

Office of International Programs  
The University of Mississippi  
University, MS 38677  
Phone: (662) 915-7404  
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## **Optional Practical Training**

revised 6/04

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is employment directly related to a student's field of study, which serves as professional training before returning to one's home country. OPT is available during and/or after a course of study.

### **Pre-Requirements for making application**

- Maintain F-1 status for one full academic year in an academic program
- Possess a valid passport
- Use only black ink on all forms

Twelve months of Optional Practical Training is available after each higher level degree (bachelor's, master's, doctorate) earned. A maximum period of twelve months is available for each degree level.

Application and materials may be submitted up to 150 days prior to degree completion or graduation. **Once a student has graduated he/she is NOT eligible to apply for OPT.**

### **Application for Optional Practical Training**

The Office of International Programs assists in processing OPT applications and materials; however, actual employment authorization is given by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS). Once all materials (see list below) have been gathered, please submit all documentation to the Office of International Programs, 331 Martindale.

### **Required Documents to Accompany Application:**

- Two required photos (refer to page six for guidelines)
- Completed Form I-538 (attached)
- Completed Form I-765 (attached)
- Passport, visa and I-94 (copies will be mailed)
- Memo from academic department stating student's name, degree, major and graduation date (sample attached)
- Copies of all I-20s (student copy) forms (both pages) issued for the current degree
- Unofficial transcript of all coursework at The University of Mississippi
- Check or money order for \$175 made payable to :  
USCIS-TSC                      P.O. Box 851041                      Mesquite TX 75185-1041

## **Processing Time**

Once mailed, full approval for OPT currently takes approximately 90 days. A receipt will be sent to the Office of International Programs to confirm the arrival of all materials. The process is complete and employment may begin once the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) is received and the start date is reached. The EAD is a card produced by USCIS, which includes the beginning and ending dates of employment and photograph. The EAD card will be returned by mail to OIP office. When materials are received in the OIP office, a staff member will attempt to contact the student that same day.

## **Cancellation of Optional Practical Training**

If one decides to cancel OPT, it is sometimes possible to do so. Once the EAD has been processed by USCIS, OPT may **not** be cancelled unless the start date has not passed. To cancel OPT please contact the OIP advisor who assisted in filing your application.

## **Beginning Date**

For undergraduates, the authorization period may begin as early as the date of graduation ceremonies or as late as sixty days after the graduation ceremony. For graduate students, it may begin as early as the date requested after degree requirements are completed, or as late as 60 days after the Graduate School's final acceptance of thesis or dissertation.

## **Travel While in Authorized Practical Training**

Re-entry into the US requires that F-1 students present the following documents; SEVIS Form I-20 endorsed for travel within the last six months, Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card and valid F-1 visa in passport.

## **On Campus Employment**

While school is still in session, students who have not yet completed coursework may work part time on campus. However, once a student has graduated or the EAD beginning date is reached, which ever is earlier, the employment is restricted to a student's major field of study at a level commensurate to the degree earned.

## **Departure After Optional Practical Training**

An F-1 student in OPT is allowed 60 days after the authorization of employment ceases to change status, acquire an I-20 for a new academic program or depart the United States.

**Jennie Stewart**  
International Programs Advisor  
jmorgan@olemiss.edu

# PRACTICAL TRAINING CHART FOR F-1 STUDENTS

<u>CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING</u>	<u>OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING</u>
AUTHORIZED BEFORE GRADUATION  No cumulative maximum but use may affect eligibility for OPT (see below)	CAN BE PRIOR TO OR AFTER GRADUATION  12 months allowed for each level degree
Attain a job which is an integral part of an established curriculum for which academic credit is awarded (EX alternate work/study, internship or cooperative education)	Includes training (1) during summer vacation if student plans to continue school in fall semester; (2) while school is in session if the training does not exceed 20 hours per week; (3) after completion of course requirements, but before completion of course of study, excluding thesis; (4) after completion of the course of study.
Work authorization is for a specific employer	Allows work with any employer as long as job is directly related to field of study and commensurate to level of degree
No cumulative maximum but use may affect eligibility for OPT (see below)	12 months allowed for each higher degree level
CPT USED	OPT REMAINING
No CPT used →→	→→ One year of OPT allowed
20 hours or less (part-time) →→	→→ One year of OPT allowed
21 hours or more for one year →→	→→ No OPT allowed

## OPT Applicant Contact Sheet

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**ID Number** \_\_\_\_\_

**When correspondence arrives concerning my OPT please contact me at:**

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_



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*The University of Mississippi*  
*Interoffice Memorandum*

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**OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS**  
**331 Martindale**  
**University, MS 38677**  
**Phone: (662) 915-7404 Fax: (662) 915-7486**

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**TO:**            Jennie Stewart, International Programs Advisor

**FROM:**        Dr. Faculty Member, Department of Major

**DATE:**        January 7, 2005

**RE:**            Ms. Graduating Student

**Please accept this memo on behalf of Ms. Graduating Student (ID 555-66-7777). Ms. Student is expected to complete degree requirements for the Master of Arts in Botany no later than May 10, 2005.**

**Should you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.**