

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING: What you need to know about F-1 OPT employment authorization

What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

Optional Practical Training is off-campus employment authorization that lets F-1 students get work experience in their major field of study. You are permitted to work for a maximum of 12 months of Full-Time employment (over 20 hours per week) for each higher educational level you pursue in the U.S. (Associate, Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate). You may use it during or after your studies and can work for any employer, anywhere in the country (relating to your major field of study). Here at Nazareth University, after your first full academic year (two semesters) lawfully enrolled (this means that you did not violate your student status) you are eligible for 12 months of Full-Time OPT.

How Can it be Used?

- * During summer vacation and semester break – either part-time or full-time employment.
- * While school is in session – part-time only.
- * After completion of all requirements for the course of study – full time employment only.
 - *Full-time means working over 20 hours per week.*
 - *Part-time means working 20 hours per week or less.*

How Can You Qualify For OPT?

1. You must have been lawfully enrolled full-time for at least one academic year before your anticipated employment start date.
2. You must be able to describe how the type of work you are seeking directly relates to your major. You do not have to have a job offer to apply for OPT. However, it is wise to at least have a couple of options so that you don't waste any of your OPT time. Even if you do not find a job, you will still lose the amount of time you were authorized for.
3. You may apply for after-completion of studies OPT up to three months before your requested employment start date, but you cannot apply after you have completed your program!
4. You cannot already have used 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training.
5. If you have already been authorized for OPT before, this time is taken away from your 12 months. For example, if you are applying for Post-completion OPT after graduation and you worked the summer before Full-time for 3 months, you would only have 9 months left. If you worked Part-time for 3 months (instead of Full-time), you would have 10 and a half months left. Part-time OPT is equal to Half of Full-time OPT. For example, 12 Full-time months equals 24 Part time months.

How Do You Apply?

Pick up an application for F-1 Optional Practical Training Employment Authorization, fill it out and return it to the Center for International Education. When you return it, we will review your application to make sure that you qualify. If we agree that you do, we will issue you a new form I-20, recommending your OPT, which you must come in to sign. After you sign it, you can send your application to USCIS for processing of your work authorization.

How Long Does it Take?

After you send your application to USCIS it should take about three - five months for your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) to be returned from USCIS. It could take less or more time, depending on their workload.

* It is important to take USCIS processing time into consideration when planning the date you want to start working! **YOU CANNOT BEGIN TO WORK UNTIL YOU HAVE YOUR EAD CARD!!!**

* Please Note: You must submit your completed application to USCIS no later than 60 days after your program end date! Please plan ahead!!

What if You Want to Travel Before Starting After-Completion of Studies OPT?

Contact the Center for International Education before making any travel plans if your OPT is still pending USCIS authorization. You are required to have *a valid visa and your EAD card* to return to the U.S. and should also be able to prove that you have a job or job offer. We recommend that you do not travel before you receive your EAD card. If you do, you are taking a risk of being denied entrance to the U.S. and losing your OPT benefit. Please contact the CIE if you must travel before you receive your EAD.

How Can you Extend your OPT?

You can extend Before-Completion of studies OPT by filing another application. You may not continue to work if your EAD card has expired and you may not start working again before you receive your new EAD. You cannot extend Post-Completion OPT. You must apply for the full amount of time remaining of your 12 month limit. You will, however, be eligible for another 12 month period of OPT if you go on to a higher level of study.

Study and Post-Completion OPT

Immigration regulations state that, “Authorization to engage in optional practical training employment is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level.” Therefore, you should not continue your U.S. studies until after your OPT has ended.

REMEMBER: DO NOT START WORKING UNTIL USCIS AUTHORIZES YOUR EMPLOYMENT AND YOU HAVE YOUR EAD CARD!

Application for F-1 Optional Practical Training Employment Authorization

1. OPT Request Form:

*Tell us what type of OPT you are applying for and the dates you want to work. If you have already used part of your OPT benefit for this program, please tell us how much you have used.

* Describe how your proposed employment for practical training is directly related to your major and appropriate for your level of education. Your description must clearly explain to an Immigration Officer what you expect to do on the job you are seeking. Remember, OPT is an employment opportunity to use the skills that you have learned here at Nazareth.

2. Create a USCIS account and upload the following documents to your Application Form I-765: Application for Employment Authorization at www.uscis.gov/i-765.

1. Passport style photograph

2. Forms I-20 *Scanned copies of previous I-20s with CPT or OPT approval are required, in addition to a new I-20 with the official OPT recommendation.*

3. Scanned copy of any previous EAD Card(s)

4. Scanned copy of Form I-94

5. Scanned copies of your passport identification pages and your visa

6. \$410 Fee *payable online with a credit card*

Information about Application Processing:

1. If we determine that you qualify for Optional Practical Training Employment Authorization, we will issue you a new Form I-20 with our recommendation on it. We will contact you to come in and sign your new I-20 before sending your application to USCIS.

2. After you have signed your new I-20, you can fill out and submit your application to USCIS. They will take about three to five months to process your application, depending on their work load.

3. USCIS may communicate with our office about your application. If they request additional information, we will contact you. If your application is approved, your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will be sent here and we will contact you to come in and pick it up.

4. You CANNOT begin working until you have received your EAD Card!!

Nazareth University
Center for International Education
**OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING
REQUEST FORM**

1. Personal and Program Information:

Name _____ Date of birth _____

Last First

Local (US) Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Student ID# _____ Major _____

Expected Date of Graduation: _____

2. What Kind of OPT Are You Applying For?

Before Completion of Studies

Full-time. Only available during vacation periods or if you have completed all of your coursework.

Starting on _____ **and ending** _____

Part-Time. Less than 20 hours a week.

Starting on _____ **and ending** _____

After Completion of Studies (Full-time)

Starting on _____. Your start date could be as early as the expected or actual date of completion of studies you put above, or any other date within the 60-day period following it.

Ending on _____. You must apply for all of the 12-month benefit you have remaining for this program of study.

How much of your 12-month OPT benefit for this program have you used, if any?

3. DESCRIBE your proposed employment and EXPLAIN HOW it relates to your Major. What type of a job are you looking for? What will you be doing? What skills that you learned at Nazareth will you use in this employment? Be as specific as you can!!

Disclaimer: The Office of Immigration is able to provide you with general guidance. However, any advice provided to you by our office, as well as the information in this packet, does not constitute legal advice. Additionally, due to the fluid nature of governmental interpretation, the USCIS may change its interpretation of the above mentioned immigration polices, procedures, regulations, and eligibility requirements for benefits at any time. This office will do its best to provide you with the most current guidance, but please be mindful that each case is fact-specific and it is advised that you contact an experienced immigration attorney if you have questions regarding your situation.

By signing below, you acknowledge that the information listed above is accurate and complete.

Signature

Date

Revised 06/2023