

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Overview

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study. International students who graduate from a U.S. university on an F-1 visa have a special opportunity to work in the U.S., in their degree field. Students in all majors are eligible for 12 months of OPT; in addition, students in the STEM fields are eligible for a two-year extension for a total of 36 months. For a list of STEM Designated Degree Programs, please click [here](#).

How to Apply for OPT

1. Apply for an OPT I-20 by filling out an OPT Request Form. Wait for your International Student Advisor to send your new OPT I-20 to you via email.
2. After receiving your OPT I-20, you are now ready to apply to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for OPT authorization. There are two (2) options to apply for OPT.
 - [ONLINE I-765 Application to USCIS](#)- RECOMMENDED
 - [Paper I-765 Application to USCIS- PDF](#)
 - [Form G-1145](#): Suggested typed, not handwritten
 - [Instructions for Form I-765- PDF](#)
 - [I-765 Worksheet- PDF](#)
3. While your OPT Application is Pending
 - It typically takes 90 days for your OPT application to process. Regularly check the status of your OPT application on the [USCIS website](#)
4. After your OPT is approved
 - After approval, you should receive your employment authorization card (EAD Card) within 1-4 weeks at the address you listed on your I-765 application.
 - If you already have employment, you can be legally hired after receiving your EAD card. However, you CANNOT start employment without receiving your EAD card.
 - If you are still searching for employment after OPT approval, you have up to 90 days to find a job from the start date on your EAD card.

- After you get your job offer, you will need to report your employment. When your OPT start date gets close or has started, you will receive an email with instructions to create your SEVP Portal account. This email will come from SEVP. Please check your spam or junk mail folder.
- You will need to use the [SEVP Portal](#) to report your employment within 10 days from the start date of the employment.
- You are permitted ONLY 90 days of unemployment between the start and end dates of your EAD card. In addition, you are required to report the following information while on OPT:
 - When you start a new job during your OPT period
 - Change of address
- OPT can only be extended beyond 12 months (additional 24 months) under certain conditions. Please see our [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#) for eligible programs.

5. Travel on OPT

- If your EAD card ***has not been issued*** by USCIS, and you do not have a job or a job offer, we highly recommend that you do not leave the U.S. However, if you need to leave the U.S., please consult with your International Student Advisor.
- If your EAD card ***has been issued*** by USCIS and you have a job or a job offer, you may leave and reenter the U.S. to begin or resume employment. ***If your EAD card had been issued and you leave the U.S. before getting a job or a job offer, your OPT ends and you cannot re-enter the U.S. as an F-1 student.
- After USCIS has issued an EAD card, to have the best chance of re-entering the U.S. without any issues, prepare the following documents to have with you while traveling:
 - Passport valid for at least six (6) months after your plan to re-enter the U.S.
 - Valid F-1 visa in your passport
 - I-20 with a valid travel signature from your P/DSO no older than six months
 - EAD card
 - Copy of your employment offer letter.