



## Applying for Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

### **Eligibility:**

- You must be an F-1 student in good standing, enrolled full-time for one academic year.
- You must complete all degree requirements by the time your OPT starts.
- You must not have used more than 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) at your current degree level.

After you have submitted the OPT request form to ISS, your request will be reviewed for eligibility. If eligible, you will receive a new I-20 indicating that you are applying for OPT. You will have 30 days from the creation of this I-20 to file your application for OPT with USCIS. Currently, you can file either online or in the mail. See the document **OPT Application Information** for suggestions on how to complete either application process.

### **Once you have submitted the OPT application:**

- If submitting online, you should receive a receipt via email.
- If submitting in the mail, you should receive a receipt within 4 weeks of mailing. Make sure there are no errors in your name and address.
- You can check the status at [uscis.gov](http://uscis.gov), with your receipt number.
- Mark your calendar on day 75 after USCIS receives your application. If you have not received an approval (or a “request for evidence”) by that date, call the National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283 and put in a service request because your application is nearing the “regulatory timeframe.” If you have not received approval at 90 days, contact ISSS.
- It is not recommended to travel while your application is pending as it may jeopardize your ability to re-enter the United States.

### **Once you have been authorized for OPT:**

- Send a scan or photocopy of your EAD card to International Student & Scholar Services.
- Set up your SEVIS portal account and report all changes in employment and unemployment, as well as your address.
- Do not exceed 90 days of unemployment. If unemployment exceeds 90 days in total your OPT is no longer valid.
- If you travel outside of the U.S., to re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status, you will need:
  - An unexpired passport
  - A valid F-1 visa



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U N I V E R S I T Y

- An I-20 that has been signed for travel by an ISS advisor within the last six months
- Your EAD card
- A letter from your employer stating your job title, job description, begin and end dates, and verifying that your employer knows you are traveling and expects you to return. If you do not have job, do not travel as you may not be permitted to re-enter the U.S.



**Frequently asked questions:**

***Do I need a job offer to apply for OPT?*** No.

***When should I apply for OPT?*** You can apply up to 90 days before your program completion date, or 60 days after your program completion date. Applications received before or after those dates will be denied.

***What is my program completion date?*** Your program completion date is the last day of the semester in which you complete degree requirements, not your graduation or degree awarded date.

***When can I start working?*** You may start working on the approved date on your EAD card AND when you have received your EAD card.

***Can I be unemployed while on OPT?*** Yes, for 90 days total. If you are unemployed for 90 cumulative days (does not have to be consecutive), you lose OPT status and will have to return home.

***Can I travel while on OPT?*** Yes. We do not recommend traveling outside of the U.S., however, if you have not found a job or are unemployed.

***May I study during OPT?*** Yes—if it is part-time, and not towards a degree. Taking a photography class, for example, or a prerequisite course for a master's program you plan to apply for is allowed. If you are admitted to a new program that would normally require an I-20 for study, you forfeit your OPT.

