INFORMATION SESSION

Optional Practical Training
FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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What is Optional Practical Training?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit and extension of F-1 student status that permits you to remain in the U.S. after you complete your academic program, with permission to work in your field of study.

You are entitled to up to **12 months of professional employment** in your field for each higher degree you obtain, including Associate, Bachelors, Masters and other graduate programs!

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Required for All Students:

- F-1 status at the time of application.

- Enrolled full-time in a degree program or qualifying certificate program for at least one academic year (two consecutive semesters) in a valid, lawful status.

- You have not used all 12 months of OPT at the same degree level.

- You have not used OPT at a higher degree level.

Exception for Graduate Students:

- You must have finished all course requirements for your graduate degree except a dissertation, thesis or final project necessary for your degree (also known as ABD).

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Plan Your OPT Timeline

Plan Ahead

Your OPT approval may take more than three months to be processed by USCIS, so you need to plan ahead.
You may receive an approval sooner.

Apply as Early as Possible

The earliest date when you can apply for OPT is 2-3 months *before* the last day of your final semester.
Use the OPT calculator to find your start date and more.

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Choose Your OPT Start Date

You can choose the date when you would like your OPT authorization to begin, within 60 days after the end of your program.

However, choose your date thoughtfully because OPT dates **cannot be changed**.

This may not be an easy decision if you don't have a job offer at the time of application.

Use the OPT calculator to find your start date and more.

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Meet With Us to Apply for OPT

After this information session, make an appointment with the International Students Office.

We will help you apply for OPT online.

We will notify you by email when your new I-20 is ready.

The U.S. government must receive your OPT application **within 30 days** after the ISO issues your OPT I-20.

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How to File a USCIS Form Online

1) **Create a USCIS account online** (if you don't have one).

- Go to our **Sign Up** page.
  If you need help creating a USCIS online account, please visit **How to Create a USCIS Online Account**.

- You must provide a valid email address and password to create a USCIS online account. The email address you provide will also be the username for your USCIS online account.

- **If you select text message**, enter your U.S. mobile phone number in the Mobile Number box (standard SMS/text messaging rates may apply).

- **If you select the app option**, the system will generate a code that you can scan or type into an authentication app that you have installed on your mobile device (such as Google Authenticator).

2) **Select "File a Form Online."**

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3) **Complete all sections of your form**.

- We may reject your form if you leave a field blank or if you do not sign your form.

- Read the instructions for completing fields when your answer is "zero" or "not applicable (N/A)."

4) Upload evidence.
As part of the application process, you must provide evidence to support your application, petition, or request.

These documents help us evaluate your form and verify your answers are true. If we do not request a specific document, then you do not need to include it when you file your form.

Tips for uploading evidence:

► Use a scanner or take pictures of each document. Make sure each image you attach is clear and that all text is readable.

► Files must not be larger than 6MB in size.

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► Your files must be in one of these formats: PDF, JPG, or JPEG. For some forms, we also accept files in TIF or TIFF format.

► Do not encrypt or password protect your files.

► If your documents are in a foreign language, include an English translation.

► If we require passport-size photos, you must scan them or take a picture with your phone.

5) **Review and digitally sign your form.**

- Review the summary of the information you provided in your application. You can also view a PDF draft version of your completed form. You should save and print a copy for your records.

- To digitally sign your application, type your full legal name (first, middle, and last names) in the space provided.

6) **Pay the filing fee**.

- You must pay with a valid credit or debit card or provide your bank routing and checking account numbers to have money taken directly from your U.S. bank account.

- After you make your payment, your form will be submitted.

- **You will receive a receipt notice** that contains your receipt number. This is a unique number that applies to your specific case with USCIS.

- You can find your receipt number on your online account home page, and you can find a copy of your receipt notice under the Documents tab.

7) **Respond to Requests for Evidence and Upload Additional Evidence.**

- USCIS will notify you by text message or email (based on your preference) if you need to respond to a **Request for Evidence (RFE)**

- Log in to your USCIS online account and click on the Documents tab to view notices and respond to the RFE.

