# Mission

The **mission** of the Center for International Services and Programs is to serve and promote an urban university where students, faculty and staff gain international knowledge and experience. We wish to further the mission of the University, which is to "prepare our students to lead productive, responsible and satisfying lives in the region and global society".

# Optional Practical Training

# CISP

1899 East 22nd Street, Berkman Hall, Room 411, Cleveland, Ohio, 44115

**Phone**
216.687.3910
**Fax**
216.687.3965

CISP
Center for International
Services and Programs

**Office Hours**

Monday – Friday

8am – 5pm

**Walk-In Hours**
Monday-Friday
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Advanced Appointments available

**Email**
intlcenter@csuohio.edu

# CISP support services during the COVID-19 outbreak

Due to health and safety concerns, the Center for International Services and Programs (CISP) has transitioned to remote services.

**All CISP staff continues to be available to support you, and we are available virtually via phone, email, and ZOOM.  The phone line (216-687-3910) is staffed from 8am – 5pm Monday – Friday or you can email CISP at** intlcenter@csuohio.edu.

For more information, please visit our website www.csuohio.edu/international

# Agenda

- What is OPT?

- Planning for your OPT

- Preparing & Processing of your OPT application

- Using your OPT & maintaining F-1 status

# OPT Definition

- **What is Optional Practical Training?**

  - 12-month work permission

  - Benefit of F-1 status

  - Work or training related to most recent degree

  - A temporary training and/or employment experience

  - Eligibility criteria

# Eligibility

- Student in F-1 non-immigrant status

- Student maintaining legal F-1 status

- Student enrolled full-time for at least 1 academic year

- Student completing new degree program at a
  higher educational level

Doctoral Degree

↑

Master's Degree

↑

Bachelor's Degree

# Inegibility

- Student not eligible for OPT if granted 365 days or more of full-time CPT (Curricular Practical Training) for the current degree level

- Student not eligible for OPT after completing a new degree program at a same or lower educational level

Doctoral Degree

⬇

Master's Degree

⬇

Bachelor's Degree

⬇

Associate's Degree

# Optional Practical Training

- **Pre-Completion (**Very rare**)**
  - Prior to completion of degree requirements

- **Post-Completion**
  - After completion of coursework and/or degree requirements

- **24-month OPT Extension** (for STEM majors meeting all eligibility criteria)

- **OPT Cap-Gap Extension**
  - In between the end of OPT (or OPT extension) and start of an "industry" H-1B skilled worker visa

