

# WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

## What you need to know about F-1 Optional Practical Training Employment Authorization for International Students.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is off-campus employment authorization that allows F-1 students to get work experience in their major field of study. The amount of work permitted is a maximum of 12 months of full-time employment for the time during which you are an F-1 student. You may use it during or after your studies in whatever portions you choose. You may work for any employer, anywhere in the United States.

Think of it as an OPT bank account! In that account are 12 months of full-time optional practical training. Let's say you'd like to work full-time for three months one summer before you graduate with your bachelor's degree. That's a three-month withdrawal of full-time employment, leaving you nine months left to spend after you have graduated from your specific degree program.

### How can it be used?

- Summer vacation and semester break
- While school is in session: *part-time employment only*
- After completion of all course requirements for a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree, excluding the thesis or equivalent
- After completion of ALL requirements for the course of study

### How can you qualify for it?

- You have been enrolled full-time for one full academic year.
- You must be able to describe how the type of work you are seeking directly relates to your major. You do not have to have a job offer to apply for OPT. If you are applying for OPT before completion of studies, however, it is wise that you be as sure as possible of a job so that you don't waste any of your OPT "account".
- You may not apply for OPT after the end date on your I-20.
- You may not use all of the 12 months of full-time Optional Practical Training *before* the end date of your I-20.

### How do you apply?

Come by and speak with the PDSO or DSO. We will determine whether you qualify for OPT. If you do, then you will receive further instructions. An appointment will be made once you have obtained all the initial documents

Please bring all of your original immigration documents: (passport, I-94, visa, all previous I-20's and two colored passport type photos as described on attached sheet. If you previously had OPT, bring your old EAD card with you.

### **How long does it take?**

After you return your application and it has been processed, it will be sent to USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services). It may take up to 90 days for your EAD (Employment Authorization Document) to be returned to us from USCIS. It could take less or longer depending on the workload on USCIS. Unfortunately, there is no way to make the process go faster.

### **What if you want to travel before starting after-completion of studies OPT?**

Once you have begun the process by sending in your application, you should *not* travel outside of the United States without the EAD card, SEVIS I-20, and a letter from the employer. To re-enter the United States you *must show proof of an employer*. Otherwise, you will be denied entry.

### **What if you don't find a job?**

It is recommended that you obtain a job offer whenever possible, *before* submitting your application. Once your application has been submitted to U.S.C.I.S. and, if you were not able to find employment/internship, it is unlikely that your requested "time" will be returned to you.

### **When you are ready for an appointment to process the application, bring the following:**

- **Two photos.** Option is Midtown Photo, 390 Main Street, Middletown, CT. *Passport-style colored photo must be 2 inch by 2 inch*
- \$340 fee (check or money order) payable to **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**
- Original I-20's
- Passport
- Visa
- I-94
- EAD card (if done in the past)

We will send the application to USCIS via certified mail, return receipt requested. Estimate that it will take approximately **60-90 days to process the application.**

***YOU CANNOT START WORKING UNTIL USCIS AUTHORIZES YOUR EMPLOYMENT AND YOU HAVE YOUR EAD CARD IN YOUR POSSESSION!***

