

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

OPT is **practical** work experience in your **field** of study (typically after completion of a degree) and Initial OPT can last up to 12 months. Students on OPT are still considered to be F-1 students at EMU even if working elsewhere in the U.S. The Employment Authorization Document (EAD) is not a working permit; it is an extension of your F-1 status for the purposes of practical training.

Who is Eligible?

- F-1 students who are legally maintaining their status; **and**
- Who have been enrolled full-time for at least 8 months at EMU; **and**
- Who will be completing a course of study this term; **and**
- Whose proposed OPT employment will be directly related to their course of study.

What should you do before applying for OPT?

You are required to attend an **OPT seminar** or **complete the online seminar** before submitting your OPT processing packet; **NO exceptions!!** Plan early to avoid the delay of your OPT application.

When should you apply for OPT?

Students can apply for OPT up to **90 days before**, and 60 days after, the program completion date. **Program completion is the last day of the term during which you're registered for all the necessary credits for your program.** It does not mean graduation nor does it mean that you can delay your OPT application until fulfilling incomplete credits. It is currently taking **approximately 3 to 4 months** for USCIS to process applications and **you must have your EAD card in-hand** in order to start work. Your OPT may end no later than 14 months after your program completion date.

What should you know when applying for OPT?

- The OPT packet contains **detailed instructions** for preparing your OPT application; please follow these instructions to avoid delay of your application.
- Once your application for OPT has been approved, your **Employment Authorization Document (EAD)** will be mailed to the address on the I-765 form. The post office **WILL NOT FORWARD** mail from USCIS, if you change your address after you apply. USCIS will also not deliver your EAD to a PO Box.
- It is impossible to **cancel** your practical training once you have received your EAD; the time granted on your EAD card will be counted regardless of your actual employment. You will not receive a refund of the fee paid and you are unable to apply for OPT again, based on that degree.

OPT I-20 Processing

1. **Obtain and read through the entire OPT packet.**
2. **Complete an OPT seminar.** Information about seminars can be found at www.emich.edu/oiss/students/seminars.php.
 - a. If attending the in person seminar, **please arrive on time**; students who arrive late will need to reschedule.
 - b. If completing online seminar (via Canvas), be sure to print out your grade sheet for your OPT request packet.
3. **Assemble the documents** required for the application and **submit to the OISS front desk.** *If you have questions, please meet with an advisor during walk-ins.*
4. **An advisor will review your packet and issue your OPT I-20.** If all the required documents are complete and received, the OISS will process within their estimated processing time (check with OISS on current estimate).
5. **Mail** application, receive receipt notice and track status.
6. **Submit a copy of the EAD card** to OISS when the EAD is received.
7. **Report** any changes of address, name, employer and unemployment to the OISS within 10 days of any change through the Information Reporting 12 (IR-12) from at www.emich.edu/oiss/forms/index.php.

While on OPT, you are still an EMU F-1 student

While on the Initial OPT period, you are still considered an EMU F-1 student, you are required to READ and FOLLOW these instructions. Please keep this information and visit www.emich.edu/oiss for the latest information.

- ❑ You understand that you **cannot begin working until you receive your EAD card** and that you may only work during the **dates that are on my EAD card**.
- ❑ You must submit a **copy of your EAD card** to OISS upon receiving the EAD card.
- ❑ **Name, Address, or Employer changes-** You must **report all name, U.S. address, and employer name & address changes** to OISS within 10 days. This is done via the OPT Reporting Form (called IR-12) on the OISS website. Your address must be where you live; it cannot be a PO Box.
- ❑ **Periods of Unemployment-** You must **report to OISS** all periods of unemployment. Failure to report can jeopardize your immigration status. You **cannot** have more than a **total of 90 calendar days of unemployment**. Keep an accurate record of your efforts to find employment (company contacted, date, phone number, name of contact person, etc.).
 - **If you have an unpaid position/volunteer:** document hours worked, projects, etc. Keep receipts from parking/bus passes, etc.
- ❑ **Generally, if you have been in the U.S. for less than 5 years**, you may be exempt from paying Social Security and Medicare taxes. Please reference the FICA Exemption Summary at www.emich.edu/oiss/forms/index.php for more information. However, you will still be subject to federal, state, and local taxes unless your country has a tax treaty with the United States. It is best to closely work with your employer's payroll department to ensure the correct taxes are deducted. **REMEMBER-** Tax returns must be filed by April 15 of each year for the previous calendar year.
- ❑ **Health Insurance** – For your own physical and financial well-being, it is very important that you have health insurance while on OPT. If it is not provided by your employer, you may be eligible to continue your student policy; contact the Snow Health Center for more information. <https://www.emich.edu/uhs/insurance/index.php>
- ❑ **Travel while on OPT** – Before you travel, remember to:
 - Make sure your **passport** is valid at least 6 months into the future
 - Make sure your **I-20** has your employer listed and has been signed for travel within the past 6 months. Request a new I-20 and/or travel signature from OISS by submitting an IR-12 form, if needed.
 - Make sure your **visa stamp** is valid. If your visa is expired, you may need to renew it while overseas. If this is the case, please speak to an OISS advisor **before** traveling.
 - If you have an expired visa stamp but plan a **short trip to Canada, Mexico, or adjacent Caribbean islands**, you may qualify for the Automatic Visa Revalidation. Please contact an OISS advisor before traveling!
 - **Carry your EAD card and proof of employment** for the EAD time period. Proof of employment can include a letter from your employer and recent pay stubs.
 - **Dependent Travel** – Since OPT is not noted on dependent I-20s, an F-2 dependent must carry copies of the F-1's I-20 with OPT recommendation, EAD card and job offer letter in addition to their own F-2 documents when traveling.
 - **If your OPT is pending or you are unemployed, talk to an OISS advisor before making travel arrangements.**
- ❑ **Change of Status** – If you change your immigration status during OPT, you are required to send us a copy of the approval document (i.e. H-1B) and Immigration Status Change Form. We recommend you begin the Change of Status process before your OPT is expired.
- ❑ Your **OPT will automatically terminate** if you transfer to another school or begin study at another educational level at EMU. Please **contact OISS** if you plan to apply for another degree program or transfer to another school.
- ❑ Remember, you have a **60 day grace period** following the end date of your OPT.
- ❑ **If you are eligible for the STEM extension, your application must be received by USCIS before the end date of your OPT.** Visit the OISS website for details on the STEM extension.

