Guide to Post-Completion OPT

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The Basics

Applying for OPT

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's program of study and educational level. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT authorization after completing their program.

To be eligible to apply, you must be:

- Lawfully enrolled full-time for one academic year immediately prior to applying.
- Currently in valid F-1 status.
- Eligible to complete degree in the current semester, including maintaining good academic standing. If completing two programs in the same semester, you may request that both programs be listed on your OPT I-20.
- Authorized for no more than 364 days of full-time CPT at current educational level.
- No prior OPT authorization at the current educational level.

You will apply for a Post-Completion OPT I-20 from the ISSO, then submit an application to USCIS. If USCIS approves your request, they will send you an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) with your authorized start date.

YOU MUST NOT BEGIN OR CONTINUE EMPLOYMENT UNTIL YOU HAVE THE EAD CARD AND THE START DATE ON THE EAD CARD HAS ARRIVED.

FAQs

Should I apply for OPT?

Not until you are certain you will graduate. If you apply for OPT and then do not graduate as expected, your F-1 status could be jeopardized. Also, when you apply for OPT your I-20 will be shortened to reflect program completion. You must end all employment by this date, including assistantships and on-campus employment.

When can I apply?

Up to 90 days prior to your program completion date and up to 60 days after the program completion date (the end of your grace period). For immigration purposes, your program completion date is EITHER the last day of final exams for the full-term session of the semester in which you are graduating OR your thesis or dissertation defense date.

What will my start date be?

The earliest date you may request is the day after your program completion date. The latest date you may request is 60 calendar days after your program completion date. USCIS may give you a different start date, especially if they process your application after your requested start date. You will not know your official start date until you receive your EAD card.

Scan to learn how to apply

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Maintaining Status

Limits on Unemployment

Students on post-completion OPT may have up to 90 days of unemployment. It is your responsibility to keep track of how many days of unemployment you have remaining.

Unemployment days begin accruing on the EAD start date. Each day (including weekends) that the student does not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment.

Reporting Requirements

You **MUST** report the following information to the ISSO within 10 days of a change:

• Your current U.S. address
• Start or end of employment
• Change of your employer's name
• Change of your employer's address
• Change of your legal name

Options after OPT

After the OPT end date, there is a 60-day grace period in which you can:

• Start another academic program at UT Dallas
• Transfer to another school
• Change to another visa category
• Leave the U.S. (Notify the ISSO of your departure through OPT reporting)

If you are in a STEM eligible major and you wish to apply for the 24-month STEM OPT extension, you must submit your application to USCIS within the final 90 days of your current period of OPT. USCIS will accept applications for the STEM OPT extension up to 90 days BEFORE your OPT end date listed on your EAD card, and no later than the OPT end date listed on your EAD card.

Travel on OPT

If you have applied for OPT but have not yet received your EAD card, it is risky to travel after your program completion date. You will not be able to re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status until you receive your EAD card.
If you are travelling and returning before your program completion date and are still taking classes, you may travel without documents related to OPT.

However, if you are travelling and returning after your program completion date, you must carry additional documents. See below for details on what you should carry.

Before Completion Date

• Valid Passport
• Valid F-1 Visa
• I-20 endorsed for travel within past 12 months

After Completion Date

• Valid Passport
• Valid F-1 Visa
• OPT I-20 endorsed for travel within past 6 months
• OPT EAD card
• Proof of employment (pay stubs or letter of employment)

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Mailing Instructions

Verify your Information

You should check your I-20 to ensure your name, major and degree level, program completion date, and OPT request information are all correct. Your OPT recommendation must be dated within the past 30 days when received by USCIS or the application will be denied. Check remarks on page 1 of I-20 to verify recommendation date or re-recommendation date. If needed, request "Post-Completion OPT I-20 Re-Recommendation" through iComet. **It is YOUR responsibility to ensure your application is complete and correct before mailing it to USCIS.**

Assemble your Application

☐ **Form G-1145:** Optional form. Authorizes USCIS to email or text status updates.

