PRE-COMPLETION OPT
ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION

OVERVIEW

WHAT IS PRE-COMPLETION OPT?

Pre-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit that allows students in F-1 status to receive work authorization to participate in off-campus practical training directly related to their major field of study during their academic program. Pre-completion OPT can only be used while a student is actively enrolled in the degree. Pre-completion OPT must end before a student completes their degree requirements. Pre-completion OPT can be used to engage in paid or unpaid practical training experiences.

AM I ELIGIBLE?

The student must meet all the below criteria to be eligible for pre-completion OPT:

- ☐ Maintain current F-1 visa status & continue full-time enrollment while on pre-completion OPT
- ☐ Enroll full time and meet the online course requirements during summer if summer is your final semester
- ☐ Have been continuously enrolled full-time for at least one full academic year in active nonimmigrant status OR will be completing one academic year within 90 days of applying for pre-completion OPT
- ☐ Have a valid passport, I-20 and I-94 record indicating F-1 and a valid Admit Until Date
- ☐ Will begin and end your pre-completion OPT while you are actively enrolled in your program of study
- ☐ Did not accrue more than 12-months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
- ☐ Have not previously earned a degree at a higher level in the United States
- ☐ Have not previously been approved for 12 months of OPT at the current degree level or at a higher level
- ☐ Will only pursue employment directly related to their major field of study

NOTE: Although students do not need a job offer to apply, we advise students to secure a job to ensure they use the benefit. Authorized pre-completion OPT is deducted from the 12 months of available full-time OPT.

HOW MANY HOURS CAN I WORK?

When to use pre-completion OPT:	HOURS:
Fall or spring semesters while school is in-session	Part-time: 20 hours per week or less
Official school break/annual vacation	Full-time: More than 20 hours per week
*Graduate student who has completed all coursework except thesis/dissertation	May be eligible for full-time Pre-completion OPT

✳Graduate students must have **Comprehensive Examination** listed as **COMPLETED** in the Student Information System(SIS) Milestone List and enroll in research credits.

HOW WILL PRE-COMPLETION OPT AFFECT POST-COMPLETION OPT?

Students may use a maximum of 12 months of OPT, combined between Pre-Completion OPT and Post-Completion OPT.
Any authorized Pre-Completion OPT will reduce the amount of Post-Completion OPT available.

Part-time	Part-time Pre-Completion OPT is defined as 20 hours per week or fewer, and is deducted from Post-Completion OPT at a half-time rate. For example, 6 months of approved part-time Pre-Completion OPT will deduct 3 months from the available Post-Completion OPT period. Students would then be eligible for only 9 months of Post-Completion OPT.
Full-time	Full-time Pre-Completion OPT, defined as more than 20 hours per week, is deducted from Post-Completion OPT at a full-time rate. For example, if students are approved for 4 months of full-time Pre-Completion OPT, 4 months will be deducted from the available Post-Completion OPT period. Students would then be eligible for only 8 months of Post-Completion OPT.

Even if students do not work during their authorized Pre-Completion OPT period, the time granted by USCIS will still be deducted from the available Post-Completion OPT period. Pre-Completion OPT and Post-Completion OPT are separate applications. Students must submit separate applications and pay separate filing fees. Applying for or receiving Pre-Completion OPT does not eliminate the need to apply separately for Post-Completion OPT at a later date.

WHEN CAN I APPLY?

A student may apply for OPT up to 90 days before he or she completes a full academic year. The requested pre-completion OPT start date must be after the one-academic-year requirement has been met. At MSU, one academic year generally consists of two consecutive academic semesters. In some circumstances, full-time enrollment completed in another qualifying non-immigrant status may count toward the one-full-academic-year requirement.

If the student has already completed a full academic year, they may apply for OPT up to 90 days in advance of the requested employment start date.

USCIS may take more than four months to adjudicate OPT application and issue the Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

NOTE: Students cannot apply for pre-completion OPT on their own. OISS must recommend students for pre-completion OPT in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Students will receive an updated I-20 with pre-completion OPT recommendation listed on page 2 of the I-20.

WHEN CAN I START WORKING?

You may begin pre-completion OPT employment after:
- You receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
- The employment start date detailed on your EAD has been reached

PRE-COMPLETION OPT APPLICATION PROCESS

STEP 1: CONSULT WITH YOUR OISS ADVISOR

It is important to meet with an OISS advisor to determine whether Pre-Completion OPT is the best option for you. Your advisor will consider your program start date & end date, program of study, plans after completing your degree, and any job offer you may have in order to provide the most appropriate guidance. Please schedule an advising appointment.

STEP 2: PREPARE YOUR SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Prepare copies of the supporting documents listed below. Creating PDF copies and organizing digital copies in advance will make the application process easier. The passport photo may be saved as an image or JPEG file.

