



## Optional Practical Training (OPT) Guidelines and Information for F-1 Visa International Students

International students attending Scripps College on an F-1 student visa desiring to obtain employment (paid or unpaid, including volunteer work) in the United States must apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) authorization prior to the start of employment. Students must be in F-1 status to apply and have completed one academic year of full-time enrollment to be eligible for OPT. OPT allows students to work in a job directly related to their major area of study for a maximum of 12 months per academic level. OPT is available both before and after completion of your program, but different rules apply for pre-and post-completion OPT. Most students who apply for OPT use their 12-month period of OPT immediately after graduation (post-completion OPT).

### WHAT IS OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is one type of work permission available for eligible F-1 students (e.g. regular paid employment, work for hire, volunteer or unpaid work). It allows students to get real-world work experience related directly to their major area of study; OPT eligibility does not apply to a minor. While a Designated School Official (DSO) recommends OPT in SEVIS, it is the student who must apply for the work permit with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). If OPT is approved, USCIS will issue an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card. The student may not begin working before receiving the EAD card or before the start date on the EAD card.

### OPT ELIGIBILITY SUMMARY – The student is eligible if:

- A full-time student for one academic year; most students apply for post-completion OPT.
- Proposed employment is directly related to your major area of study.
- You have not used all of the practical training available at the Bachelor of Arts degree level of study.
- You have not been authorized for 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT).

NOTE: Full-time CPT at a previous school at the same program level (Bachelor of Arts degree) counts toward the 12-month total. CPT at another program level does not count toward the 12-month total.

### LOCATION, DURATION, and HOURS PER WEEK

- OPT is not employer-specific but must be in the United States, and as long as it is in the student's field of study. **IMPORTANT:** No offer of employment is required to apply for standard 12-month OPT.
- Duration of time is governed by recommendation in SEVIS, on the Form I-20, and on the EAD card. There is a maximum of 12 months per higher educational level.
- Post-completion OPT work must be at least 20 hours per week.  
Pre-completion OPT is limited to 20 hours per week while school is in session. Full-time OPT is possible for pre-completion during school breaks.

### WHEN TO APPLY FOR OPT

Typically, students apply for OPT during their final semester of enrollment since it is most common to use OPT during the 12 months after graduation; standard period of OPT is for 12 months.

- Earliest date you may apply for OPT is 90 days prior to the program end date notated on your Form I-20.
  - Mid-February for May graduates
  - Mid-September for December graduates
- Latest date to apply for OPT is 60 days after the program end date

NOTE: OPT can take 90 days or more to process so it is best to apply as early as possible in mid-February or mid-September, as applicable above.

### HOW TO APPLY FOR OPT

- Student determines desired OPT start date. Start date can be as early as the day after your program end date and no later than 60 days after graduation. An example: For students graduating on May 13, 2017, the latest time period you can be authorized for OPT is July 12, 2017 through July 11, 2018.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Take into consideration when determining desired OPT start date that students are limited to a maximum of 90 days of unemployment. **Students unemployed for more than 90 days are in violation of their immigration status.**

- Scripps DSO will mail OPT application to USCIS after you provide DSO with all application materials.

**OPT application documents to submit to DSO:**

- Complete form I-765 Application for Employment Authorization – Department of Homeland Security fillable PDF (fill out and print); see the USCIS website for form and instructions: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
- ✓ Standard 12-month OPT period, item 16 must indicate: (c)(3)(B)
  - Less common, Pre-completion OPT: (c)(3)(A)
  - Less common, 24-month STEM extension: (c)(3)(C) – *see below under NOTE*
- ✓ Signature on form: Do not make your signature any larger than 1" wide x ½" tall and do NOT cross the lines of the space allotted. If signature is too large, USCIS may return the application to you without processing it.
- ✓ Address to use on application: Where will you be before and after commencement? EAD card will be sent to the address you use, so this is very important to consider. You can check with I-Place to request that you use their address. I-Place has a way of sending your EAD to you in the U.S. Your EAD card cannot be forwarded from Scripps after you graduate.
- Optional cover letter but highly recommended (see [sample letter](#))
- Current Form I-20 and all previous Form I-20s (copies will be made)
- Print out of I-94 information; instructions at this [link](#)
- Photocopy of your passport ID page(s) containing personal information, the expiration date, and passport photo
- Photocopy of your F-1 visa
- Processing fee – check or money order in the amount of \$410 made payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- Two identical passport-style photos (sized 2"x2"); available at CUC Connection at the Honnold/Mudd Library; print your name and SEVIS ID in pencil on the back
- Form G-1145 – to receive electronic notification that your application has been accepted; PDF fillable form at <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
- Copy of any previous EAD (Employment Authorization Document); example, if you had a period of previous OPT, however uncommon

NOTE: Applicants for the 24-month STEM OPT extension should refer to [The Claremont Colleges International Place website](#) for special instructions pertaining to this option, if eligible. STEM fields of study are in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (complete program list available [here](#)).

- DSO will provide you with a copy of the OPT application when mailed. **Keep this copy for your records.**

**APPROVAL PROCESS:**

- DSO confirms eligibility, enters the request in SEVIS and prints and signs the Form I-20.
- The student signs the Form I-20 and submits all aforementioned application materials to DSO.
- DSO mails student application to applicable USCIS Service Center for processing.
- Upon receipt of the application, USCIS issues a Receipt Notice (Form I-797) that contains the receipt number assigned to the case.
- If USCIS needs more information, the student will receive a Request for Evidence, which states what information is needed and the deadline to submit; student must respond by deadline.
- If the application is approved, USCIS issues an EAD and the OPT Request status in SEVIS changes to Approved. If the application is denied, the OPT Request status in SEVIS changes to Denied.
- The student receives the EAD and can begin work once the authorized date arrives.
- When the student is hired, the student reports the employer information to the DSO within 10 days (see Reporting Requirements below).

**REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

Students must report all new address and employment information and/or changes to the Scripps College DSO via email to [registrar@scrippscollege.edu](mailto:registrar@scrippscollege.edu). Please refer to the [Agreement with Scripps College While Participating in Post-Completion Optional Practical Training](#) document for specific details about your reporting responsibilities.

Scripps College – Office of the Registrar  
1030 Columbia Avenue, Claremont CA 91711  
Location: Balch 121; phone: 909/621-8273; email: [registrar@scrippscollege.edu](mailto:registrar@scrippscollege.edu)