F-1 Optional Practical Training Fact Sheet
Online OPT Workshop: http://www.iss.purdue.edu/opt

Eligibility
Optional Practical Training (OPT) is available to F-1 students who have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for an academic year and have maintained their F-1 student status. OPT provides authorization for F-1 students to be employed in a job related to their major field of study. At this time OPT does not require a job offer before application. DO NOT E-FILE.

Time Frames for OPT
OPT may be used:
1) Full-time during official school breaks (i.e., summer break) as long as the student was enrolled the previous semester and plans to continue the following semester;
2) Part-time during the academic semester, while maintaining full-time enrollment;
3) Full-time for graduate students after completion of required coursework (excluding a thesis or equivalent); or
4) Full-time after completion of all degree requirements.

Time allowed for OPT
A student may be authorized 12 months of OPT and becomes eligible for another 12 months of OPT when he or she changes to a higher educational level. This may be done in segments. For example, if a student pursuing a Bachelor’s degree uses OPT for 3 months during the summer between his sophomore and junior years, at the end of his degree he may apply for 9 additional months of OPT. In addition, by continuing on for his Master’s degree after OPT he would be eligible for 12 more months of OPT.

Recommended by ISS, Authorized by CIS
OPT is recommended by ISS if eligibility requirements are met, but is authorized by CIS in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). It is your responsibility to ensure that CIS receives your completed OPT application before the completion date of your degree requirements (or course requirements for graduate students: see #3 under “Time Frames for OPT”).

EAD Dates Are Permanent
Once your EAD dates have been submitted into the SEVIS system, you may not change the dates of your employment authorization! It is important to discuss the beginning and ending dates of your employment authorization during the OPT follow-up session.

Completion Date
It is critical that you do not apply for OPT until your completion date is certain. This will be the new ending date on your new I-20. If you do not complete by the date indicated by your advisor and you are an undergraduate student or a graduate student non-thesis option you may not begin your OPT. If you are a graduate student you may start your OPT only if you have completed all of the course requirements. However, if you plan to continue a T.A. or R.A. position you must cancel your OPT application with the help of an ISS Immigration Counselor and must maintain full-time enrollment status.

Things to Remember while on OPT:
1. Reentry into the US while on OPT
(You should not leave the US until you receive your EAD card.) If you plan to travel outside the US after you receive your EAD card, you will need to present the following to the officer at the port-of-entry.
   • a valid passport with a valid F-1 visa,
   • a valid EAD card, and
   • your I-20 form endorsed by ISS within the last six months of your reentry to the US.
   • A job offer letter from a prospective employer or a job letter from a current employer.
If you cannot physically come to ISS, please contact an Immigration Counselor in ISS to arrange to mail your I-20 for a travel endorsement.

2. Enrolling in Courses while on OPT
The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has ruled that F-1 students on OPT may enroll in “incidental” classes while employed on a full-time basis. Therefore, we do not advise that students engaged in OPT (authorized after completion of a degree program) enroll in any courses until they are employed on a full-time basis AND only if the classes are incidental to employment. DHS has stated that enrolling in classes in a new degree program while on OPT is not considered to be incidental to employment and therefore is not permitted.

3. Name, Address and Employer Changes
If your name, address or employer changes while you are on OPT you must report these changes to ISS. If you have changes, email your last name, first name, last four digits of Purdue SID and the changes to iss@purdue.edu. Also inform us of any change in your immigration status. Failure to do so may lead to a loss of legal status and the inability to change to H-1B status or to U.S. permanent residence status. Thanks for your help in keeping our records current and complying with federal regulations.