**Optional Practice Training – OPT**

**WHAT IS OPT?**

* + U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services today announced that F-1 students seeking optional practical training (OPT) can now file Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, online if they are filing under one of these categories:
  + (c)(3)(A) – Pre-Completion OPT;
  + (c)(3)(B) – Post-Completion OPT; and
  + (c)(3)(C) – 24-Month Extension of OPT for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) students.
* OPT is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student’s major area of study. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization before completing their academic studies (pre-completion) and/or after completing their academic studies (post-completion). Eligible F-1 students who receive STEM degrees may apply for a 24-month extension of their post-completion OPT.
* “USCIS remains committed to maximizing our online filing capabilities,” said Senior Official Performing the Duties of USCIS Director Tracy Renaud. “The I-765 online filing option allows eligible students to file forms online in a more user-friendly fashion and increases efficiencies for adjudicators.”
* The option to file Form I-765 online is only available to F-1 students filing Form I-765 for OPT. If an applicant submits Form I-765 online to request employment authorization on or after April 15, but is eligible for a different employment authorization category, USCIS will deny the application and retain the fee. As USCIS continues to transition to paperless operations, the agency will work to expand online filing for Form I-765 to additional categories.
* Online filing allows applicants to submit forms electronically, check the status of their case anytime from anywhere, and receive notices from USCIS online instead of waiting for them in the mail. USCIS is using innovation and technology to meet the needs of applicants, petitioners and employees. Regardless of the paper or electronic format of an application or petition, USCIS is committed to ensuring a secure and efficient process for all.
* Individuals can file 11 USCIS forms online, which can all be found on the Forms Available to File Online page. To file these forms online, individuals must first create a USCIS online account at myaccount.uscis.gov. This free account allows them to:
* Submit their forms;
* Pay their fees;
* Track the status of their case;
* Communicate with USCIS through a secure inbox; and
* Respond to Requests for Evidence (in case that this is needed)
  + Practical training is a temporary work authorization for F-1 students related to their major area of study.
  + For OPT Purposes there are two types of degree
    - STEM Degree
      * Degrees on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)
        + Students in these fields may apply for a 24-month extension of Post-Completion OPT Employment Authorization if student is

F1 holder who received a STEM degree including on the STEM Designated Degree Program List

Link [HERE](https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf)

Employed by an employer who’s enrolled and using E-Verify; **AND**

Received an initial grant post-completion OPT employment authorization based on STEM degree.

Different document regarding this information.

* + - Non-STEM Degree
      * Students that are in degrees such as law, communications, etc. Other than STEM
  + Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12months of OPT Employment authorization before completing their academic students (Pre completion) or after completing their academic studies (post-completion).
  + Granted by the United States government
  + Types of OPT – All must be related to mayor area of student but there are two ways to do so:
    - prior to graduation (pre-completion)
    - after graduation (post-completion).

