PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidelines for granting authorization for optional practical training to international students.

PROCEDURE

I. Introduction

A. Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an opportunity for hands-on experience related to the student’s program of study. Students must have been lawfully enrolled on a full time basis at an I.N.S. approved school for 9 consecutive months before being eligible for Optional Practical Training. OPT is available both before and after completion of the educational objective; however, different rules apply to pre- and post completion.

B. Students may engage in OPT for any employer for the duration of OPT authorization as long as the employment qualifies under OPT standards.
C. Optional Practical Training may be authorized during the following times:

1) During the student’s annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session if the student is currently enrolled and eligible, and intends to register for the next term or session.

2) While school is in session, provided that the work does not exceed 20 hours per week.

3) After completion of all course requirements for the degree, excluding thesis, or equivalent, if the student is in a bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral degree program.

4) After completion of the course of study.

II. Specific Requirements of Optional Practical Training Before Completion of the Course Study

If the student still has coursework remaining to complete his or her educational objective, the student:

1) Is limited to 20 hours per week while school is in session.

2) May apply for full-time authorization during annual vacations and during official school breaks.

If the student still has not completed his or her educational objective,

3) Full use of the Optional Practical Training will be granted. Although the current regulation at 8 CFR 214.2 (f) (11) no longer specifies this, students must apply for post-completion OPT within 60 days after completion of studies. Sixty days reflects the period of time F-1 students are still in status before departing from the United States.

III. The student is responsible for:

A. Completing section A, of form I-538.

B. Submitting the original form I-20ID to the designated school official.

C. Completing Form I-765 (Application for Employment Authorization) marked with code “(C) (3) (i)” at item 16.
IV. The designated school official is responsible for:

A. Completing section B of Form I-538, checking the appropriate box in item 9 with the program completion date, and checking box "A" for practical training in the student’s field of study. The designated school official may type in “optional practical training” since that is the same box used for CPT.

B. Reviewing carefully the information provided by the student in section A of Form I-538, particularly the dates in item 7 and the history of prior periods of curricular and optional practical training previously granted.

C. Writing the following statement and then endorse the back of the student’s I-20ID with signature, title, and date.

D. Making file copies.

E. Returning the endorsed I-20 ID to the student.

F. Forwarding the completed Form I-538 to the I.N.S. Data Processing Center.