Evidence (as listed in online filing system)	Description of Evidence to Upload	Notes
2x2 photo of you	Passport Photo	See U.S. Department of State photo requirements
Form I-94	Most recent I-94 or I-797 Approval Notice	Download your most recent I-94 here
Employment Authorization Document (EAD) (if applicable)	Copy of previous EAD and/or Valid passport biographical page	If you have never applied for EAD, upload a copy of a valid passport biographical page
Proof of Enrollment	Transcripts	Evidence of having been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year
Previously authorized CPT or OPT	Signed Form I-20s for any previous CPT or OPT Periods	Leave blank if you have never applied for CPTs or OPT
Form I-20	I-20 with OPT recommendation once it is issued	Form I-20 with pre-completion OPT will be provided to you after completing step 4

STEP 3: DRAFT FORM I-765 IN YOUR USCIS ONLINE ACCOUNT

- [ ] Create USCIS online account
- [ ] Select "File a Form Online"
- [ ] Select "I-765, Application for Employment Authorization" & click on "Fill Out Form Fields Online"
- [ ] Select "(c)(3)(A) Student Pre-Completion OPT" eligibility category
- [ ] Select "Yes" if you wish to premium process. (see page 4 of this guide to learn about premium processing)
- [ ] Continue through the application and answer all applicable questions
- [ ] Under "Evidence Section", upload supporting documents listed on Step 2. Do not upload an I-20 in the Form I-20 section. OISS will issue an I-20 with pre-completion OPT recommendation after completing Step 4
- [ ] Under "Your Application Summary" Click on "View draft snapshot"
- [ ] Download and save your Form I-765 "Application For Employment Authorization"
- [ ] Do not progress beyond the "Your Application Summary" page. Save your draft I-765 Application

STEP 4: SUBMIT YOUR PRE-COMPLETION OPT I-20 REQUEST TO OISS

- [ ] Login to myoiss.msu.edu and click on F-1 Student Services
- [ ] Click on Pre-Completion OPT eForm
- [ ] Complete all requirements and upload supporting documents from STEP 2
- [ ] Upload "I-765 draft snapshot"

STEP 4: SUBMIT YOUR PRE-COMPLETION OPT I-20 REQUEST TO OISS

- [ ] Submit Pre-Completion OPT I-20 Request eForm
- [ ] OISS Advisor reviews your request and creates an I-20 with pre-completion OPT recommendation
- [ ] Download and save your I-20 with pre-completion OPT recommendation
- [ ] **SIGN** your I-20 with pre-completion OPT recommendation in ink.
- [ ] Scan and save your signed I-20

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- OISS requires 8–10 business days to review and process your pre-completion OPT I-20 request.
- If your request is complete and accurate, OISS will recommend you for pre-completion OPT in SEVIS and issue your I-20 with recommendation, which will list your recommendation dates and requested start and end dates on page 2.
- If corrections are needed, your OISS advisor will contact you via your MSU email.
- Once you receive your I-20 with pre-completion OPT, review it carefully, confirm the OPT recommendation information on page 2, then print and sign it before submitting your application to USCIS.
- USCIS must receive your application within 30 days of the OPT recommendation in SEVIS.
- **Do not submit your Form I-765 to USCIS until OISS has recommended Pre-Completion OPT in SEVIS and issued your updated Form I-20.**
- **USCIS must receive your Form I-765 within 30 days of the OPT recommendation.**

STEP 5: FINISH SUBMITTING YOUR FORM I-765 TO USCIS

- [ ] Log in to your USCIS online account
- [ ] Click Continue to continue I-765 Application for Employment Authorization
- [ ] Navigate to the "Evidence" section of the I-765
- [ ] **Upload your signed I-20 with pre-completion OPT recommendation under the "Form I-20" section**
- [ ] Confirm all fields in your I-765 are complete and all required evidence is uploaded
- [ ] Provide payment with a U.S. Debit or Credit Card
- [ ] Submit your application

STEP 6: REPORT YOUR RECEIPT NOTICES TO MYOISS PORTAL

- [ ] Submit your receipt notice, biometrics notice, approval notice and employment authorization document into your MyOISS portal when you receive them

RECEIPT NOTICE AND TRACKING YOUR CASE STATUS

USCIS will provide all applicants with a I-797 Notice of Action after receiving the OPT application. The I-797C Notice of Action should be accessible within 48 hours in the USCIS online account. Once you have received your Receipt Notice, log in to myoiss.msu.edu, select F-1 Optional Practical Training and upload a copy of your Receipt Notice to OISS.

You can use the Receipt Number listed on your I-797C, form to track your application at USCIS online Case Status.

OPT PROCESSING TIMES

OPT processing may take four months or longer after USCIS receives your application. If your application is approved, your EAD will be mailed to the address listed on your Form I-765. For current processing-time information, visit USCIS Case Processing Times.