☐ **2 passport photos:** Must meet U.S. passport photo requirements. No glasses allowed. Print name and I-94 number on back. **https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/requirements/ photos.html**

☐ **$410 filing fee*:** Payable by check, money order or Form G- 1450 (for credit card). No starter checks. Must have name and address printed on check. Write your I- 94 number at the top of the check/money order. Enter purchaser's address and signature on Money Order. Can have a different address than I-765. Make payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
   *Note: USCIS is requesting to increase fee to $550. Check uscis.gov/i-765 for most up-to-date details.

☐ **Original Form I-765:** If corrections are needed, fill out a new form. Use current version: uscis.gov/i- 765. Use black ink and sign by hand. If a question does not apply to you, type or print "N/A" unless otherwise directed.

☐ **Copy of OPT I-20:** pages 1 and 2, signed by you and ISSO advisor. Must be dated within the past 30 days when received by USCIS or the application will be denied. Check recommendation date on page 1 in remarks section.

☐ **Copy of Passport ID page:** showing picture and expiration date. If passport will expire in next 6 months, renew passport before sending application or submit proof of renewal application to USCIS.

☐ **Copy of most recent I-94:** paper copy front and back, or print out from CBP website: cbp.gov/i94. If I- 94 information is incorrect contact Deferred Inspection Office: **utdallas.edu/isso/files/Deferred- Inspection-Office.pdf**

☐ **Copy of F-1 visa or Change of Status Approval Notice:** visa can be expired.

☐ **CPT printout:** Provided by ISSO with OPT I-20. Include even if you have never done CPT.

☐ **Copies of former OPT EADs:** If any. Front and back.

Mail your Application

You must mail your application to USCIS, and they must receive it no later than the last day of your 60-day grace period. Do not attempt to deliver your application in person. It must be mailed. You can use regular U.S. Postal Service or a courier service like FedEx, DHL, or UPS. The ISSO recommends getting a tracking number for your shipment.
For mailing addresses, visit our webpage: utdallas.edu/ic/isso/USCISapplications/.

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I-765 Top Tips

Check your I-765 before mailing

It is your responsibility to ensure that you fill out the I-765 completely and correctly. The ISSO advisor will review your I-765 and give you a "DRAFT" copy with recommended changes. However, an advisor review of your I-765 does not guarantee that it is error-free. Thoroughly check your I-765 before mailing. Here are some of the top mistakes to watch out for:

- The code for #27 is (C)(3)(B)
- You must send an original I-765. Do NOT send the "Draft" copy from the ISSO advisor.
- USCIS instructions say to write "N/A" for any question that does not apply to you, unless otherwise directed.
- You may type or handwrite your answers on the form. You may type some answers and handwrite others. If you have trouble fitting your full answer in the blank provided, you may wish to handwrite your answer.
- Always use black ink.

How to Complete Part 6

If you have ever had CPT, OPT, or a different SEVIS ID, you must fill out Part 6 of the I-765. See the chart below for examples of how to input your information.

Situation	Details to Include	Example
I've had CPT authorization.	Page 3, Part 2, Item 27 - CPT Authorization • full or part-time • your SEVIS ID number • employer name • employment start and end date • degree level	Page Number 3.b. Part Number 3.c. Item Number 3 · 2 · 27 CPT Authorization Full-time N0012345678 Rocket Tech, Inc. 06/01/2016 - 08/10/2016, Bachelor's
I've had OPT authorization.	Page 3, Part 2, Item 27—OPT authorization • full or part-time • your SEVIS ID number associated with the authorization • Start and end date on EAD card • degree level	Page Number 4.b. Part Number 4.c. Item Number 3 · 2 · 27 OPT Authorization Full-time N0012345678 09/25/2017 - 09/24/2018, Bachelor's
I've had one or more previous SEVIS ID number(s).	Page 3, Part 2, Item 26 - Previous SEVIS ID • Your previous SEVIS ID number • Program start and end date for that previous SEVIS ID number • Degree level	Page Number 5.b. Part Number 5.c. Item Number 3 · 2 · 26 Previous SEVIS ID number N0010160668 08/20/2015 - 05/11/2017, Bachelor's