

# Pre-Meeting Instructions for Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application Meeting



Your OPT appointment will last approximately 45 minutes. In order to make this meeting go as smoothly as possible, there are a few things that you will need to do BEFORE coming to your OPT appointment. Please note that while the International Student Services office will assist you with completing the OPT application process, your advisor is not an attorney and cannot provide legal advice. You are ultimately responsible to ensure your application is submitted with accurate information, on time, and with the required documents.

## Step 1: Collecting all of the Necessary Documentation

Your OPT application requires you to provide specific documentation.

Please save the following documents on your computer so that you can upload them to your OPT application.

- Copies of every I-20 that you've been issued in your current degree program
  - Save each I-20 as a separate document.
  - Label it as "LASTNAME I-20 DATESIGNED"
  - The date that it is signed on the bottom of the first page is the date you should use. For example, if it was signed on 01/01/2022 and your last name was Smith, the label would be: Smith I-20 01.01.2022
  - **PDF or JPEG file type**
- Passport Page
  - Label as "LASTNAME Passport Page"
  - **PDF or JPEG file type**
- F-1 Visa
  - Label as "LASTNAME F1 Visa"
  - **PDF or JPEG file type**
- I-94 record
  - Go to <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home> to find your I-94 and save it as a PDF
  - Label it "LASTNAME I-94"
- 2x2 passport sized Photo
  - **JPEG or PNG file type**
  - Label as "LASTNAME Photo"
- You will be able to pay the OPT fee online with a Debit or Credit card. You do NOT need a check or money order.
  - Have your card ready when we meet.

## Step 2: Creating a USCIS Account

In order to apply for your OPT, you must make an account with USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services). Before your OPT appointment, please do the following:

- Go to <https://myaccount.uscis.gov/>
- To create your account, click the blue words that say Create an Account.
- It will ask you to enter an email. Use a PERSONAL email address and NOT your NEC email for this as your NEC email will be deactivated shortly after graduation. You will need to type it in twice.
- Once you have submitted that it will take you to the Sign In page and text will appear in a box at the top that says an email has been sent your email account. Go to your email account and find that email.
- You will need to click on the link they provided to create your account.
- Once you do, it will bring you to a page with Terms of Use. Once you have scrolled through the page, you can click the blue box that says: I Agree.
- It will now prompt you to create a password. Please follow the rules at the top for the password. Make sure to pick something you will remember. Once you have created a strong enough password click the Blue button that says: Submit

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- Now it will take you to the Two-Step Verification Method screen. You can choose to have this send to your phone via text or to your email address. That is up to you.
  - Choose one then select Submit. You will then get a text or email with the verification code, depending on which option you chose.
- On the next page you will be asked to enter that code, then select submit.
  - You will then be taken to page with a Back Up code. Feel free to save this to your computer or just write it down. Then click Proceed.
  - You will now be prompted to select 5 security questions and provide those answers. Please do this and then select Submit.
  - On the next page click the blue box that says: my USCIS.
  - On the next page click the option for "I am the petitioner" and then submit.
  - At this point you have successfully made your account. When we meet, you will log back in, so have you passwords ready.

### **Step 3: Completing the Request for Optional Practical Training Form**

Included in this packet is the "Request for Optional Practical Training" form. Please complete this form with all of the requested information

Please carefully consider the dates that you choose for your OPT. You can choose a start date as soon as the day after your program end date listed on your Form I-20, and up to 60 days after that date. Your OPT employment authorization period may last for up to a year. Choose your dates carefully, as they cannot be changed.

### **Step 4: Attend your OPT Appointment**

Once you have all of your documentation in order, you can schedule and attend your OPT appointment.

# Optional Practical Training (OPT) Appointment Checklist



New England  
Conservatory

*Please make sure that you have the following,  
prior to your meeting for your OPT application*

The completed "Request for Optional Practical Training" Form

All of your previously issued I-20s, properly saved

Your passport page, properly saved

Your F-1 visa page, properly saved

Your I-94 Arrival/Departure Record, properly saved

A 2x2 Passport Sized Photo, properly saved

You have successfully made a USCIS account

A credit card for the payment of the OPT application fee of \$410

# Request for Optional Practical Training (OPT)



Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Major: \_\_\_\_\_

ID#: \_\_\_\_\_ Degree: BM MM GD DMA AD

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

Expected Graduation: Fall Spring \_\_\_\_\_ (year)

Have you ever been an F-1 student at ***another school?*** Yes No

Have you ever used OPT for ***another degree program?*** Yes No

Have you ever used OPT in your ***current degree program?*** Yes No

**For your OPT employment, you may have a start date as soon as the day after your program end date listed on your Form I-20, and up to 60 days after that date. Your OPT employment authorization period may last for up to a year. Choose your dates carefully, as they cannot be changed.**

I request the following OPT period

Start Date

End Date

I understand that my international advisor will request for me to have OPT for the above listed dates.

I also understand that I am not permitted to work pursuant to OPT employment authorization until I receive an Employment Authorization Card in the mail.

I understand that it is not advisable to travel internationally before my OPT has been approved and I have my Employment Authorization Card in hand. If I leave the United States during this time, US Customs and Border Protection officers may not permit me to return.

I will report all employment opportunities using the SEVP portal.

I understand that I may not have more than 90 days of unemployment during my OPT employment period, and if I transfer schools during my OPT period, my OPT employment period automatically ends.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## To be completed by the International Advisor

I have met with the student listed above, and have requested their OPT employment for the above listed dates

\_\_\_\_\_  
DSO Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Frequently Asked Questions about Optional Practical Training (OPT)



## What is Optional Practical Training?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a work authorization issued by USCIS that allows F-1 students to gain work experience in their degree program. 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 may still qualify for OPT.

## What responsibilities do I have while on OPT?

- You must report all jobs/gigs to your SEVP portal before engaging in the employment or activity
- 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.

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