STEP 7: COMPLETE BIOMETRICS

USCIS may require you to attend a biometric appointment at an Application Support Center (ASC). If USCIS schedules you for biometrics, carefully follow the instructions on your ASC Appointment Notice. The following is a checklist on what to do if you receive an ASC Notice. However, always read and review the instructions on listed in the actual Notice

- [ ] **Receive Your ASC Appointment Notice:** Within approximately 30 days
- [ ] After you submit your OPT application, you will receive an Application Support Center (ASC) Appointment Notice from USCIS
- [ ] **Review the Appointment Details:** The notice will include the date, time, and location of your biometrics appointment. Read this information carefully and check for any errors
- [ ] **Prepare for Your Appointment:** Bring the following items to your appointment:
  - ✳ Your ASC Appointment Notice (Form I-797C)
  - ✳ Your OPT or STEM OPT receipt notice
  - ✳ Your passport
  - ✳ A copy of your I-94 Form
- [ ] **Attend the Appointment:** You must attend your scheduled appointment as instructed. Missing it without notifying USCIS may lead to delays or denial of your OPT application
- [ ] **After the Appointment:** Once your biometrics are collected, USCIS will continue processing your OPT application. No further action is needed unless USCIS contacts you for additional information

OPT APPROVAL

Once your pre-completion OPT is approved, you must do the following:

- [ ] **Check your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) details:** Review the EAD card to confirm correct name, date of birth and validity period. Report errors to your OISS advisor
- [ ] **Upload a copy of your EAD to MyOISS:** You must provide a copy of your EAD to OISS through MyOISS
- [ ] **Wait for EAD Card:** You may begin working only after you have received your EAD and reached the employment authorization start date listed on your EAD card
- [ ] **Complete Step 8:** Report your employment information to OISS via MyOISS
- [ ] **Hours:** Your EAD will detail how many hours you can work. Part-time = maximum 20 hours. Full-time = more than 20 hours

STEP 8: REPORT YOUR EMPLOYMENT TO OISS

It is your responsibility to report employment to OISS. Failure to report employment and address updates in a timely fashion can have negative consequences on your F-1 status

- [ ] Students must report their employment information to the MyOISS Portal
- [ ] Student must only work in a position that is directly relates to their major area of study

STEP 8: REPORT YOUR EMPLOYMENT TO OISS

Below are some examples of how to report your employment in the SEVP Portal:

Example #1:
Bachelor's degree in Business. I work part time (20 hours maximum a week) as a Loan Officer at a mortgage company called Happy Homes. At Happy Homes, I meet with clients and evaluate, authorize and recommend approval of loan applications. On a daily basis, I use the knowledge I gained in my credit analysis, sales and marketing classes that I took as part of my major program of study

Example #2:
PhD in Electrical Engineering. I work full time (30 hours minimum a week) as an Electrical Engineer at ABC Corp. At ABC Corp, I analyze client requirements for electrical systems and provide them with cost estimates of such systems. My work requires understanding of electrical circuit theory which I studied in-depth at Michigan State University

MAINTAINING YOUR F-1 VISA STATUS WHILE ON PRE-COMPLETION OPT

During pre-completion OPT, students must continue to maintain their F-1 status

- [ ] Continue full-time enrollment during fall & spring semesters
- [ ] Enroll full-time during summer, if summer is your final semester
- [ ] Report any changes about your job to OISS via MyOISS Portal
- [ ] Report address changes to the Student Information System (SIS) within 10 business days
- [ ] Employment(s) must be directly related to your field of study
- [ ] You are eligible to work more than one job as long as all employments are directly related to your field of study
- [ ] You must NOT exceed 20 hours if authorized for part-time
- [ ] Employment can be paid or unpaid
- [ ] Employment authorization will begin on the date listed on the EAD
- [ ] Employment authorization will end on the date listed on the EAD or program end date listed on your I-20

PREMIUM PROCESSING

The USCIS offers an optional premium processing service to provide expedited processing to certain USCIS forms.

Students submitting the form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization for OPT or STEM OPT extensions are eligible to request premium processing by submitting the form I-907, Request for Premium Processing Service, and paying the premium processing fee.

HOW FAST IS PREMIUM PROCESSING?

The premium processing timeframe is 30 business days after all prerequisites for adjudication have been met. If the application requires a student to submit additional evidence or documentation due to the issuance of a request of evidence or notice of intent to deny, the premium processing period will stop and reset. A new premium processing time period will begin when the response is received by USCIS.

HOW MUCH IS THE PREMIUM PROCESSING FEE?

The premium processing service fee is an additional fee. Please check the USCIS website for up-to-date fee rates.

HOW DO I REQUEST PREMIUM PROCESSING?

Students can apply for premium processing while completing the I-765, Application for Employment Authorization". Alternatively, students can submit form I-907, Request for Premium Processing Service, through their USCIS account.

CAN I REQUEST PREMIUM PROCESSING LATER?

Students can file a form I-907, Premium Processing Service after they have submitted the form I-765, as long as USCIS has not made a final decision on the request. However, the 30 business day window does not begin until the date of the filing.