



## WALSH UNIVERSITY / INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

### F-1 Student: Optional Practical Training (OPT)-General Information

**What is F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)?** OPT is the opportunity to apply knowledge gained in the classroom to a practical work experience off campus. OPT is authorized by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This authorization can take up to 120 days to obtain. The maximum amount of time granted to work in F-1 OPT status is 12 months for an undergraduate degree and an additional 12 months for a graduate degree. You may use some or all of the available 12 months of OPT during your course of study or save the full twelve months to use after you graduate.

**What are the Eligibility Requirements for F-1 OPT?** To be eligible to apply for OPT, you must: (1) have been in full time student status for at least one full academic year, (2) be maintaining valid F-1 status at the time of the application, and (3) intend to work in a position directly related to your major field of study.

**If I complete a degree program, take 12 months of OPT, and then begin a second course of study, am I eligible for an additional 12 months of OPT?** As of January 1, 2003, an F-1 student may become eligible for another 12 months of OPT when he or she moves to a higher educational level.

**How long does it take to get authorization for OPT and when should I apply?** Authorization for OPT is granted by the USCIS and can take up to 120 days to obtain. Therefore it is important that you apply for the authorization well in advance of the date you wish to commence employment. You may submit your application 90 days prior to graduation or within 60 days after your program completion date.

**What dates should I request for the beginning and ending of my OPT?** The earliest day you can request for the beginning of the OPT is the day after you complete your degree. However, you may request that it officially begins anytime in the 60 days following graduation. The ending date is 12 months after the beginning date.

**Do I need to have a job to apply for OPT?** You do not need to have a job offer before applying for OPT.

**Will I receive a new I-20?** Yes. All applications for OPT must include a SEVIS form I-20 with the OPT recommendation by the Designated School Official (DSO).

**How will I know if the OPT application has been received and approved?** Within 30 days of receiving the application, the USCIS will send a receipt (Form I-797) to the ISS. The DSO will contact you to pick this up. Once you have the receipt, you can check your case status on line at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov). Once approved, the USCIS will mail your Employment Authorization Document (work permit card) to the DSO. This card will state the type and length of the period of employment authorized.

**E-Notification:** If you want to receive an e-mail and/or a text message that your Form I-765 has been accepted at a USCIS Lockbox facility, complete Form G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance and clip it to the first page of your application. Form G-1145 can be downloaded through the link above.

**Can I begin working before I receive the Employment Authorization Document?** No. You may not begin employment before you receive your EAD from USCIS and the start date on the card is reached. Working before OPT has been authorized by the USCIS constitutes illegal employment.

**What about traveling abroad after I have completed my studies and while I hold OPT status?** Please discuss your travel plans with the DSO before making any arrangements – this is very important.



**Will I have to pay U.S. taxes for income earned while on OPT?** In general, F-1 students who have been in the U.S. for fewer than five calendar years are exempt from Social Security (FICA) and Medicare taxes. You should be sure to bring this to the attention of your employer, as many employers are not familiar with this provision of the tax law. You will be subject to all other taxes that may apply: federal, state and local. You should check to see if your country is one of the few that has a tax treaty with the U.S. allowing students to exclude a limited amount of earned income from federal taxation.

**Am I required to report any information to Walsh University while I am on OPT?** Yes. You are required to report a change of address within 10 days of moving and you are also required to report the following employment information: employer's name, address, phone number, and your dates of employment.

**What if I cannot find a job?** The latest regulations (04/08/2008) state that students who accrue 90 days of unemployment on OPT will have their work authorization terminated. If you are approaching 45 days without employment, contact International Student Services office so we can discuss your options for maintaining valid F-1 status.

**Can I get an extension of my OPT?** You may be eligible for an extension of your work authorization if you are currently employed in a designated STEM field (please contact International Student Services for a list) or if your employer has filed an H-1B application for you for the following fiscal year. Please contact International Student Services for more information about your specific situation.