



Optional Practical Training Request **For F-1 Graduate Students**

Optional practical training is defined as **employment directly related to your major area(s) of study**. F-1 students must be enrolled *full-time* for at least *one academic year* to be eligible. OPT is recommended by the ISSS Office and authorized by the Department of Homeland Security and USCIS. Once approved for OPT you will receive an employment authorization document (EAD card).

A graduate student in F-1 status may apply for optional practical training:

- After completion of all requirements for the degree (excluding thesis or dissertation submission). The practical training must be full-time (more than 20 hours per week).
- After completion of the course of study (i.e. graduation). The practical training must be full-time (more than 20 hours per week).

Please note: The Office of Graduate Education at Rensselaer only approves **post-completion** OPT for graduate students

OPT Duration: Optional practical training is limited to a total of 12 months. **You are granted 12 months optional practical training for each degree level completed.** For example, if you receive OPT for your undergraduate degree, you may also receive OPT for a Master's or Doctorate degree. You cannot receive additional OPT if you earn a second degree at the same level (i.e. a second Master's degree).

Processing Times: Your application for post-completion OPT may be submitted to USCIS no earlier than 90 days before your program completion date and no later than 60 days after your program completion date on your I-20. After obtaining approval signatures (see page 4 of packet) please allow the ISSS Office up to **2 weeks** processing time. After receiving a newly endorsed I-20 for OPT from the ISSS, you will be given instructions on how to submit your application to USCIS. USCIS takes an average **2-3 months** to approve your request. You cannot start working until you have **1) reached your OPT start date as approved by USCIS and 2) physically obtained your EAD card in the mail.**

Start Date Selection: The *earliest* start date you may select is the **day after** your program completion date (as approved by your advisors on page 4). The *latest* possible start date is **60 days after** your completion date.

Travel Warning: Please be advised that travelling while the OPT application is pending is **at your own risk and not advised by this office**. If you must travel while your OPT is pending, please consult the ISSS Office first.

Employment may not commence until you have physically obtained your EAD.

Please submit the following documents to the ISSS Office to begin OPT processing. All documents must be submitted in their entirety for an application to be accepted:

1. *Optional Practical Training Request Form*: Page 3 of this packet
2. *Graduate Education Office Recommendation Form*: Page 4 of this packet. All signatures are required.
3. **Photocopies of all previous I-20s**: including previous programs or previous schools
4. **Completed I-765 from**: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf>
 - a. For # 16 write (c) (3) (B) for post-completion
 - b. Immigration will send your EAD card to the address that you write on the form I-765. You should write your name in your personal mailbox so that official government mail can be delivered to you. If you are using a friend's address, please write "c/o Friend's Name" in the address line section of the I-765.
5. **Two copies of I-94**: Printed electronic form I-94 (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>) and/or photocopy of both sides of cardstock I-94 if you were issued one.
 - a. Instructions are attached on how to retrieve the electronic I-94
6. **Two copies of identifying page in passport**
7. **Two copies of F-1 visa page(s)**: Please include entrance stamp in scan
8. **If applicable: Two copies of previous EAD card(s)**
9. **Optional but recommended: 2 copies of G-1145**—Notice of electronic receipt; PDF available online at USCIS.gov

Please Note: USCIS also requires two passport photos and a check for \$410.00 made payable to the Department of Homeland Security, but our office will not need to collect these items. These items should be sent with your application to USCIS after you get the new I-20 with OPT recommendation from the ISSS Office.

The ISSS Office will email the student when his/her documents, including I-20 with OPT recommendation, are ready. Please allow at least 2 weeks processing for your application. All outstanding bills must be paid before your application will be processed.

Requirements for EAD card photos (i.e. passport-style photo):

1. Full frontal face position, no distracting shadows on the face or background.
2. Have a "natural expression" – this means "neutral (non-smiling) with mouth closed. A smile with closed jaw if allowed but is not preferred".
3. Do not wear any headpiece unless "worn daily for religious purposes;" but "no item or attire should cover or obscure any part of the face".
4. It is recommended that you do not wear large earrings, eyeglasses unless "normally used by the subject;" dark or tinted lenses are not acceptable unless (needed) for medical reasons" and a medical certificate may be required.
5. Photograph should be 2 inches by 2 inches (see attached).
6. White or off-white background. Printed on thin photo paper or stock
7. **Photographs may not be more than 30 days old** at the time of filing this application. All photos must be identical.
8. In color, clear, focused & not retouched, enhanced or softened.
9. Printed with continuous-tone quality; if digitally printed must be produced without visible pixels or dots ("a digital camera with a resolution of 1 mega pixel will be more than adequate").
10. Head should be centered within the frame, with the captured image from slightly above the top of hair to the middle of the chest; height of head should measure one inch to 1 3/8 inches; with eye height, 1 1/8 inches to 1 3/8 inches from the bottom of the photo with eye height, 1 1/8 inches to 1 3/8 inches from the bottom of the photo (see attached)



Optional Practical Training Request Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Date of Birth: _____

RPI E-mail: _____

Alternate E-mail: _____

RIN (Rensselaer ID Number): _____

Degree Pursuing (select one): Master's / PHD

Graduate Program: _____

Dates you are requesting for your Optional Practical Training:

Start Date: _____ End Date: _____

Student Agreement: *I understand that while on OPT I am legally required to report to the ISSS Office. I agree to report any changes to my personal address, legal name, email, phone number, employer information (including employer name, address, dates of employment, and unemployment), and any other changes to immigration status to the ISSS Office within 10 days of any change, and to check in with the ISSS Office every 6 months as per reporting regulations. I will also submit a copy of my EAD card upon receipt from USCIS.*

Signature: _____ Date: _____



Graduate Education Office Recommendation Form For Optional Practical Training

This form provides information required by the Department of Homeland Security for the granting of employment under practical training to an international student. The Office of Graduate Education, the student's Graduate Program Director, and Advisor should assist the student in completing this form, verifying that the student will complete his/her program by the date listed. Please direct any questions to the ISSS Office (ISSSOffice@rpi.edu, x6266). Thank you for your assistance.

STUDENT'S NAME: _____ RIN: _____

GRADUATE PROGRAM: _____

<p>To be filled out by advisor:</p> <p>When do you anticipate this student completing his/her degree requirements? Please fill in dates for at least one of the following. This date will be considered the "program completion date" on your I-20:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Defense Date* _____/_____/_____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Graduation Date _____/_____/_____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Thesis/Dissertation Submit Date _____/_____/_____</p> <p>*Students may request an OPT start date after the defense date as long as the student has completed <i>all other</i> requirements for their degree <i>except</i> for thesis/dissertation submission. The defense date will serve as the program completion date in this scenario, as all degree requirements except thesis/dissertation submission have been completed.</p>

Advisor's signature

Date

Advisor's name printed

Phone Number

Graduate Program Director's signature

Date

Graduate Program Director's name printed

Phone Number

Dean of Graduate Education Office signature

Date