- **Post-Completion**
Optional Practical Training

# Things to remember

1. Establish an OPT plan

2. Apply for OPT with CISP [10 calendar-day process]

3. Prepare supporting documentation

4. File OPT with USCIS [90-day process]
   1. Online
   2. Mail

5. Be mindful of USCIS deadlines & fees

6. Keep in touch with CISP

# Your OPT Plan

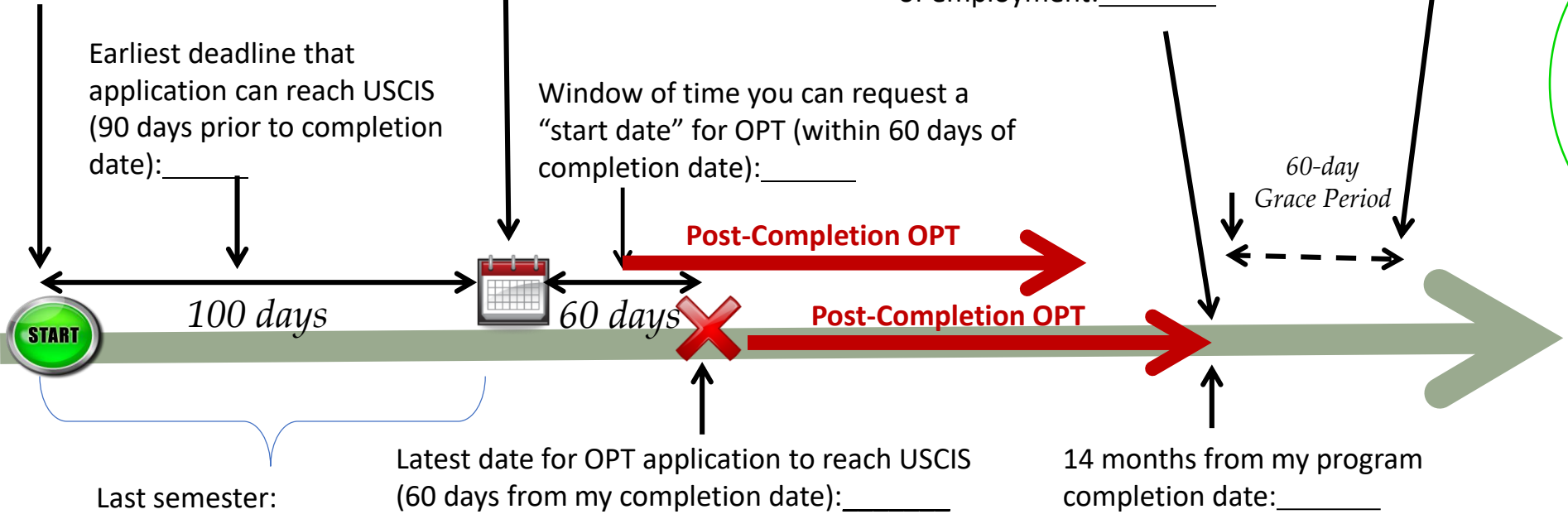**Program Completion Date**

My estimated completion date:_____

Date by which to leave U.S. or take action to remain in U.S. (60 days from end date on EAD):_____

CISP preferred date to request OPT (100 days prior to my completion date):_____

Earliest deadline that application can reach USCIS (90 days prior to completion date):_____

12 months from preferred start date of employment:_____

Window of time you can request a "start date" for OPT (within 60 days of completion date):_____

**Post-Completion OPT**

*60-day Grace Period*

**Post-Completion OPT**

*100 days*

START

*60 days*

Latest date for OPT application to reach USCIS (60 days from my completion date):_____

14 months from my program completion date:_____

Last semester:
-Semester you are completing your degree
-last semester you are registered at CSU

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# OPT and Dissertation

- You may be able to apply for "post-completion OPT" authorization to begin before you graduate if:

    • you have completed all required coursework **<u>and</u>** you have only thesis or dissertation remaining

- Post-completion OPT can begin while you complete your thesis or dissertation (as long as you already **<u>completed all required</u>** coursework).
- Procedurally, the OPT start date can only be after the I-20 end date, so your I-20 program end date will be shortened to the end of the semester or defense date in which you submit the OPT application.

# What employment qualifies?

- Directly related to current field of study

- Type of Employment
  - Multiple employers
  - Short term multiple employers (performing artists)
  - Work for hire (contractual relationship)
  - Employment through an agency or consulting firm
  - Self employed business owner
  - Paid
  - Unpaid (volunteer or unpaid intern. . .caution, labor laws!)

http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/opt_policy_guidance_042010.pdf

# What employment qualifies?

- Position can be anywhere in the U.S.

- Position can be at CSU
    - Any professional position requiring the degree you have completed
    - However, it cannot be a student position
        - All student employment, including graduate assistantships, must end on or before the end date on the I-20

# What if I don't find a job?

- **Allowed up to 90 days of unemployment**
  - Count only days between dates listed on Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
  - Count all days, including weekends and holidays
  - Count any week employed 20 hours or less (part-time)
  - Cumulative over 12 months of OPT
  - Count days outside the U.S.

