



Office of International Student Services | La Sierra University | 4500 Riverwalk Pkwy, Riverside, CA 92515  
951.785.2237 | 951.785.2919 fax | [oiss@lasierra.edu](mailto:oiss@lasierra.edu) | [www.lasierra.edu/international](http://www.lasierra.edu/international)

## **OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT): GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **What is OPT?**

Optional Practical Training, also known as OPT, is defined in the regulations as “temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major field of study.”

### **Who is eligible for OPT?**

An F-1 student must have been “lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis in an approved college, university or conservatory or seminary for one full academic year” to be eligible for OPT. ESL and language learning program students do not qualify for OPT.

### **How long is the duration of OPT?**

Optional Practical Training can be authorized for a maximum aggregated period of 12 months per education level.

Legal Note: A student become eligible for 12 months of OPT when he or she changes to a higher education level, this student needs to be in this new level for another full academic year before becoming eligible for another OPT for this new educational level.

Legal Note: The regulation states “authorization to engage in practical training employment is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level.

### **When should you apply for OPT?**

You can **ONLY** apply for OPT before you program end date, but not sooner that 90 days from the last day of classes.

### **Can I travel out of the country after applying for OPT?**

It is recommended by OISS that you do not leave the country after you have applied for OPT (EAD) card until you have received it in the mail.

### **Can I travel after I get my card?**

Yes, you may travel temporarily out of the country after you get your EAD. You need to make sure that your \*I-20 has a valid signature; each student is valid for six months at a time. You would need a valid F-1 visa in your passport in order to re-enter the United States.

\*Legal Note: A student, who had been issued an EAD, for Optional Practical Training, might have an I-20 whose program completion date has passed. If this is your case, your stay in the country is still legal as long as you have a valid EAD.

You may travel with the expired I-20 as long as you follow the guidelines explained above.

**When can I start working?**

You may not start working off campus until you have received your Employment Authorization Card (EAD), and you may not start working before the beginning date on your card.

**What will happen after I apply for my EAD?**

You will get a receipt from the BCIS in about 2 weeks from the mailing date.

**How long will it take for me to get my card?**

Depending on which immigration service you are applying at, it might take from 90-120 days for you to get your card.

**What should I do if I don't get my card by the 90<sup>th</sup> day and I need to start work?**

Regulations provide that if an EAD application has not been adjudicated within 90 days of receipt, the applicant may apply for BCIS for 240-day grant interim employment authorization card. You may go in person to the local Immigration office. In our case the address is:

655 W. Rialto Ave.  
San Bernardino, CA 92410-3327

**Driving Directions:**

1. Start at 4500 Riverwalk Parkway, Riverside, Ca. 92515
2. Turn RIGHT onto Magnolia headed towards the freeway.
3. Make a Left on Magnolia Ave. (0.1 mi)
4. Take the CA-90 east towards San Bernardino (10.6 mi)
5. Continue on the I-215 North (8.7 mi) (the 91 becomes the 215, changing freeways is not required)
6. Take 2<sup>nd</sup> Street exit towards Civic Center (0.2 mi)
7. Turn Right on West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (0.2 mi)
8. Turn Left on West Rialto Ave. (0.1 mi)
9. Arrive at 655 W. Rialto Ave. San Bernardino, CA 92410-3327

You need to take proof of identity and any documents received from the BCIS Service Center in connection with your initial application for employment authorization to prove that 90 days have elapsed.

Legal Notice: You are required by law to inform us of your address change in a form AR-11 within 10 days of change. You must maintain your address in SEVIS or the USCIS will not approve your application.