

How to Apply for Post Completion OPT

A Guide for Graduating F-1 Students
Office of International Student Services

What is OPT?

Optional Practical Training is a temporary employment benefit for practical training directly related to the student's major area of study. {8 C.F.R. 214.2(f)(10)(ii)}

When do I get OPT?

You will get 12 months of OPT at the completion of each educational level.

- ∅ Bachelors Degree – 12 months

- ∅ Masters Degree – 12 months

- ∅ Doctoral Degree – 12 months

Am I eligible to apply?

You are eligible to apply for post completion OPT if:

- & You are graduating after maintaining F-1 status for one academic year
- & Have not previously utilized your OPT benefit
- & Have not previously used 12 months of full time CPT.

Can I get more than one OPT at a time?

- ⌘ No, you will receive the benefit of 12 months of full time OPT at the completion of each academic program.
- ⌘ You can not reserve the right to take your OPT and add them together at the completion of your final academic program.
- ⌘ If you do not use your OPT you LOSE it.

When should I apply?

- ⌘ You are advised to apply for OPT as soon as possible.
- ⌘ The application can take 90 days to be processed by the Vermont Service Center.
- ⌘ Remember you can not start employment prior to receiving the EAD card so apply early.
- ⌘ October is recommended for December graduates, early March is recommended for May graduates and June for August graduates

How early can I start my OPT?

- ⌘ As early as the program end date (However it is recommended that you choose a later start date in case you will not receive your card in time)
- ⌘ Program Completion Date is listed on the university academic calendar
- ⌘ Start Date Anywhere from the day following your program completion date up to 60 days thereafter
- ⌘ Remember the application processing time is 90 days
- ⌘ The end date is 12 months from the start date

Can I travel and reenter if my request for OPT is pending?

- ⌘ Yes, you may travel but do so with precautions.
- ⌘ You should not travel for extended periods in case you need to supply additional information to the service center.
- ⌘ Please make sure your I-20 is endorsed, you have a valid passport and visa.
- ⌘ Check with your international adviser for more information.

Can I reenter if I left while on OPT?

- ⌘ If your OPT has been approved and you depart before you get a job, you cannot reenter unless you have a employment letter.
- ⌘ If you have a job, you may travel and reenter to resume work at the same job or you have a written offer for another job.

What documents to I need to travel?

- ⌘ Valid Passport
- ⌘ Valid Visa
- ⌘ Endorsed I-20 document (within 6 months)
- ⌘ Valid EAD card
- ⌘ Valid Employment Letter

What is the EAD card?

Employment Authorization Document

- ⌘ This card looks like a drivers license of sort.
- ⌘ It has your photo on it
- ⌘ It shows the beginning and ending dates of employment authorization.
- ⌘ You must have this card to begin employment

What if I don't want OPT?

- ⌘ You intend on transferring to a SEVIS approved College or University
- ⌘ You have applied for a change of status
- ⌘ You have 60 days after your program completion date to depart the U.S.

STEM Programs

Science

Technologies

Engineering

Mathematics

<http://www.ice.gov/sevis>

17 Month STEM Extensions

- ⌘ A qualified student may apply for an extension of OPT while in a valid period of post-completion OPT. The extension will be for an additional 17 months, for a maximum of 29 months of OPT, if all of the following requirements are met. (Revised 4/8/08; 73 FR 18944)
- ⌘ The student has not previously received a 17-month OPT extension after earning a STEM degree.
- ⌘ The degree that was the basis for the student's current period of OPT is a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in one of the degree programs on the current STEM Designated Degree Program List, published on the SEVP Web site at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis>.
- ⌘ The student's employer is registered in the E-Verify program, as evidenced by either a valid E-Verify company identification number or, if the employer is using a designated agent to perform the E-Verify queries, a valid E-Verify client company identification number, and the employer is a participant in good standing in the E-Verify program, as determined by USCIS.

The job requirement and unemployment while on OPT

- ⌘ A job offer is not a required element of the recommendation for standard OPT or of U.S.C.I.S.'s approval of a standard OPT EAD. It is a requirement for the 17-month STEM OPT extension, though.
- ⌘ However, the regulation effective April 8, 2008 [8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(E)] focuses on the issue of "unemployment" while on OPT, stating that "during post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment," and setting aggregate limits on days of "unemployment" while on post-completion OPT.
- ⌘ During any 12-month period of standard post-completion OPT, no student (including STEM students) may be unemployed for an aggregate of more than 90 days. If a STEM student receives a 17-month extension, the limit on unemployment is raised to an aggregate of no more than 120 days, applied to the entire 29-month period of post-completion OPT

Notification of Employment

- ⌘ Gain employment as soon as possible, whether part time, full time or internship.
- ⌘ Notify the Office of International Student Services with the name and address of employer via email.
- ⌘ Try to gain employment as soon as possible to stay in status.

What the student must report to school

& Change of Address

& Employment Information (name and address)

& Change of Name

An F-1 student authorized by USCIS to engage in optional practical training (OPT) is required to report any change of name or address, or interruption of such employment to the DSO for the duration of the authorized training. A DSO who recommends a student for OPT is responsible for updating the student's record to reflect these reported changes for the duration of the time that training is authorized.

8 C.F.R. § [214.2\(f\)\(12\)\(i\)](#)

What do I need to apply?

- ⌘ Form I-765
- ⌘ Photocopies of your passport information page, I-94 (front and back) and Visa
- ⌘ Photocopies of ALL previous I-20's
- ⌘ Two passport size photos (Write your name and date of birth on the back)
- ⌘ \$380.00 Check or money order made payable to: The United States Citizenship and Immigration Office.
- ⌘ Letter from academic department fulfilling graduation and date
- ⌘ Photocopies of any and all previous EAD cards
- ⌘ Make an appointment with the International Student Services Office

Questions?

Please contact the Office of International Student Services.