- **Considered a violation of status to go over 90 days of unemployment**
  - Burden on student to report employment to CISP
  - Only DHS determines if violation occurs

# Submitting OPT Request to CISP

- **Submit e-form to CISP**

- **CISP Advisor will process an OPT I-20:  10 days**

- **Prepare supporting documents with CISP advisor**

- **Mail or Submit Onilne OPT application to USCIS:  90 days**

Student

Academic or Faculty Advisor

**CISP**

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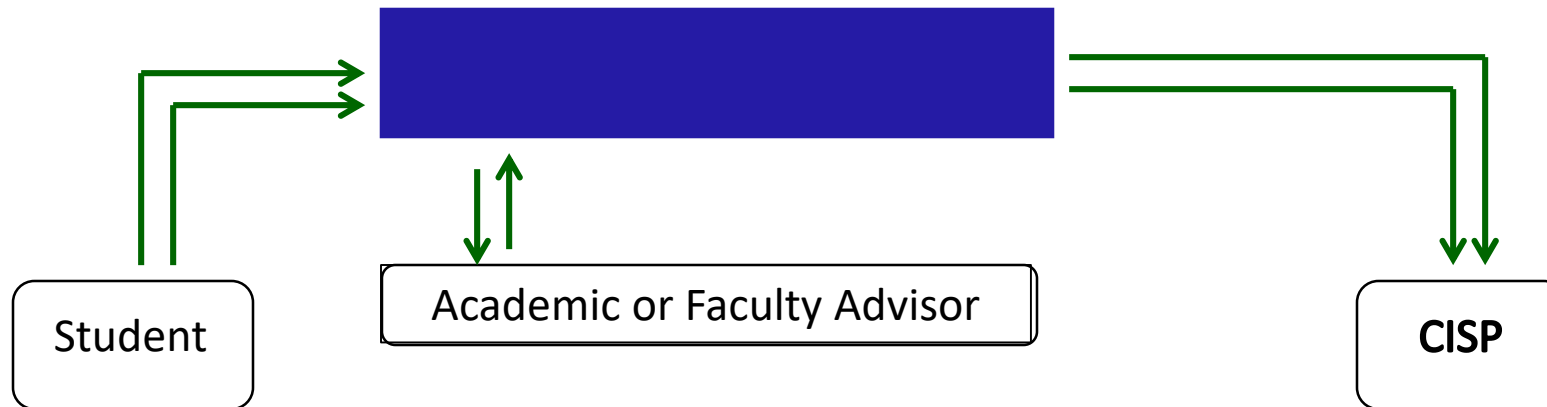
# Required Application Materials

- Completed form: *Optional Practical Training (OPT): Student Request (e-from)*

- Check for $410 payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- 2 passport photos taken within past 30 days
- Completed Form I-765
- Completed G-1145
- Copy of new OPT I-20 signed by CISP advisor within past 30 days
- Copy of SEVIS CPT I-20(s)
- Copy of previous EAD card(s), **if any**
- Copy of previous I-20 forms with OPT, **if any**
- Legible copy of I-94 card, front and back
- Copy of passport page with biographical information & expiration date
- Copy of passport page with F-1 visa (or most recent visa)

# Fee Payment

- **Personal Check**

# Photos

- 2 color photos

- Taken within past **30 days**

- U.S.-quality-passport photos

- No glasses

https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/how-apply/photos.html

# How to complete the I-765

- **Directions on [CISP website](#)**

- **Use I-765 directions on CISP web site to complete your own I-765**
  - Type your responses on the .pdf form
    - Use your I-94 card number for 10 (11 digits)
    - Do not change the information in 2, 3, or 15
    - Do change information that is different for you
      - 14 (if last U.S. entry was not as F-1 student)
      - 16 (if doing pre-completion OPT)
        - Change to (c) (3) (A) for pre-completion OPT

- **Save the .pdf file to add to your OPT e-form request**

- **Print a copy of the I-765**

# How to complete G-1145



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# Pending OPT Application

- What are my rights during this time?

