

Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

What is Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

Standard Post-Completion Optional Practical Training, or “OPT”, is off-campus work authorization for F-1 international students in their field of study. This benefit can be utilized after completion of all degree requirements. If granted by USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) the authorization full time employment for a maximum of 12 months.

Who is eligible for OPT?

Students who will complete their degree requirements within 90 days and have been in full time status for two consecutive semesters by the program completion. **Please note that your program may complete before the end date on your I-20.**

You are ineligible for OPT if you:

- Completed one year of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) at your current level of study
- Have already applied and been approved for OPT after completing a different degree at your current level of study

What is my program completion date?

The program completion date is the last day of your **final program requirement**, which can be the last day of the semester; the end of a summer or winter session; or after completion of a modular or Saturday course. Please check your course registration to determine the end date of your final course.

When should I apply?

You can apply for OPT up to 90 days before your program end-date. The latest that you can apply is 60 days after your program end-date. If they receive the application packet more than 90 days before the requested start date, it will be denied and the application fee will not be refunded.

We recommend that you apply at least 3 months before you plan to start working to allow for document processing. You must file your application to USCIS no more than 30 days past the date of issuance on your I-20. If it is past the 30 days, it will be denied

How long does it take USCIS to approve my application?

Processing times take on average 3 months.

How do I choose my OPT dates?

Immigration allows you to begin working *up to* 60 days after the completion of your program. You must choose a start date between the day after program completion and 60 days later.

With processing times up to approximately 90 days, you want to allow time for the OPT card to arrive. You cannot begin working until both the card arrives and are within the authorized dates of employment listed on the card. We recommend you choose your dates accordingly.

How many hours can I work on Post-Completion OPT?

The minimum number of hours is 20 hours per week. There is no maximum amount.

Do I need a job before I apply?

No, a job is not needed.

What work can I do?

All OPT employment must be related to your field of study. Your OPT employment may include:

- Multiple employers: You may work for more than one employer, but ALL employment must be related to your major program of study.
- Work for hire (commonly referred to as 1099 employment)
 - You may perform a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship
 - You must be prepared to provide evidence to the U.S. government, if called upon to do so, showing the dates and duration of the contract periods, and the name and address of the contracting company.
- Unpaid employment
 - You may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, so long as your work does not violate any labor laws (for example, it is not a position normally associated with wages.)
 - You must work at least 20 hours per week, and must be able to provide to the U.S. government, if called up to do so, evidence from the volunteer/internship supervisor of the hours you worked.

What are my OPT Reporting Requirements?

The U.S. government checks that students with OPT authorization are engaged in practical training experience (work/internships/unpaid professional experience) related to their major area of study.

WARNING

If you do not report your practical training/employment to ISS, the U.S. government may terminate your F-1 SEVIS record 90 days after the OPT start date print on your EAD card. A terminated SEVIS record cancels OPT authorization and requires you to leave the U.S.

Report your OPT employment updates using the SEVP OPT reporting portal. Learn about the portal on the SEVP Portal Help page found at <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevp-portal-help>.

Report the following changes using the SEVP Portal:

- Employment/Practical Training information: Report employment/practical training as soon as you start working. Report employment changes within 10 days.
 - 12-month standard OPT: Do not exceed 90 days of unemployment.
- Address changes: Report within 10 days of moving.

What happens if I am unemployed during OPT?

- You are permitted a total of 90 days of unemployment of OPT, which will begin based on the start date on your EAD card. If you travel outside the U.S. while unemployed during OPT, the time you spend abroad counts towards your 90 days of unemployment.
- You must report all employment/unemployment to the SEVIS portal or International Student Services at RCC. Failure to report your employment within 90 days of your OPT start date may result in your record being auto- terminated by SEVIS.

When can I apply for a Social Security Number?

If you do not have a Social Security Number already, the I-765 Form allows you to apply for a SSN while filing for OPT (see section 13 on I765 form.)

What if I would like to TRAVEL after I have applied for OPT?

Because your recommendation for OPT will be clearly stated on page 2 of your I-20, you will be asked by an Immigration Official to produce your Employment Authorization Card upon entry of the United States. You will also be asked to show a letter stating that you have secured employment in the USA, and you are returning to resume employment. We *strongly* recommend that you travel outside of the US only if you have a job in the US to return to. Travel with your OPT card, as well as all immigration documents (see below). (Your OPT card states that it is not valid for entry to the US. Don't panic! This means that the OPT card alone is not enough to enter the country, you need *all* immigration documents.) You may wish to bring copies of a pay check from your employer as evidence that you are engaging in practical training.

