



INFORMATION AND OVERVIEW

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

OPT, Optional Practical Training, is practical work experience in your field of study after your Program End Date. 12 months of OPT is available for each higher level of study. A STEM OPT Extension is an additional 24 months. Students must work at least 20 hours per week while on OPT, but can work up to full-time.

Students on OPT remain on on F-1 visa from NMU, regardless of where in the U.S. they are working.

Who is Eligible for OPT?

F-1 status students are eligible to apply for Optional Practical Training if they:

- have been enrolled at NMU for full-time studies during the preceding academic year.
- are in valid F-1 status.
- are in good academic standing.

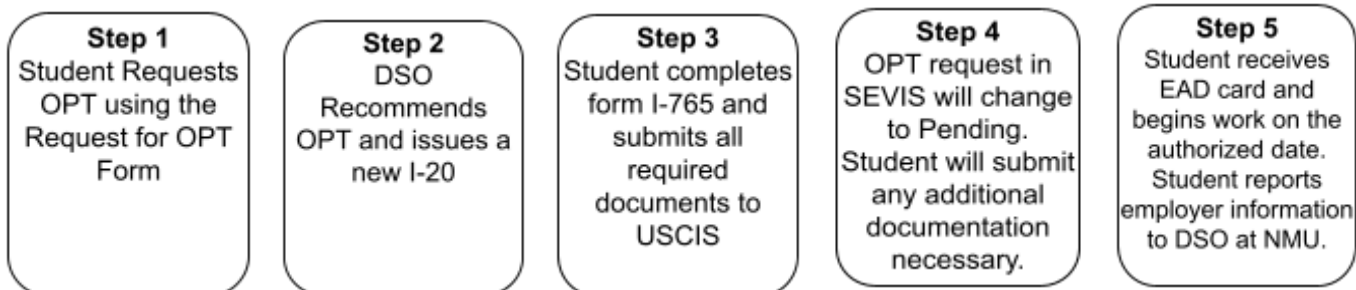
Students may apply for OPT authorization to occur during any of the following times:

- During the student’s annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session.
- After completion of all course requirements for the degree, excluding thesis or equivalent.
- After completion of the course of study (most common).

OPT Timeline

One Year after Full-Time Study Begins	90 Days before Program End Date	60 Days after Program End Date	14 Months after Program End Date
First date that F-1 OPT can be requested	Earliest date that form I-765 may arrive at USCIS for post-completion OPT	Last date to request Post-Completion OPT in SEVIS and Filing Deadline for USCIS to receive Form I-765	Last possible end date for post-completion OPT

OPT Process



What are the requirements while I am on OPT?

Pre-Completion OPT:

You must be employed in a position that is directly related to your field of study. The number of hours of work per week may not exceed 20 hours unless it is OPT during a break period or you are a graduate student who has completed all coursework except the thesis or dissertation.

Post-Completion OPT:

You must be employed during your OPT authorization, working at least 20 hours per week in a job that is directly related to your field of study.

What constitutes employment?

- Paid employment: Must work for at least 20 hours per week
- Work-for-hire employment (Consultant): In this case, services are based on a contractual basis rather than an employer relationship. Student must maintain a list of all contracts, including dates, duration, client, and address.
- Self-employed: Must have proof of a proper business license and work full-time. In addition, the student must show that they are actively engaged in business directly related to their degree program.
- Employment through an agency: Student must provide evidence of an average workload of 20 hours per week.
- Unpaid employment: Must work at least 20 hours per week. Student's employer must provide evidence that they work at least 20 hours per week directly related to their degree program.

How do I document that I am employed?

You must notify the International Programs Office of any changes to your employment within 10 days of the change. You should send the following information to edoan@nmu.edu:

1. Name and address of your employer
2. Job title
3. Contact information for your direct supervisor (email and phone number)
4. Start date of the employment
5. Number of hours per week (approximately) that you are working

Upon departure from a job, you must notify the IPO that you are no longer employed in that position.

How long can a student on post-completion OPT be unemployed?

Students on post-completion OPT may be unemployed for a cumulative maximum of 90 calendar days during the 12 months of authorization.

What counts toward the 90 days of unemployment?

Every day you are without a job counts towards the 90 days with one exception. If you are moving from one job to another and the gap is 10 days or shorter, then this period will not be calculated towards the time spent unemployed.

What are the consequences of exceeding the period of unemployment?

If you have not found employment while on post-completion OPT you will be considered to be out of status, unless you have taken one of the following actions:

- Applied for a new program of study to continue your education in the United States by a change of level or transferring to another school
- Departed the United States
- Taken action to change to a new authorized status in the United States (e.g. H1 or Permanent Resident)

May I travel internationally while I am on OPT?

You may travel outside the United States while you are on OPT. In order to re-enter, you must have all of the following:

1. Form I-20 signed within the last six months
2. Passport valid at least six months into the future
3. Valid F-1 visa*
4. Employment Authorization Document
5. Letter from your current or future employer confirming that you have OPT-eligible employment in the U.S. You will not be allowed to re-enter the United States if you do not have proof of employment.

May I study while I am on post-completion OPT?

You may study on an informal basis (not pursuing a degree or other academic objective). If you begin a new degree program, your I-20 will need to be updated to reflect that change and the remainder of your OPT will automatically be canceled.

Do I need to remain in contact with the International Programs Office while I am on post-completion OPT?

Yes! During the OPT authorization period, you are still in F-1 status. You must report the following to the International Student Advisor within 10 days of a change:

1. Change in your physical address or your email address
2. Change in your employment status or your employer
3. Change of immigration status (e.g. change to H1 or to permanent residency)
4. Early termination of OPT and departure from the U.S. 12 month OPT Information

What happens at the end of the OPT authorization?

Upon completion of your OPT authorization you have 60 days to do one of the following:

1. Move to a new degree level at NMU or another university in the U.S.
2. Transfer to a new institution to pursue an additional degree
3. Change to a new status in the United States
4. Depart the United States to return home

Your record will automatically complete 60 days after the last date of your OPT authorization. If you have not made any of these changes, you will be considered to be out of status and in the United States without proper authorization.

May I extend my OPT authorization?

Students with certain degrees in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics) may be eligible to apply for a 24 month extension of their post-completion OPT authorization. Eligible students must have proof of a completed degree in an authorized field and must be employed with an employer who is enrolled in the E-Verify system.

Pre-completion OPT and Post-completion OPT for students in other fields may not be extended beyond 12 months. For a list of authorized STEM degrees and information about the extension process, please contact an International Student Advisor to request a STEM extension information packet.

For additional information, contact the International Programs Office at 906.227.2510 or ipo@nmu.edu