

# New England Conservatory

## OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) Application for F-1 STUDENTS

In this packet, you will find:

- ❖ An NEC OPT Application
- ❖ Frequently Asked Questions about OPT

Please read the forms and instructions carefully before filling them out. Applying for Optional Practical Training will be easier if you have all of your forms prepared before you meet with your International Student Advisor.

You must get approval and I-20 endorsement from your Academic/International Advisor (DSO) before you send your application materials.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Applications can take up to 11 weeks to process – Apply early!

Make your check payable to:  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Mail your application to:

**For US Postal Service:**

USCIS  
PO Box 660867  
Dallas, TX 75266

**For Express Mail:**

USCIS  
Attn: AOS  
2501 S. State hwy. 121, Business  
Suite 400  
Lewisville, TX 75067

Questions about your application may be addressed to the Office of Student Services:

Yukii Ntumba at [yukii.ntumba@necmusic.edu](mailto:yukii.ntumba@necmusic.edu)  
Laura Messina at [laura.messina@necmusic.edu](mailto:laura.messina@necmusic.edu)

## New England Conservatory Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application

Please read through the FAQ sheet that is attached before you complete this form. Please bring completed form with you to your OPT Advising Appointment with your International Advisor.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Non-NEC Email \_\_\_\_\_

Current Degree Program (Bachelor's, Masters, Grad Diploma) \_\_\_\_\_

When is your expected date of graduation (month and year)? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you been an F-1 Student at another U.S. School?                      Yes                      No

Have you ever used Curricular or Optional Practical Training as part of another degree program?

Yes                      No

Have you ever used Curricular or Optional Practical Training as part of your current degree program?

Yes                      No

When do you want to begin your OPT? The latest you can begin practical training is 60 days (two months) after your expected date of graduation. You will receive exactly one year of Practical Training, so choose your beginning date carefully.

Beginning Date \_\_\_\_\_ Ending Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Application Checklist: Please bring these items to your OPT Advising Appointment:**

- Check for \$410 made out to **US Department of Homeland Security**
- 2 identical passport-sized photos (2" x 2", color)
- Copy of all previous I-20s that were issued to you (including I-20s from previous schools)
- Copy of previous EAD Card (if you used OPT before)
- Copy of all previous correspondence with USCIS (if any)
- Copy of F-1 VISA page of passport (make sure it is the F-1 page and not tourist)
- Copy of I-94 stamp in passport
- Copy of electronic I-94 record from [www.cbp.gov/I94](http://www.cbp.gov/I94)
- Copy of Expiration and Photo page of Passport

Please schedule your OPT Advising Appointment with your International Advisor in March-April (May Graduates) or early October (December Graduates) to allow for processing at USCIS.

Processing at USCIS can take up to 11 weeks!

**DSO Completing Application** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

### **What is Optional Practical Training?**

- Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a work authorization issued by USCIS to be used by F-1 Students.
- If you are approved for OPT, you will be issued an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card that you may present to any employer who wishes to hire you as proof that you are authorized to work.

### **How do I qualify for Optional Practical Training?**

- In order to use OPT, you must have been in F-1 status and in good academic standing at NEC for 9 consecutive months (2 semesters).
- If you have been a student at a school in the U.S. other than NEC you will still qualify for OPT.

### **What responsibilities do I have while on OPT?**

- You may not be unemployed for more than 90 days during your OPT period.
- You **must** report address changes and employer changes to your academic/international advisor.
- You **must** report **all** jobs/gigs

### **What kind of jobs can I use Optional Practical Training for?**

- You can use OPT for any music-related job opportunity that is offered to you.

### **How much can I work using OPT?**

- Post-completion OPT (c)(3)(B) is full-time (40 hours per week) for one year.
- OPT cannot be stored up or saved. You may use your OPT for a year after graduation and *then* begin a new academic program.
- You will lose any OPT you have remaining if you begin a new academic program before the year of OPT granted has been completed.

### **When can I start working if I get OPT?**

- You may begin OPT the day after your graduation or up to 60 days after your graduation and no later.

### **When should I apply?**

- You may apply as early as 90 days before the end date on your I-20.
- You may apply as late as 60 days after the end date on your I-20.

### **What's the difference between OPT and Curricular Practical Training (CPT)?**

- OPT, unlike CPT, can be used after you graduate and you may work for any number or combination of music-related employers.

### **Is OPT a different kind of Visa than my F-1 Visa?**

- OPT is **not** a visa, it is simply a work authorization that is a benefit of your F-1 visa.
- You will still be an F-1 student sponsored by NEC which means you will still have to have a valid, up-to-date signature on your NEC I-20 before you plan to travel outside the U.S.
- You are encouraged **NOT** to travel while you are waiting for your EAD card from the USCIS.