If you choose to travel outside the U.S. while on OPT, make sure you have the following documents:

- EAD Card
- All SEVIS I-20s including the current I-20 with **travel signature** on page 2 that is **less than 6 months old!** It is very important that your OPT I-20 has been signed by a DSO less than 6 months before the date you plan on re-entering the U.S.
- Valid F-1 Visa for re-entry to the U.S.
- Letter from your employer stating that you are re-entering the U.S. to resume employment. It is also helpful to bring with you any pay stubs as additional proof that you have secured a job.

What do I do when my Post-Completion OPT ends?

USCIS states that you have 60 days from the end date of the authorized Post-Completion OPT period to:

- Be in the process of changing to another immigration status.
- Have an I-20 for the next upcoming semester to begin a new academic program.
- Leave the United States.

I have been admitted for another degree program and it starts before my OPT ends. Is this ok?

Once you start a new degree program, your OPT is cancelled.

What are the steps to apply for Post-Completion OPT?

1. Apply for the Post-completion OPT I-20 from ISS:

- a. Submit a Post-Completion OPT Request Form, signed by both yourself and your academic advisor
- b. Pick up your I-20, check it over, and mail it with the rest of the required items no more than 30 days after the issuance date on the I-20.

2. Send your application and all required documents to USCIS:

- a. G-1145 Form. This will provide with E-notification that your file was received. (Free and optional)
- b. A check or money order for \$410.00 made out to the **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**. (DO NOT WRITE ON THE BACK OF THE CHECK!) Your name and address must be on the check. Write your I-94 # on the bottom left hand of the check (in the “memo” or “for” section.)
- c. Two passport style photographs taken within the last 6 months. Each photo must be cut to 2 inches by 2 inches with your name and I-94 # printed lightly on the back in pencil. Photos must have been taken within the past 6 months. Place the photos and check/money order in an envelope. Write your name and I-94 # on the outside of the envelope as well.
- d. Complete form I-765 **online** using the PDF version located at the following website <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf> you will need Acrobat Reader to open the file.
 - i. **Be sure to enter (c) (3) (B) in step # 20. Print completed form I-765 and sign in BLUE INK.**
 - ii. Double check your address. Will you be there in 3 months? If unsure, you can use ISS’s address.
- e. All I-20s, Visa, Passport, I-94 card/electronic print out.

3. Make a copy of your completed I-20 application for your records.

4. Make an appointment with ISS to bring in your application to be reviewed by an advisor.

5. Mail your entire packet by certified return receipt mail (allows you to track the package.) If you are staying with the New York/New Jersey area, all packets mailed by USPS should be sent to:

USCIS
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

Once I receive my EAD card, what should I do?

- Make sure to check the dates are correct on the card.
- Make a copy of the card and bring it to ISS for our records.
- You must inform ISS or update the SEVIS Portal with any employment you receive and if you change your address.
- You cannot start working until you receive your EAD card and the start date on the card has arrived.

Post-Completion OPT USCIS Application Checklist

You must submit all the following items to USCIS. Please put the packet together in the following order.

- ❑ Fee of \$410. Make check payable to the “US Department of Homeland Security.” You may send a money order or personal check drawn on a US bank, NO CASH. Your name and address must be on the check. Write your I-94 # on the bottom left hand of the check (in the “memo” or “for” section.)
- ❑ G-1145. Use this form if you wish to receive email or text confirmation (within 1 week) of your receipt number from the Lockbox facility. Clip the form to the front of the OPT application. Find the form at: www.uscis.gov.
- ❑ Two “passport” photos. Print your name and write your admission number (I-94#) on the back of each photo. Use powder to prevent glaring and be sure there are no shadows in your photos! You may put the photos and check in an envelope and attach carefully to the front of the I-765 (do not staple photos!).
- ❑ Original I-765 form (follow instructions on how to complete form included in this packet). Make sure to sign it in blue ink.
- ❑ A copy (NOT original) of page 1 and 2 of the new post-completion I-20 from ISS with the recommendation for OPT on page 2. Sign the new I-20 in blue ink. This I-20 cannot be more than 30 days old when it arrives at USCIS or OPT will be denied!
- ❑ A copy of ALL previously issued I-20 documents dating back to beginning of F-1 status (signed in item #11).
- ❑ A copy of your I-94 record.
 - Both sides of your I-94 card (front and back - even if the back is blank) OR
 - Printout of the electronic I-94 record from www.cbp.gov/i94
- ❑ A copy of the photo page (identification page) and expiration date page of your passport.
- ❑ A copy of the most recent F-1 visa page in your passport (even if expired).
- ❑ A copy of any previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD) OPT card, if you have had one.