Required Documents

The following documents must be given to the OISS front desk (in this order)- do not staple!

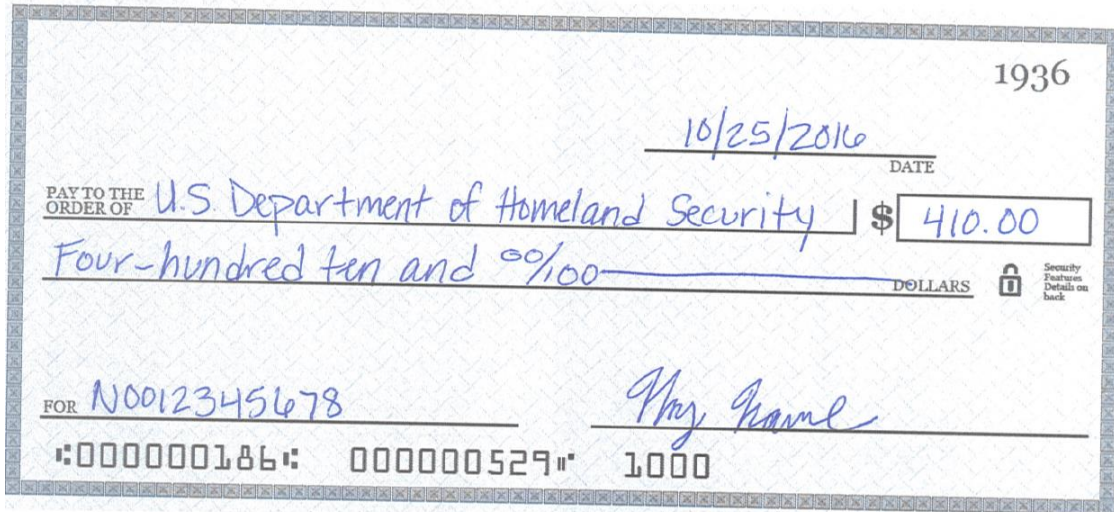
- Completed **OISS OPT request** form (included in this packet).
- OPT online seminar gradebook printout** (must have gotten at least 90%), if completed seminar online.
- Completed **OPT I-20 request form** (included in this packet).
- 2 full, frontal passport size photos** – gently print your name & SEVIS number on the back of each photo; visit www.emich.edu/oiss/forms/index.php for Color Photo Specifications.
- Check for \$410** made payable to the *U.S. Department of Homeland Security* (do not abbreviate) and include your **SEVIS N#** in the memo field.
- Completed **G-1145** Form E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance. **Must be typed!** Form can be found at: <http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/g-1145.pdf>.
- Completed **I-765**—reference sample. **Must be typed!** Form can be found at: <http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/i-765.pdf>. Instructions on completing the form can be found at www.emich.edu/oiss/forms/index.php.
- Academic **Advisor Letter**, on EMU letterhead.
- Photocopy of **Initial I-20 for current degree program**.
- Photocopy **previous Transfer Pending I-20s** from other U.S. schools (for **transfer** students only).
- Photocopy of **F-1 Visa Stamp**; if filed Change of Status **F-1 Approval Notice** is needed .
- Photocopy of original **Passport**.
- Photocopy of **I-94**. *If your last entry into the U.S. was processed electronically* and you don't have a paper I-94 card, print your I-94 from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94>
- Photocopy of **photo identification** (driver's license or student ID).
- Photocopy of any **previous EAD cards** and **I-20 with previous OPT authorization** (previous SEVIS records included).
- Photocopy of any I-20s **with any previous and current CPT authorization** (previous SEVIS records included).