A diagram of employment

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* **Pre-completion OPT**
  + Have been enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year at a college, university, conservatory, or seminary that has been certificated by ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement).
  + You do not need to have had f-1 status for the one full academic year
  + It can be satisfied if you had another nonimmigrant status during that time
  + Option of doing training part-time while still a student, which is called Pre-completion OPT.
  + With this option:
    - Students can work up to 20 hours a week while school is in session, if complete a full-time course load.
    - During your annual vacation quarter AND/OR
    - Break between quarters,
  + Can work full-time (20-40 hours per week).
  + Pre-completion training is counted against the 12-month total as follows:
    - 4 months part-time = 2 months full-time
  + **Impact of Pre-completion OPT:** is deducted from the 12 months of OPT eligibility
    - If a student has already received 1 year of part time (20h per week) pre-completion OPT, the total time of full-time OPT still available would be reduced by 6months, 50% of the previously authorized year at the same education level.
      * In this scenario student would only be entitled to a remaining period of 6 months full-time post-completion OPT.
    - If a student has already received 1 year of full-time (40h per week) pre-completion OPT, the total time of full-time OPT still available would be reduced by 1year, 100% of the previously authorized year at the same education level.
      * In this scenario student would not be entitled to a any period of post-completion OPT.
    - Students prefer to save their OPT for after program completion.
      * However, students who may be leaving the US after completing their program or starting a higher-level degree immediately after graduation may choose this option
  + Students can apply for Pre-completion OPT:
    - as early as 90 days before the preferred start date
  + **Note that Pre-completion OPT is not applying for OPT while you are still a student** 
    - it means you would engage in the practical training while you are still a student.
  + When to apply:
    - Based on STEM Degree & Non-STEM Degree
      * Must apply after DSO enters the recommendation for OPT into SEVIS record, and
      * May apply up to 90 days before completing a full academic year,
        + if student does not start OPT employment until you complete one full academic year.
* **After graduation – post-completion**
  + Post-completion OPT takes place after students have completed their academic program.
  + Can be done part time (20th per week) or full time (40h per week).
  + This is the most common type of OPT
  + Always considered full-time with the government.
    - Whether to work 20 or 45 hours per week, it will count as full-time and counts towards the 12 months of available OPT.
  + **Application deadline:**
    - As early as 90 days before the end of your program (your graduation date).
    - As late as the end of your 60-day grace period
      * (i.e. 60 days after I-20 end date)
      * **Recommendation:**
        + applying as early as possible to prevent delays
  + **Eligibility criteria:**
    - Students can use OPT to find a job in a field closely related to their major of study, and appropriate to the level of education.
    - Eligible to apply for OPT if meet the following criteria:
      * Currently in F-1 visa status as a full-time student or are in the last quarter of degree completion
      * Have been in the United States and in F-1 visa status **for at least one academic year,** 
        + or will complete one year by the time OPT approval begins
      * Have **NOT** been authorized for a total of 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT).
        + Part-time CPT does not affect OPT eligibility
      * Have NOT previously completed 12 months of OPT at the same education level
  + When to apply:
    - Based on STEM Degree & Non-STEM Degree
      * Must apply after your DSO enters the recommendation for OPT into your SEVIS record, and
      * Must apply within 30 days after your DSO enters the recommendation for OPT into your SEVIS record, and
      * May apply up to 90 days before you complete your degree, but no later than 60 days after you complete your degree.

**OPT TIMELINE**

A diagram of a program

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**Application Timeline:**

* 120 days before the end of the program or graduation
  + Complete OPT Canvas Course
  + Starts countdown before:
    - program ends
    - grace period starts
* 90 days before the end of the program or graduation
  + Window to apply starts
    - Remember “as early as 90 days before end of program/graduation”
* 0 program ends!
  + Grace period starts
* 60 days after the end of the program or graduation
  + End of grace period
  + Latest OPT Start Date
  + OPT Application must be completed and sent to USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services):
    - between 90days before/ up to 60 days after graduation

**OPT Duration Timeline:**

* 12months after the 60 days after the end of the program or graduation
  + At the end of the 12months OPT ends / EAD expires.
  + Students that qualify for STEM OPT\* Extension must:
    - submit their application as early as 90days prior the end of their current OPT Period;
    - Eligible for STEM OPT:
      * students with science, technology, engineering, or math degrees
* 60 days grace period after completion of OPT starts
  + Depart the US
  + Find sponsor
  + COS (change of status)

**Note: s**tudents cannot start working:

* before they receive their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) OR
* before their start date on their EAD.

