

# Optional Practical Training

## Important Information

### Application

Take your application to the post office or mail service center, have it weighed, pay the postage, and mail it to the address provided to you during your OPT application appointment. The Department of Homeland Security requires that your application is received within 30 days of today (60 days if applying for the STEM OPT extension). Your request will be rejected if your application is not received within the time allotted. If you move before the EAD card is received, you must change your address online at <https://www.uscis.gov/addresschange>, or call 1.800.375.5283. Failure to update your address will result in your not receiving the EAD card.

### Email Notification

If you complete the form G-1145 you will receive an email notification from the USCIS lockbox facility when they have received your application. Approximately 30 days later, you will receive a formal Notice of Action (receipt) from Homeland Security. Approximately 60-75 days after that receipt, you will receive your employment authorization document (EAD card). This is your official permission to work and it will be good for the dates specified on the card. As soon as you receive your EAD, bring it to our office or email a copy so that we can include it with your university record.

### Travel

You may not travel or re-enter the United States while your application is in requested or pending status if your sole purpose for travel is to return for practical training. You must have an academic purpose for returning (classes to attend). Once your application has been approved, and if you plan to travel outside the U.S. you will need to have a current travel endorsement on your I-20 (signature from a DSO within the last 6 months), your EAD card, and a job offer letter from your employer. F-2 dependents must carry a valid passport with valid F-2 visa, the F-2 dependent I-20 with valid travel signature, copies of the most current immigration documents of the primary F-1 (if traveling separately) including copies of the F-1 visa, I-94 record, OPT I-20, EAD card, and job offer letter.

### Social Security and Medicare Taxes

If you have been in the U.S. for 5 years or less, be certain that your employer does not withhold Social Security and Medicare taxes from any pay that you receive. As an F-1 student, you are exempt from such withholding until your 6<sup>th</sup> year in the country.

### Maintaining Status

While participating in practical training, you will remain in F-1 status. If you move while on OPT you must provide the university with your new address within 10 days of the move. You must keep us up to date with the name and address of your employer while on OPT. You must also notify us of any periods of unemployment. You cannot be unemployed for more than 90 days while completing 12 month OPT or 150 days while completing STEM OPT. You must verify personal contact information and employment information with the university every 6 months. If participating in the STEM OPT extension, you must submit the self-evaluation on form I-983 every 6 months and a new form I-983 when there is a change in employment. You must also submit an annual evaluation of your STEM OPT progress via form I-983 which must be signed by your employer. If you change your immigration status to H1B, Permanent Resident, or any other status while on OPT, please notify the university of that change.

Once your OPT expires you will have 60 days in order to leave the U.S., apply for a change in your immigration status, or obtain a new I-20 to begin a new program of study. If you are going to begin a new program of study, classes must start within 5 months of the expiration of your OPT. In addition, studying at a higher level of education or transferring to another school terminates your OPT.

All updates, changes to employment, and questions while on OPT should be emailed to [LCJohns@indianatech.edu](mailto:LCJohns@indianatech.edu).