Within the allotted processing time, after you submit all completed documents, an OISS advisor will:

- Issue you a new I-20 with OPT authorization
- Issue you SEVIS screen shots of your OPT and CPT authorizations
- Return all your application documents from the checklist above
- Provide you with a final mailing checklist and mailing address
- Provide an envelope for mailing your application

You will receive an email (to your university email) when your new I-20 and application documents are ready for pick up. **The U.S. government MUST receive your OPT application within 30 days of the OISS issuing you an OPT I-20. DO NOT DELAY in picking up your OPT I-20 and mailing it!**

Sample Check & Academic Advisor's Letter



EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

TO: EMU Office for International Students and Scholars
240 Student Center, Ypsilanti MI

From: **Dr. Jane Doe**

Date: **January 24, 2008**

Re: Estimated Program Completion Date

This is to certify that **Student Sohn** is a full-time student in the Department of **Educational Leadership**, pursuing a **Master's** degree, and is in the final stage of their program. Completion is expected by **April 29, 2008**.

Dr. Jane Doe

Dr. Jane Doe

Academic Advisor, Department of **Educational Leadership**

Initial 12-Month OPT Request Form

Student First Name	Student Last Name	E _____ Student E ID #
_____@emich.edu Emich E-mail Address	_____ Personal E-mail Address	(_____) _____ (Area Code) Telephone Number
Current Address	Current City	State
Student Major or Field of Study	Degree Level (Bachelor, Master, Ph.D.)	Zip code
Student Major or Field of Study	Degree Level (Bachelor, Master, Ph.D.)	Expected Completion Date

Optional Practical Training is intended to provide hands-on, practical work experience that is complimentary to your academic program. An F-1 student may be eligible for **12 months OPT**, provided this practical training is **directly related to your field of study**, is **commensurate** with your educational level, and is **recommended** by your academic advisor.

Desired OPT start date: _____ **and end date:** _____

Program End Date	Fall 2018 12/18/2018	Winter 2019 04/26/2019	Summer 2019 08/12/2019	Fall 2019 12/20/2019	Winter 2020 04/27/2020
Application					
First Date for USCIS to receive application (90 days before the program end date)	09/19/2018	01/26/2019	05/04/2019	09/21/2019	01/28/2020
Last Date for USCIS to receive application (60 days after the program end date)	02/16/2019	06/25/2019	10/11/2019	02/18/2020	06/26/2020
Employment					
Earliest Employment Start Date	12/19/2018	04/27/2019	08/13/2019	12/21/2019	04/28/2020
Latest Employment Start Date (60 days after the program end date)	02/16/2019	06/25/2019	10/11/2019	02/18/2020	06/26/2020
Date OPT Must be Completed (14 months from program end date)	02/18/2020	06/26/2020	10/12/2020	02/20/2021	06/27/2021

In making this request I understand and agree to abide by all requirements outlined in “**While on OPT, you are still an EMU F-1 student**” including (check each box after reading):

- I will **report all changes** in my U.S. or overseas **address** to OISS within 10 days of such change
- I will **provide OISS** with a **copy** of my Employment Authorization Document (**EAD**) upon receipt
- I understand that **I cannot begin working until I have my EAD card in-hand** and only during the dates in which my EAD card is valid.
- I will **report** the name & address of my **employer** to OISS within 10 days of starting work
- I know I **should have health insurance** coverage for the duration of my F1 status, including the OPT period.

Student Signature

Date

OPT Workshop Attended on: _____ OISS Advisor Initials: _____

OPT I-20 Processing Request Form

_____	_____	E _____
Student First Name	Student Last Name	Student E ID #
_____@emich.edu	_____	(____) _____
Emich E-mail Address	Personal E-mail Address	(Area Code) Phone Number

In making this OPT Processing request I understand and agree to do the following (please check after reading each statement):

- I understand that OISS only reviews OPT documents for completeness. It is my responsibility to ensure that the information on the OPT documents is accurate.
- I understand compiling and mailing my OPT application is my responsibility. I do not hold the Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS) liable for the outcome of my OPT application, even in the case of a Request for Evidence (RFE) or denial.
- I will mail my OPT application to USCIS within 30 days of OISS advisor's signature date on the I-20. I understand the USCIS MUST receive my application within 30 days of the advisor's signature date.
- I understand that USCIS will deny my OPT application if they receive it more than 90 days before my program completion date and 60 days after my program completion date.
- I understand that the **address on the I-765 must be valid from the time I send my OPT application until my EAD card is received (up to 4 months after mailing)**. I understand it is difficult to change the mailing address of my EAD card and that I am liable for any mailing issues should my address change. I understand USCIS mail (like my EAD card) cannot be forwarded by the U.S. Postal Service.

Please choose what U.S. Postal Service mailing option you would like. The OISS will give you the mailing slip and envelope with your OPT I-20. After return of my application materials and I-20, I am responsible to take the OPT application to the U.S. Postal Service for mailing.

- Express Mail**/overnight mailing (general cost of \$25.00)
- Priority Mail**/2-4 shipping time (general cost of \$7.00)

- I have read the "While on OPT, I am still an F-1 student" flier and I understand my responsibilities.
- I understand failure to follow the OPT rules and regulations may result in termination of my F-1 status.

Student Signature

Date