**APPLICATION PROCESS**

* Complete canvas course: [OPT for F-1 Students](https://seattleu.instructure.com/courses/1598972)
* Submit [Last Term Statement](https://forms.seattleu.edu/Index#/form/106/?header=false&focus=true)
  + It can be done online or in PD
    - Online Version -
    - PDF
  + Info required:
    - Personal information:
      * Student name
      * Seattle University ID
      * Date filling the form
      * Student email
      * SEVIS ID
        + Found in form I-20
    - Academic Information
      * Current majors
      * “select your major”
      * Select advisor for this major
        + Someone from ISC assigned to me

Law students: Dale

* + - * Graduation Year/Term:
        + Ex. 25SQ
        + Ex. 25SS
      * I-20 End Date
    - Future Plans
      * Have you already applied to graduate through mySeattleU?
        + Link [HERE](https://my.ec.seattleu.edu/Student/Student/Graduation)
      * Do you intent to apply for OPT?
      * Do you plan to being a new program within 5 months of graduating?
* OPT Request Form
  + Link [HERE](https://redhawks.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-GlobalEngagement/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FIntranet%2DGlobalEngagement%2FShared%20Documents%2FInternational%20Student%20Center%2FOPT%2DRequest%2DForm%2Epdf&viewid=60dbd504%2D9855%2D4bd5%2Db49e%2Dde463af79734&parent=%2Fsites%2FIntranet%2DGlobalEngagement%2FShared%20Documents%2FInternational%20Student%20Center)
  + Info required:
    - Select OPT Time
      * Pre-OPT / Post-OPT / STEM Extension
    - Student Information
      * Seattle University ID
      * SEVIS
      * Name
        + Last
        + First
        + Middle
      * Address (local – where student will be staying in the next 6 months)
      * Address (home country)
      * Telephone
      * Email
        + Personal email (will be reported to DHS)
        + SU Email
      * Major
      * Level
        + Undergraduate
        + Graduate
        + Doctorate
      * Statement describing intended employment replated to the major
        + If student has a job offer needs to include

Employer name

Address

Supervisor

His/her contact info

Job title

Main role at the job

* + - * Date requesting OPT
        + POST OPT NOTE:

Date must be within 60 days after term ends

* + - * Beginning date
      * End date
      * Full / part time
      * List of all the periods of previously authorized employment for practical training
      * Curricular
      * Pre/post completion of study
* USCIS Portal
  + Create USCIS account
    - [**https://myaccount.uscis.gov/create-account**](https://myaccount.uscis.gov/create-account)
    - After logging in, select “My USCIS” and select account type
      * “I am an applicant, petitioner, or requestor”.
    - Next, select “File a form online”
    - Then select “Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)” to begin completing the form.
    - Completing the I-765: Answer all questions that appear.
      * These questions are the same as the paper form
      * Part 1 - Reason for Applying
        + Initial permission to accept employment (Right option if applying for the first time)
        + Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged EAD (Right option if EAD was lost)
        + Renewal of my permission to accept employment (Right option if applying for STEM OPT time)

Attach copy of previous employment authorization

* + - * Part 2 – Information about you
        + Legal name
        + Oher names used
        + Your US Mailing Address
        + US Physical Address (if different from mailing)
        + Other information

Gender

Marital status

Have you previously filed a form i765?

Has Social Security Administration (SSA) ever officially issued a Social Security card?

If yes, then provide social security number

Do you want the SSA to issue you a social security card?

If yes, then fill

Father’s name

Mother’s name

* + - * + Country of citizenship
        + Place of birth

City

State

Country

Date

MM/DD/YYYY

* + - * + Information about last arrival in the US

Form i-94 Arrival-Departure record

[“Get Most Recent I-94”](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/home)

Passport number

Country that issue your passport

Expiration date for passport

MM/DD/YYYY

Place of last arrival in the US

Immigration status at your last arrival

F-1 Visa

Or any other type of visa you entered the US with

Some people do change of status from J1 to F1, or B2 to F1

Student and Exchange visitor information

SEVIS

Found in I-20

* + - * + Information about eligibility category

Eligibility category

(c)(3)(A) (Pre completion OPT)

(c)(3)(B) (Post Completion OPT)

(c)(3)(C) (STEM OPT Extension)

Degree

Employer’s name listed in E-Verify

Employer’s E-Verify company identification number or a valid E-Verify client company identification number

* + - * Part 3 – Applicant’s statement, contact information, Declaration, Certification and signature
        + Here you list all your information

