. Immigration regulations require F-1 students on post-

completion OPT to report their employment, U.S. address, telephone number and any contact information updates to be reported to OISE within 10 days.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHEN SHOULD I APPLY?
Apply early since it takes on average of 3 months to receive your EAD card from USCIS. Expedites are not available. The earliest OISE can process an OPT request form is **90 days before** your program end date. The latest USCIS can receive the application is the 60th day following your program end date. It can take anywhere from 2 days to 2 weeks to prepare the OPT application packet (depending on your schedule).

HOW WILL I KNOW IF USCIS WANTS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?
USCIS will communication with you via letters mailed to your mailing address. If they request additional information, you will receive a letter in the mail.

WHEN CAN I START WORKING?
You must wait until you have received your EAD card. Your start date will be printed on that card.

WHAT IF I FIND A JOB BEFORE THE OPT START DATE?
You must wait to start working until the start date printed on your EAD card. Please note that you cannot start working before that date under any circumstances. Any unpaid or paid employment before or after your approved EAD authorized work dates can jeopardize your immigration status.

WHAT DO I DO ONCE I FIND A JOB?
Once you have a Job Offer Letter, update the OISE by submitting the OPT Change of Employment form using this link: https://laverne.edu/oise/opt-change-of-employment/. There's a section on the form where it will ask you to attach your Job Offer Letter, make sure the letter is on company letterhead.

WHAT COUNTS AS EMPLOYMENT?
OPT is intended to enhance your academic program by providing a means to gain experience in your field of study. Working in a position that does not relate to your field of study is a violation of your F1 status. Students must work at least 20 hours a week in either a paid or unpaid position.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I CANNOT FIND A JOB?
If you accrue more than 90 days of unemployment (or if you fail to update your employer information while employed), USCIS will automatically terminate your record, which will end your legal presence in the US and forfeit your remaining OPT time. If your immigration record is terminated, you must leave the US immediately, as there is no grace period. If you exceed the 90 days of allowable unemployment, you will no longer be in a valid immigration status, and this can affect your ability to remain in the US, and may mean ineligibility for future immigration benefits (such as a change of status to H-1B), or denial of a future visa application. Therefore it is critical that if you can't find employment, you either apply to continue your studies in a new program (and have your new I-20 in place before the 90 day grace period ends), or plan to depart the US before your I-20 closes, because once it closes you are considered out of status.

CAN I TRAVEL WHILE I AM ON OPT?
Yes, traveling is possible while on OPT. You need to time your re-entry and carry the necessary documents upon the re-entry to the U.S. Please email the OISE for a travel signature prior to your travel at least 3 weeks in advance (only valid for 6 months while on OPT). Your passport and visa must not be within 6 months of their expiration dates.

WHAT ELSE DO I HAVE TO DO WHILE I AM ON OPT?
You must report any change of employment, address, or contact information within 10 days to OISE. Remember, it's your responsibility to keep the OISE updated with any changes.

WHAT ABOUT HEALTH INSURANCE?

Students are no longer eligible for the student health insurance plan administered by the University of La Verne once they have completed their program. Below are some health insurance options. *Please note these are optional.*

HEALTH CARE COVERAGE

1. International Student Insurance: http://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com
2. CISI Cultural Insurance Services International: https://www.culturalinsurance.com/#cultural-insurance
3. International SOS: http://www.internationalsos.com
4. International Student Organization: http://www.isoa.org
5. Wallach and Company, Inc.: http://www.wallach.com
6. International Student and Scholar Health Insurance: https://www.psiservice.com

HOW DO I APPLY FOR AN OPT STEM EXTENSION?

USCIS must receive your completed STEM application *prior* to the initial EAD expiration, not more than 90 days before the initial EAD expiration, and within 60 days of OISE endorsing your I-20 for the STEM extension. Additionally, you must be employed more than 20 hours per week per employer. The application for the 24-month STEM extension is very similar to the initial 12 months of OPT application, but with some additional reporting requirements (including the fact that the supporting company must be currently enrolled in E-Verify) and additional documents needed:

- Email a scanned copy of the completed and signed Form I-983 Training Plan (located in the resources below) to OISE. We do not need a hard copy. The I-983 is not uploaded to USCIS as part of the formal application packet, but it could be requested by USCIS during the adjudication process.
- Copy of new I-20, showing the 24-month STEM extension dates. This will be issued by OISE only after OISE receives your completed I-983. (Send only a photocopy of your STEM I-20 with your application packet. You must keep the original I-20 for yourself, as you will need it for any travel and re-entry to the United States.)
- Application filing fee of $410 (credit card, ATM Card).
- Passport sized photo. Note: Photos must have been taken within the last 30 days. To check if an image is eligible, use the photo tool found here: https://tsg.phototool.state.gov/photo
- Copy the front and back of any current and previous Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) and EAD card.
- Copy of diploma or copy of transcript showing all degree coursework was completed.
- Printout of electronic I-94 (or copy of front and back of paper I-94).
- Copy of F-1 visa (valid or expired). *Canadian citizens are exempt from the visa requirement.*
- Copy of valid passport ID page.
- Copy of I-20 issued for your 12-month OPT.
- Form I-765 (See the "I-765 STEM" link for tips on completing the form.)
- The government requires that any companies who are sponsoring for the I-983's must be currently e-verified.

Here are some additional resources, and links to the forms that you will need to complete.

Determining STEM OPT Extension Eligibility: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students-determining-stem-opt-extension-eligibility

EMPLOYER MUST BE CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN E-Verify: https://www.e-verify.gov/about-e-verify/e-verify-data/how-to-find-participating-employers

USCIS STEM OPT Extension https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/stem-opt#_OPT_Students_Who

I-765 Instructions from USCIS: https://www.uscis.gov/system/files_force/files/form/i-765instr.pdf?download

I-765 Fillable Form: https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/i-765.pdf

Form I-983 Overview: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview

Form I-983 Fillable: https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983.pdf

DHS may Conduct Employer Site Visits: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/employer-site-visits

After a student receives a STEM OPT Extension, they must report any address, contact information, or employer changes to OISE within 10 days. Student must also submit a self-evaluation (page 5 of Form I-983) every 12 months, or when the student leaves a position. Refer to the SEVP portal for your reporting obligations and deadlines.