  - You remain in legal, F-1 status

  - You may travel within and outside the U.S.

  - You may no longer work on-campus if your I-20 completion date is in the past
    - I-20 end date may have been shortened when the OPT recommendation was submitted to SEVIS
    - Students with graduate assistantships should research the consequences for ending the assistantship before the end of the semester
  - You may not begin employment through OPT until you receive the Employment Authorization Document

# Approved OPT Application

- How will I know if CISP has received my EAD?

  - Please remember it can take up to 30 days for CISP to receive your EAD from the date the USCIS Case Status system indicates it has been approved.

  - CISP will send an e-mail to your e-mail address

  - If more than 15 days has passed since you see your case has been approved, you may:
    - Send an e-mail to CISP

# EAD

- Employment Authorization Card
  - More commonly known as an EAD



EADs are issued for various purposes; this shows it is for OPT.

Signature: Missing if signature touches a line of the I-765. The EAD is OK for employment purposes; but some states will not allow as documentation for driver's license.

This reminds you that you need more than just the EAD to return to the U.S.

Dates of employment: If decision made after your requested start date, the EAD start date will reflect the decision date.

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# EAD

- Mailed to CISP
    - Based on mailing address on I-765
        - Helps prevent lost EADs

    - CISP will send e-mail to notify you EAD arrived
        - You may respond to the e-mail you will need to pay for express mail to receive the card and receipt notice.

# Travel Outside U.S. During OPT

- Can I travel while my OPT is pending?
  - Yes, as OPT is considered a benefit of F-1 status.
    - However, if application approved while outside the U.S., keep in mind the F-1 regulations indicate you need the EAD to return to the U.S.
    - **Do not** travel without I-797C receipt notice or EAD card

- Can I travel with my EAD but no job?
  - The F-1 regulations indicate you may return to the U.S. to resume employment.

- Can I obtain a new F-1 visa during my OPT?
  - Yes, but opinions vary on how easy or difficult it actually is to obtain a new F-1 visa during OPT.

# Travel Outside U.S. During OPT

- What documents do I need to travel?

  - Passport valid 6 months from date of U.S. entry

  - Valid F-1 visa

  - Travel validation signature within the past 6 months on page 3 of OPT I-20

  - EAD
    - If OPT still pending, take original I-797 Receipt Notice

  - Job letter

  - "Time spent outside the United States during an approved period of post-completion OPT counts as unemployment against the 90/120[/150]-day limits, unless the student is either:
    - Employed during a period of leave authorized by an employer; or
    - Traveling as part of his or her employment."
    http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/opt_policy_guidance_042010.pdf

**Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) & OPT Reporting**
Once your OPT authorization is granted, you will receive the EAD card, including your photo and authorized employment dates. **Do not begin working until your employment authorization is valid and documented!** Throughout your OPT period, you must report all employment activities and other changes online: http://www.csuohio.edu/international/opt-work-address-line-submission

# Responsibilities During OPT

- Submit OPT Report Form to CISP
  - When beginning employment
  - When ending employment

- Update local, living address in CampusNet

- Updates should be made within 10 days of any change in employment or address

- Failure to update employment or exceeding 90 days of unemployment may result in loss of status

# Responsibilities During OPT

- Updates should include a description of how work relates to major field of study: ""The description should relate more to the position with the employer. For example, the student studied architecture and now works for an architect using skills and knowledge learned during study." (https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2015-10-02%20OPT%20Changes%20in%20December%202015%20FAQ_0.pdf)

- The explanation should be clear and the connection should be apparent.

- **Reporting employment and having employment directly related to the field of study is important to maintaining status during OPT**

# Responsibilities During OPT

- Contact a CISP Advisor if you plan to begin a new degree program

  - Limitations to enrollment in new program during OPT
    - Cannot begin studies at a new educational level

  - Immigration deadlines for transfer or change of level after OPT

# Nearing the OPT End Date

- 60 day grace period following end of OPT

  - Leave the U.S.