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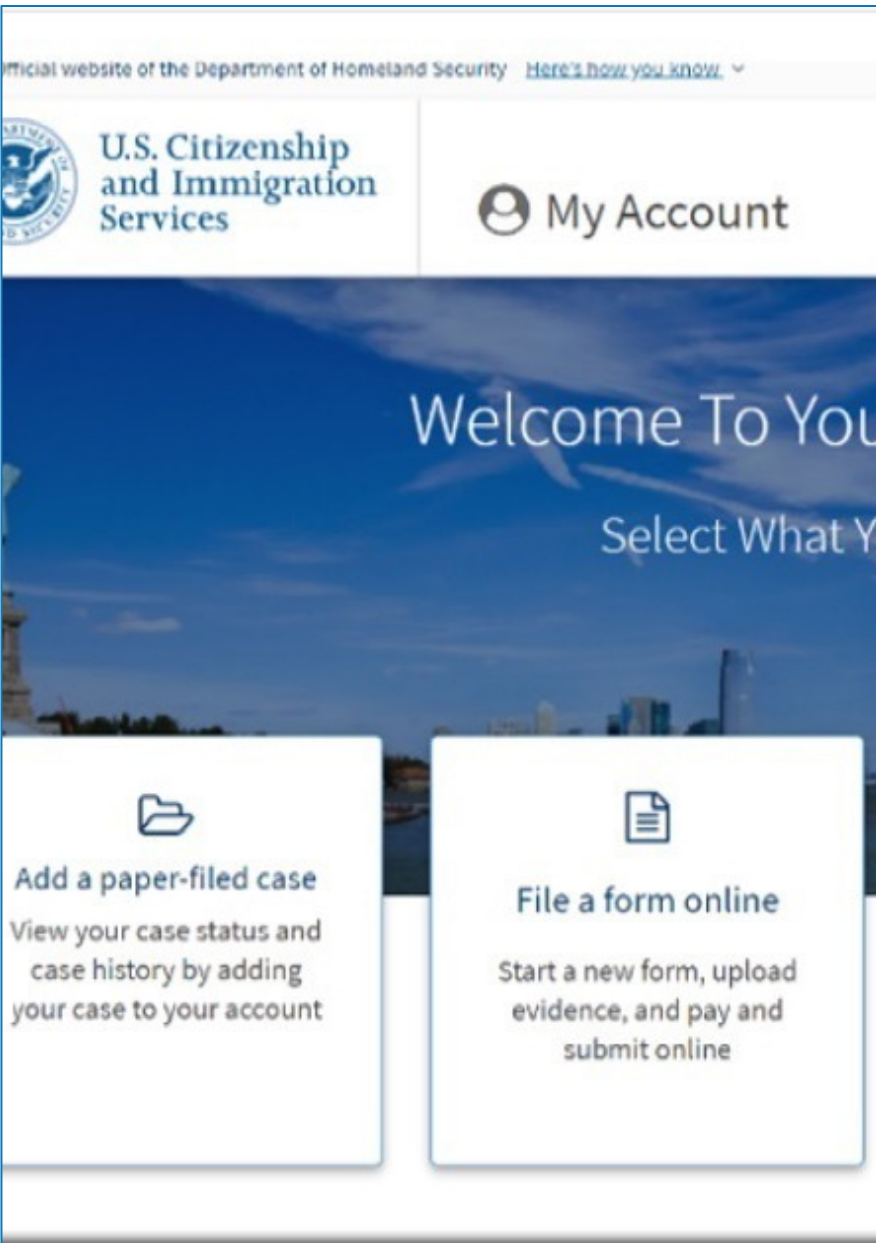
- While your case is pending, you may provide additional information regarding your case, including evidence that USCIS did not specifically request. This is available in the Documents tab, except when you have an open RFE.

8) **Check the status of your case**.

- Log in to your USCIS online account for details on the status of your case.

9) **Check your secure messages**.

- Once you file a form, you will have access to a secure inbox to send messages to an immigration services officer and receive a response to your question.

10) **Receive a decision**

- Log into your online account to read details on the decision that USCIS made on your case. For information on processing times for all forms, please visit **USCIS Processing Time**

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Thank You for Viewing this Presentation

If you have questions or need further

assistance, please contact the

International Students Office at

intlss@hunter.cuny.edu

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