

College of the Holy Cross – Office of International Students

OPT Overview – Student Acknowledgement Form

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Acknowledgement: Complying with the following rules and procedures is mandatory to maintain lawful F-1 immigration status while on post-completion OPT. Please review carefully each item below, and then sign this form to confirm that you understand and will abide by each item. Your signature also confirms your requested OPT dates. The original, signed copy of this acknowledgement will be kept in your file and a copy will be given to you for your reference. **You must be inside the US when you apply for OPT.**

1. OPT employment and my major(s): I understand that it is solely my responsibility to ensure that all employment (including volunteer work) that I undertake while on OPT must be directly related to my major (at least one, if I am a double major). I must provide the statement for USCIS for each job I accept. OIS can advise me but the final decision and text are mine and I assume all responsibility if USCIS later questions me about the relevancy of the employment (see #7, below).

2. Graduation date: I understand that if I fail to complete all of my program requirements, I must request an extension of my form I-20 prior to the program end date found in my latest I-20. I know that this may invalidate or otherwise affect the OPT authorization.

3. Timely and correct filing of the OPT application: If I submit on time **and I am inside the US**, OIS will file my OPT application with USCIS. I am responsible for completing the application and providing all required documents, photos, and fees. Delays in my doing so may result in delayed filing of my application.

4. Cancelling my application: If extraordinary circumstances warrant it, I can attempt to cancel my OPT application only if the application has not yet been adjudicated (approved) by the USCIS Service Center. I will work with the OIS if cancellation becomes necessary.

5. Maintain timely communication with OIS: Unless otherwise requested, OIS will arrange to receive all USCIS receipts and my Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and then send them to me. It is my responsibility to maintain timely communication with OIS, especially regarding the correct delivery address for my EAD. If I choose to have documents sent to an address other than OIS, I accept the responsibility for tracking the documents on my own.

6. Maintaining status on OPT: During OPT, I understand that my F-1 status is dependent upon employment (in addition to following all other regulations). Unpaid or volunteer positions must be documented under special guidelines. I understand that my SEVIS record may be automatically terminated if I accrue a cumulative total of more than 90 days of unemployment during the 12 months of OPT. It is my responsibility to comply with the reporting requirement by submitting OPT Employment Information Form to the OIS (see below).

7. Employment Information Form: I understand that it is my responsibility to update OIS on my employment status using OPT Employment Information Form within 10 days of beginning employment. I will also notify OIS of any change in employment (or of my supervisor) -- including termination of employment -- within 10 days of the effective date that such a change or termination occurs. Whenever I start a job, within 10 days I must submit the required statement of its direct relationship to my major.

8. Unemployment “Clock”: I am aware that SEVIS unemployment clock will begin counting days of unemployment starting with my OPT start date. I understand the SEVIS unemployment clock stops when OIS manually enters employer information reported on OPT Employment Information Form. I understand that if I fail to update my SEVIS record with employment, SEVIS may automatically cancel the record, resulting in a visa violation. I understand that SEVIS termination due to a visa violation will trigger alerts in various US government database and that the consequence will be very damaging and long lasting (including removal/deportation and being banned from the U.S.).

9. Notifying OIS of address changes: I understand that I am required by federal regulations to notify OIS of my new address within 10 days via email if I should move to another residence.

10. Invalidating OPT: I understand that my OPT will be cancelled or invalidated if I commence a new program of study, transfer my SEVIS record to a new school, engage in unauthorized employment, or otherwise violate my F-1 immigration status.

11. Duration of OPT

a. Non-STEM majors: I understand that I am eligible for one 12-month period of OPT per educational level and that all of my OPT employment must be directly related to my major field(s) of study.

b. STEM majors: I have been advised by OIS that if my major is in a DHS designated STEM field (Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics), I may be eligible to apply for the STEM Extension. I am aware that I will need to contact OIS to determine my eligibility to apply for this additional 24-month period of OPT. If I am eligible for, and am granted a 24-month OPT STEM extension, I understand that I may not accrue an aggregate of more than 150 days of unemployment during the total OPT period comprising both the initial 12-month post completion OPT authorization and the subsequent 24-month extension period. I understand that it is my responsibility to work with my employer to apply for OPT STEM Extension in a timely manner and comply with all reporting requirements while I am on STEM OPT extension.

12. Traveling outside the U.S.: Travel between graduation and OPT approval is NOT RECOMMENDED. I understand that travel authorization on page 2 of my I-20 is valid for a maximum of 6 months while I am on OPT. It is my responsibility to request a new travel signature from OIS at least 3 weeks prior to the date needed. I understand that if I travel outside the US without required documents including valid EAD, letter of employment and valid F-1 visa, I may experience difficulty when returning and could be denied re-entry to the US. I have been warned by OIS of the difficulties and risks associated with travel while on OPT.

13. Entering with F-1 visa while on OPT: I understand that I cannot enter the U.S. in any other visa category except F-1 during my OPT. If I re-enter as a tourist or on any other visa status including visa waiver program, it will interrupt my F-1 status and invalidate my OPT.

(continues on page 3)

14. Sixty-day “grace period” after OPT: I understand that I am permitted a period of 60 days to remain in the U.S. following the end date on my OPT card. I may not work during this period unless my immigration status is changed to a classification that permits employment. I can also use this time to transfer my F-1 status to another school, apply for a change of status, process a level change to begin a new program of study, or to depart the U.S. (which I must do no later than the 60th day).

15. Beginning employment: I know that I may not begin working until I have the physical OPT EAD (card) in my possession and reach the start date of the EAD. To do so constitutes unauthorized employment and a violation of my F-1 status.

16. OPT start and end dates: I understand that USCIS ultimately determines my OPT start and end dates, based partly on when I apply and processing time (which generally takes *about* 110 days). I am responsible for requesting the employment dates below which will be reflected on the DSO’s recommendation on the Form I-20. I know that I will not be able to change them should the dates become incompatible with a future offer of employment. I request the following OPT dates:

Requested Start Date: _____ Requested End Date: _____

I have read and understand the above rules and procedures and will abide by them. I also have thoroughly read and understand all the OPT information on OIS website. I understand the responsibilities required for maintaining F-1 status during my period of OPT authorization as stated above and I understand that it is my responsibility to comply with these regulations. I acknowledge the above statement by signing below.

Sign: _____ Print: _____ Date: _____

Email to be used after graduation: _____ Mobile: _____

I give my permission to the OIS to share the following information (e.g., on the OIS website or via email) to help other Holy Cross students with their career development:

Contact Information: Yes No Employer Information: Yes No