OPT FACT SHEET

DEFINITION

• Optional Practical Training (OPT) is off-campus work authorization in a student’s field of study for 12 months after completion of the academic program.
• Students in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) may also be eligible for an additional 17-month extension for OPT.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

• Student must have been enrolled at Mercer University for at least one full academic year (9 months or 4 consecutive sessions) before applying for OPT.
• Student must be in valid F-1 status at the time of the application.
• Student must have no HOLDS on their academic or financial record.
• Student must NOT have been previously approved for OPT for the same or higher level.

HOW TO APPLY FOR OPT

• Complete the Mercer University OPT Application with your academic department
• Meet with your International Student Advisor to review the following documents:
  o Completed Mercer University OPT Application
  o Original completed USCIS Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization
  o Two U.S. passport-style photos with your I-94 number and full name printed lightly in pencil on the back
  o Personal check or U.S. money order for $380 payable to the Department of Homeland Security
  o Photocopy of Passport Biography Page (Can be made in OIP)
  o Photocopy of F-1 Visa (Can be made in OIP)
  o Photocopy of I-94 card (front and back) or print your electronic I-94 at: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html
  o Photocopy of all I-20s since entry into the U.S. as an F-1 student. This includes all I-20s issued from other schools.
  o Photocopy of previous EAD/OPT cards (If applicable)
  o Photocopy of Change of Status I-797A Notice of Action (Approval Notice) if you changed status to F-1 (If applicable)
  o Job offer letter (Optional)
• International Student Advisor will issue a new I-20 with an OPT recommendation.
• Obtain a photocopy of all documents to be sent as part of your OPT application.
• Mail all application materials with the newly signed I-20 with OPT recommendation to USCIS.

WHEN TO APPLY & PROCESSING TIMES

Earliest: 90 days before completion of studies. Latest: 60 days after completion of studies. We recommend applying 90 days before completion to ensure timely processing. You DO NOT have to have a job to apply. USCIS processing of your application can take up to 90 days from receipt. USCIS will mail your application receipt in 2-3 weeks. If your EAD card does not arrive within 90 days, contact the Office of International Programs immediately.