LOS ANGELES CITY COLLEGE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM
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OPT Workshop

What is OPT?

▶ **O**ptional **P**ractical **T**raining is a temporary employment directly related to student's field of study.

▶ During OPT, a student remains in F-1 status.

▶ F1 students are eligible for 12 months OPT once for each higher educational level.

▶ LACC offers Post-Completion OPT. This means that you must be eligible to graduate at the end of the semester you wish to apply.

Eligibility to apply for OPT

- You must be in legal F1status

- Be full-time student for at least one full academic year (2 semesters)

- You must be enrolled in the last semester of your program (to complete all the requirements for graduation)

- You must file for graduation in the A&R Office or show a proof of completion of the program (Educational Plan from academic counselor)

When does OPT employment begins?

- Employment begins after completion of academic program.

- Your intent should be to find full-time employment in your field of study.

- You do NOT need to have a job offer in place to apply for OPT.

If I am eligible, when can I apply ?

▶ You can apply as early as 90 days before your last semester end date

▶ Or during your grace period- within 60 days of your program end date.

▶ The last day of the semester June 3, 2019

How do I apply?

▶ You will need to submit an I-765 application to USCIS with supporting documents.

www.uscis.gov

▶ You will need an I-20 with OPT recommendation from your DSO

▶ The filling fee is $410.00 USD.

▶ The DSO will go over your OPT packet with you before you mail it to USCIS.

What happens if I fail a class and can't graduate this semester?

- **See your DSO as soon as possible.**
  - If you have already submitted an OPT application, we can cancel it and update your SEVIS information if you let us know early enough.
  - However, if you are approved for OPT and you do not pass your class, you may lose your OPT time.
  - **It is best to apply when you are sure you will pass your classes.**

How do I know if I am approved?

- You will receive letters from USCIS in the mail (I-797C notice)

- Or submit Form G-1145 (e-Notification) to receive email updates about progress.

- Once your OPT is approved, your EAD (Employment Authorization Document) card will arrive in the mail.

- You must submit a copy of your EAD card to the ISP office once you receive it.

What does an EAD card look like?

How do I pick a "start/end date?"

- When you apply, you must choose a "start date."

- Your start date must be within <u>60 days after</u> the last day of the semester.

- Your requested start date may differ from what USCIS actually approves.

- <u>You can only start working on or after the start date that appears on your EAD card.</u>

How do I get an SSN?

- You will apply to receive a Social Security number with your I-765 application.

- Your Social Security card will arrive by mail.   http://www.ssa.gov/

- The adjudication of OPT with USCIS may take from 90 to 110 days.

How do I find a job?

- It is student's responsibility to find a job

- Check job websites and Brahma Jobs

How much time do I have to find a job?

- You are allowed a total of **90 days** of unemployment from the OPT start date on your EAD card.

- If you do not find a job within 90 days and you would like to maintain your OPT status, you should volunteer.

- Volunteering must be at least **20 hours** per week

- You should continue to search for paid employment even if you cannot find a job within 90 days of your OPT start date. Keep records!

Reporting your Employment

- **You <u>must</u> report your OPT employment to SEVP.**

- You will receive an email directly from SEVP to create a student portal account upon your OPT approval.

- It is student's responsibility to report the employment or changes in the employment to SEVP.

- Inform International Student Office if you don't receive an email to create an account.

- If you have difficulties reporting your employment directly to SEVP, you must report your employment to ISP.

What if I can't find a job?

▶ You can always volunteer – you will need to submit the address and information of your volunteer work to SEVP, make sure you keep records of your volunteer work!

▶ You will need to submit the info for your volunteer site.

▶ You can return to school.

▶ Start a new program at LACC.

▶ Transfer to a different college or university.

Health Insurance Information

- **You are NOT automatically insured through LACCD while on OPT.**

  - Re-enrolling with Relation Insurance will cost $761 for a 6-month period of coverage.

  - Some employers may provide you with insurance coverage.

  - You may also choose an independent insurance provider such as Blue Cross, Study USA, etc. Be sure to read the policy clearly before you enroll.

  - **Health care in the US is extremely costly without proper health insurance.**

Keep the ISP updated!

- **Per USCIS policies, you are required to inform the ISP of any periods of unemployment or changes in your employment history.**

- **You are also required to update your address and contact information if you move.**

- **You must inform the ISP of any changes within ten (10) days of the change.**

Can I travel while on OPT?

▶ Yes, you can travel. Make sure you have the travel authorization signature from DSO on the 2nd page of your I-20.

▶ When you travel, you must have a support letter from your current employer and your EAD card to re-enter the USA.

Can I take a class while on OPT?

- Yes, you can take incidental classes while on OPT. See your DSO for approval.
- If you start working towards a higher degree level while on OPT, your I-20 may be terminated for violating USCIS policies.

What happens after I'm done with OPT?

- You have a **60-day grace period** after you complete OPT. If you do not update your SEVIS record within that time, your I-20 will automatically be completed in SEVIS and you are expected to return to your home country ASAP.

- You can start a new program of study at LACC.

- You can transfer to another college or university.

- You can return to your home country.

Allowable Employment during Post-Completion OPT
Employmnet must directly relate to the student's program of study.

▶ **Regular paid employment:**

   ▶ May work for multiple employers.

▶ **Payment by multiple short-term employers:** (musicians and other performing artists)

   ▶ May work for multiple short term employers (gigs).

   ▶ Should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration.

▶ **Work for hire:**

   ▶ **1099 employment** where an individual performs a service based on a **contractual relationship**.

   ▶ Should keep evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.

- **Self-employed business owner:**
  - May start a business and be self-employed.
  - Must have a proper business license.
  - Be actively engaged in a business related to program of study.
- **Employment through an agency:**
  - Should be able to provide evidence showing they worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.
- **Volunteers or unpaid interns :**
  - May work as volunteers or unpaid interns
  - The work should be at least 20 hours per week
  - Should be able to provide evidence acquired from the employer.

Which documents should I have to prove that I have been employed?

- Copies of job offer letters and agreements/contracts with all OPT employers including start and end dates.

- Copies of job descriptions including job title, duties, location, pay rate and proposed number of hours to be worked per week.

- If you worked for an agency, keep evidence of the projects you worked on.

- Keep copies of your pay vouchers or pay stubs for all periods of employment.

- Maintain copies of your bank statements that show direct deposits from your employer(s).

- Copies of you W-2 tax forms.

What if I want to transfer before my OPT period ends?

▶ You may transfer but your OPT period automatically expires once we release your I-20 to your new school.

OPT Package

Required documents to bring to International Student Office for OPT Recommendation: (see the package)

- Form I-765 Application for Employment Authorization
- Valid Passport

- I-94 Arrival and Departure Record www.cbp.gov
- 2 U.S. Passport Size Photos (2"X 2")
- Check or Money Order in the amount of $410.00 made out to Department of Homeland Security
- Poof of completion of your Degree/Certification requirements (Ed. Plan or Graduation Petition)
- All I-20 Forms (current and previous schools)
- Any previous Employment Authorization Documents (EAD)

Q & A

- Question & Answer Session
- Quiz