

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is work authorization available to international students who have been in valid F-1 status for at least two consecutive semesters and who plan to seek employment in the U.S. in their field of study.

OPT is recommended by designated advisers at NPU, but final approval is granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).

Application Deadline

The earliest you can apply for OPT is 90 days before your "program completion date." The latest date the USCIS will accept your application is 60 days after your completion date. In addition, OPT applications must be submitted to USCIS within 30 days of receiving an OPT I-20 from the designated staff.

[OPT Application Instructions](#) are described below. Also refer to the files "2 OPT Application Checklist" and "3 NPU's Instructions- Apply for OPT" for the required application material and procedures.

What is Your Completion Date?

For OPT purposes, this is the day you complete your final degree requirements:

Your completion date is considered to be the last day of the semester your degree requirements are fulfilled.

Points To Remember

- One year of OPT is available after completing each higher level degree program.
- A job offer is not required to apply for OPT. However, once you find a job, you must notify the NPU administrative staff of your employment information: company name, office address, office phone number, your job title, your supervisor's name.
- [Unemployment](#) is allowed for no more than 90 days.
- The employment may occur anywhere in the U.S.
- No special permission is required to change employers or terminate your employment. However, you must notify NPU of your unemployment and/or new employer's information.
- During the period of OPT, a student continues in F-1 status, since OPT is considered to be part of the program of study.
- It can take the USCIS three to five months to issue the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) that allows you to begin working on OPT. There is no way to expedite an application.
- Once you complete your degree, you cannot work on-campus or off-campus until you have the EAD in your possession and your chosen start date has arrived.
- Once the OPT application is submitted to the USCIS, it is very difficult to change or cancel the application.
- OPT can only be extended beyond 12 months (for up to 17 months), if you meet the following three conditions:
 - Your OPT is based on a US Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral in a Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics ([STEM](#)) degree at the time of application for the extension.
 - Your employer subscribes to [E-Verify](#).
 - You are currently authorized for OPT and working in a job related to your field of study
- OPT is available both before and after completing the degree program. If you start OPT before completing your program of study, you may work half-time, called pre-completion OPT, until your program ends. The work time is considered

half (1/2) of full-time. OPT conducted after your program ends is called post-completion OPT.

A Note on Health Insurance

International students are eligible to purchase the International Student Health Insurance Plan with NPU during their OPT period.

17-Month Extensions of OPT

Students who have received a U.S. Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees in certain STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) fields, are eligible for a one-time, 17-month extension of post-completion OPT (for a total eligibility of up to 29 months).

To be eligible for the 17-month extension, the following conditions must be met:

- The student must have completed certain science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) degrees.
- The student must be authorized for OPT at the time of the extension application and working in a job or have a job offer related to his or her field of study.
- The extension must be based on the same degree as the post-completion OPT.
- At the time of application for the OPT extension, the student's employer (or prospective employer) must be registered with and participating in the USCIS' E-Verify employment verification program.
- The student must not have exceeded 90 days of unemployment in the initial 12-month period of OPT.

What is E-Verify?

[E-Verify](#) is an Internet based system operated by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA) that allows participating employers to electronically verify the employment eligibility of their newly hired employees. An employer's participation in E-Verify is voluntary and is currently free to employers.

If your company wants to participate in E-Verify, see the [DHS web site](#).

When To Apply for the 17-Month Extension

The USCIS must receive your application before the expiration date of your EAD, but no earlier than 120 days before the expiration date. The USCIS recommends that students apply within 90 and 120 days of the expiration date of the current OPT.

Timely applications will automatically extend the 12-month OPT work authorization up to 180 days until you receive the 17-month OPT Extension EAD.

Application Instructions

Applying for the 17-month extension is similar to the initial 12-month application.