Post-Completion OPT Request Form

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE STUDENT:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

RCC ID: _____ Major: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____
(Street) (City/State) (Zip Code)

Email Address for SEVIS Portal: _____

OPT Start Date: _____ OPT End Date: _____

Passport Expiration: _____

Have you applied for OPT before (Circle one): NO YES

If YES, please indicate for which education level: Associates Bachelors Masters

TO BE COMPLETED BY AN ACADEMIC ADVISOR ONLY:

The above-named student is applying for permission to engage in employment for OPT as provided in the immigration regulations for F-1 students. OPT is employment in a job related to the student’s field of study and is intended to enhance and supplement the formal, classroom education. US Immigration and Citizenship Services (USCIS) will authorize OPT.

- International Student Services (ISS) must have a statement from the student’s academic advisor indicating the date the student is expected to complete all degree requirements or the expected date of completion. The date of completion is not necessarily the end of the term or the graduation date, but the date all requirements for the degree are fulfilled.
- This date must accurately reflect the actual completion date of his/her program. Students may not continue working on campus after the end date that you confirm below until they have OPT from USCIS.

Please complete the information below and return it to the student so we may process the student’s request. Should you have any questions, call ISS at ext. 4193.

I certify that the above student will complete All the requirements for their degree on: _____
(mm/dd/yyyy) please be accurate)

Major: _____ Degree to be received: _____

Advisor Name: _____ Advisor Signature: _____

Date: _____

Form I-765 Tips for Post-Completion OPT

To best aid you in completing the Form I-765 for Employment Authorization we have suggested tips below.

You will need your I-20's, Passport, Visa and I-94 to complete the form.

All dates on the form are written 2-digit month, 2-digit day and 4-digit year (MM/DD/YYYY).

This document is for guidance ONLY. It is your responsibility to understand the complete instructions and where to file your I-765: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>. International Student Services is not responsible for any missing or incomplete information.

Part 1	
1a.	Check if first time applying for Post Completion OPT
1c.	Check if applying STEM OPT
Part 2	
Enter name, mailing, physical addresses, immigration information	
5a through 5e	This is the address where USCIS will send your OPT Receipt, Approval and OPT card to be delivered.
6	Answer Yes or No
7a through 7d	Enter the address where you are physically residing at the time of filing if DIFFERENT than MAILING ADDRESS entered in number 5.
8	Enter the A-number if any. This number is typically issued to individuals who have applied for or been granted certain immigration benefits. If you have previously been issued an EAD the number can be found on the front of the card. For additional information please refer to the above link for I-765 instructions Page 16, Item Number 8.
9 through 12	Mark the appropriate boxes
13a through 15	Enter the appropriate boxes regarding issuance of a Social Security Number (SSN)
16a through 17b	If you are Requesting a Social Security Number (SSN) complete the required fields
18 through 25	Enter information from your Passport and I-94, Travel History
26	Enter your SEVIS ID number from the top Left-hand side of the I-20
27	<input type="checkbox"/> Post Completion OPT Enter: (c)(3)(b)
28a through 28c	STEM OPT ONLY: SKIP
Part 3	
1a	Read the statement and select this box if you understand the terms.
1b or 2	Read the statement and complete the boxes if SOMEONE OTHER THAN YOU completed this form FOR YOU or you required a Language Interpreter's assistance.
3 through 6	Enter your Contact Information
7a through b	Sign in Blue Ink and Date the page
Part 4	
ENTER if SOMEONE OTHER THAN YOU Completed this form FOR YOU or you required a Language Interpreter's assistance.	

Part 5	ENTER if SOMEONE OTHER THAN YOU Completed this form FOR YOU or you required a Language Interpreter's assistance.
Part 6	
3d	<p>Post Completion OPT Applicants ONLY:</p> <p>The I-765 Instructions dictate that you must enter and provide evidence of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All SEVIS ID numbers used in the U.S. • All Previous Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorizations • All Previous Optional Practical Training (OPT) authorizations <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include copies all previous I-20 and previously issued EAD's <p>Example SEVIS Number: (SEVIS ID: N0000000000) Example CPT: (CPT 08/01/2018 to 12/19/2018 – Master's) Example OPT (OPT 05/18/2017 to 08/25/2017) – Bachelor's)</p>