  - Apply for a change of status

  - Apply for change of level (new degree at CSU)

  - Apply for a transfer (new degree, new school)

# Selecting a Date for OPT

**Please be advised that you application for OPT must arrive at the USCIS Service Center no later than the last day of your studies plus 60 days if you are taking grace period, regardless of your graduation ceremony or the start date that you choose.**

You may choose a starting and ending date for OPT that falls between the last day of your studies and your 60 day grace period for a total of 12 months (if you have not used any of your OPT previously).

Once you have indicated your preferred dates on the green form and they are entered into the SEVIS system, they **CANNOT** be changed.  Please choose accordingly.

| Completion Term | Last Day of Studies | Start Date Range |
|---|---|---|
| Spring 2021 | May 7, 2021 | May 8, 2021 – July 7, 2021 |
| Summer 2021 | August 6, 2021 | August 7, 2021 – October 4, 2021 |
| Fall 2021 | December 11, 2021 | December 12, 2021 – Feb 8, 2022 |

Please submit your OPT application well in advance of your completion date, but no more than 90 days before your program end date.

# Career Services

- Please contact Career Services for resume reviews, cover letter assistance, and interview help.

- Please contact Career Services at: careers@csuohio.edu.

- Find out more on the Career Services website here: https://www.csuohio.edu/career-services/career-services.

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For more information, please visit our website
www.csuohio.edu/international

# Process during the COVID-19 outbreak

**Apply For Graduation in CampusNet: OPT Applications will not be accepted if you have not applied for graduation**

- Step 1:  View the online Presentation
- Step 2:  Complete the CISP Optional Practical Training(OPT) Form
  https://cispcsu.formstack.com/forms/opt_application
- Step 3:  OPT I-20 issuance by CISP
- Step 4: OPT Application Review
- Step 5: Mail or Submit OPT Application to USCIS

# USCIS Announcement About Online OPT Filing

- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced on April 12, 2021 that F-1 students seeking Optional Practical Training (OPT) and STEM OPT 24-month extension now have the option to file their applications online. Please [click here](#) for the full announcement. This new online filing system is still in the testing phase and USCIS has acknowledged that the soft release could include glitches or lead to errors in adjudication. CISP encourage students to continue filing OPT and STEM OPT applications by mail while the USCIS online filing system is tested.

# Application Submission Online

On 4/12/2021, US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that F-1 students seeking Optional Practical Training (OPT) can now file their form I-765 online if filling under the pre-completion, post-completion and the STEM extension categories. For the full news release, please visit the **USCIS website.**

- Note that you should proceed with the online application process very carefully. The system allows you to submit your application without all required evidence, which can lead to requests for evidence and additional difficulties. This means you must be very careful to ensure that everything is included before submitting the online application. The general suggestions below are not intended to be legal advice. They are simply general suggestions for how you might proceed when completing the online I-765 application.

# Recommended Steps for Completing the I-765 Application Online

- **Create your online USCIS account: [https://myaccount.uscis.gov/](https://myaccount.uscis.gov/)**
- **Gather the following documents:**
  - Digital 2x2 color passport photo that meets USCIS specifications
  - A scan of your passport photograph page
  - A scan of the front and back of any previous EAD cards (if applicable)
  - A scan of any previous I-20s with CPT or OPT information (if available)
  - A digital copy of your I-20 with an OPT recommendation
    - Must be issued within the last 30 days for post-completion OPT and within the last 60 days for STEM extension OPT. You MUST consult with ISS to receive a new I-20 before filing for your OPT online.
    - The I-20 must be signed by an ISS advisor and by you. You can use a digital or handwritten signature.
  - Your most recent form I-94.
    - **[https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home)**
    - Select "Get Most Recent Form I-94"
  - A credit card with which you can pay the filing fee