International Students are eligible to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). You do not need to have a job in order to submit an application. OPT provides permission to work in the U.S. for up to 12 months in a position related to the major field of study. Students may not work until they receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). As processing of applications by USCIS takes up to 90 days, students are encouraged to plan ahead. To be eligible, all students must have completed one academic year (2 semesters) in F-1 status by the requested OPT start date.

**Pre-Completion OPT:** Students with pre-completion OPT authorization may work up to 20 hours per week during the school term (while also maintaining their full-time enrollment). Students may work up to 40 hours per week during the summer and winter vacations. Any months of Pre-Completion OPT will be subtracted from the total 12 months of standard Post-Completion OPT for which a student is eligible.

**Post-Completion OPT:** Post-Completion OPT may begin after graduation or after all coursework is completed, but while the thesis, project, or comprehensive exam remains, according to the student's preference. Post-Completion OPT Applications will be accepted by USCIS between 90 days prior to the student's completion of the degree and within 60 days after the completion of the degree. The program completion date on the front page of the I-20 will be adjusted (if necessary) to reflect the student's anticipated graduation date. If the student does not complete all courses (excluding thesis, project, etc.) as anticipated, the student will be limited to working 20 hours per week until the degree requirements are completed. The date requested for OPT must be within the first 60 days after completion of the degree. OPT end date must be within 14 months of completion of the degree.

**Unemployment:** No more than 90 days of unemployment is allowed during the 12 months of OPT (or 120 days in total during the 29 months of OPT plus STEM extension). For this purpose, volunteer work in a field related to the major, if it is 20 hours per week or more is considered to be employment and should be immediately reported.

**APPLICATION PROCESS**

**Step 1:**
- a) You must take care of any university "holds" you might have.
- b) Determine which address you wish to use in your OPT application as the Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) will be sent to that address. It may take up to three months to receive the card. The post office will not forward these documents even if you have your other mail forwarded.
c) **Adjunct status**: Graduate students who have not graduated and are not registered in regular courses, must register in adjunct status at Regional and Continuing Education in order to keep their space in the Graduate School.

**Step 2:**


b) Complete the student section of the attached departmental recommendation form and request that your department chair, faculty advisor, or graduate coordinator complete and sign the department section.

**Step 3:** Bring to the International Student Advisors the two forms above, plus:

a) 1-94 card (or photocopy of front and back)

b) Photocopy or passport bio data (photo, name, birthday, etc.) and visa pages

c) Proof of current health insurance coverage

d) $380 application fee – check made out to Department of Homeland Security

e) Two passport-size photos - 2 inches x 2 inches – lightly write your name and 1-94 number on the back

f) Copy of previous EAD card if you have received employment authorization in the past

**Step 4:**

a) The International Student Advisors will issue a new 1-20 for you with a recommendation for OPT.

b) After you sign the 1-20, the application will be mailed by the International Student Advising Office to USCIS.

c) You may mail the application yourself, if you wish.

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International Student Advising

Office of International Education

Student Services Center, 440

California State University, Chico

95929-0680

Phone: 530-898-5415

Fax: 530-898-6889
Optional Practical Training (OPT) Recommendation Form

International Students with F-1 visas are eligible to apply for 12 months of work authorization in the United States. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) regulations refer to this as Optional Practical Training (OPT). Typically, this is done immediately following completion of studies, post-completion, but there is also a provision for pre-completion OPT. A significant number of applications are granted and many students take advantage of this opportunity. **A job is not required in order to apply for OPT.**

**Part I: To be completed by the student**

1. **Surname**
   - Last Name: Chico
   - Given names
   - Email
   - Phone number

2. **Major**
   - Undergraduate (Bachelor)
   - Graduate (Masters)
   - Semester when you will graduate:

3. **OPT Dates Request**
   - **START:**
   - **END:**
   - This period is limited to a total of 12 months.
   - I understand that during OPT I will remain an F-1 student and must notify the International Student Advisors within 10 days of: 1) any change of my residential address, 2) the name and address of any company that employs me, 3) ending any employment, 4) changing to another immigration status. 5) Travel outside the US requires the ISA signature.
   - **Student Signature:**
   - **Date:**

**Part II: Completed & signed by Dept. Chair, Faculty Advisor, or Grad Coordinator**

Because USCIS requires an academic recommendation, your assistance in completing this form will be most appreciated. If you have questions or need for clarification, please contact the International Student Advisors James Luyirika-Sewagudde, Jr. at 898-5721 or Cindy J. McKay at 898-5408.

1. **Name:**
   - **Phone#:**

2. **Title:**
   - **Department:**

3. **Is the student expected to complete all of his/her coursework (excluding thesis, project, or culminating activity) by the end of the current academic term at CSU, Chico? (Please check one)**
   - **YES**
   - **NO**

4. **I recommend engagement in OPT in order to gain field experience in the major.**
   - **Signature:**
   - **Date:**

jls1215