Phone number

Email

Signature and date of signature

* + - Note: When answering the question: “Is someone assisting you with completing this application?” – check ‘NO’
* OPT Appointment
  + Schedule appointment with immigration advisor
    - Email individual advisor or [isc@seattleu.edu](mailto:isc@seattleu.edu)
  + Advisor reviews all forms and information
  + Makes changes (if any) before submitting it to USCIS
  + Answer extra questions
* USCIS Process
  + About 2-3months for USCIS to process OPT
    - If application pending, student may remain in the US
      * Even after 60 period grace
    - If intended to travel while application is pending:
      * Recommend talking to advisor to discuss specific plans and seek advice
* I-20
  + Follow up with immigration advisor after obtaining EAD to receive updated I-20

**Supporting Documents**

* 2x2 Passport Photo
  + Upload your 2x2 passport photo (taken within last 30 days)
* Form I-94: Upload a screenshot of I-94 number
  + Click [“Get Most Recent I-94”](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/home)
* Employment Authorization Document or Government ID:
  + Upload your Passport & Visa here.
  + Only if applicable: upload your previous EAD card (front and back)
* Previously Authorized CPT or OPT authorization (if applicable): Upload previous I-20s with any CPT or OPT authorizations.
* Form I-20: Newly issued I-20 with OPT endorsement signed by your immigration advisor and yourself (digital signature on the I-20 is not acceptable by USCIS)

**Additional Information**

* If previously authorized CPT or OPT and do not have former I-20s with these details, you should do the following:
  + Section: Evidence
  + Page: Post-Completion OPT or CPT
  + Question: Post-Completion OPT or CPT
  + Additional Information:
    - Type of previously authorized practical training (CPT and OPT)
    - Dates of previously authorized practical training
    - Application status (approved, denied, or withdrawn)
    - Degree level (associates, bachelors, masters, certificate and doctorate)
    - Receipt or Card Number if known

**Review all application materials one last time.**

* If any red or yellow alerts appear, fix those corresponding sections.
* Save it. Be ready to share your screen during the OPT meeting with your immigration advisor.

**After meeting with your immigration advisor:**

* Read and agree to the “applicant’s statement”
  + Part 3 of I-765
* Digitally sign
* Pay $470 application fee using debit or credit card
* After clicking submit application will be sent/received by USCIS
  + You will be given a receipt number
* **Important:**
  + **Do not submit until the materials have been reviewed with the immigration advisor at International Student Center and you have been issued an updated I-20 with OPT Endorsment**
* **Note:**
  + **Application must be submitted within 30 days of your Designated School Official (DSO) signature endorsing your OPT request on your I-20.** 
    - **Don’t wait too long or it will be automatically denied**

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The difference between Pre-Completion OPT, Post-Completion OPT

* OPT Application timelines, when to apply
* How to apply for OPT, including ISC processes and procedures
* What happens after your application is submitted
* Things to know during OPT

**After OPT Application has been submitted**

**Receipt Notice**

* If application submitted via mail:
  + Within about 1-2 weeks you will receive a Receipt Notice from USCIS in the mail, confirming that your application has been received.
  + You can use your receipt number on this notice to track the status of your application[**HERE**](https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do)
* If filing online:
  + You will receive a receipt number automatically in your online account. You will still receive a physical copy of your notice in the mail.
* You can remain in the US while USCIS is processing your OPT application, even beyond your 60-day grace period

**Approval**

* Current processing time for OPT takes an average of 1-2 months, but can take longer (expect anywhere from 1-4 months)
  + During this time you are legally in the United States but you are not allowed to work.
* Once your OPT has been approved:
  + You will receive your Approval Notice and then your Employment Authorization Document (EAD card).
  + If you requested a Social Security Card, it usually arrives in the mail a few weeks after the EAD arrives.
* You can start working **ONLY** after you have received your EAD card AND your OPT start date (listed on the EAD card) has happened.
* Once you find a job:
  + Be sure to report your employment!
    - You will receive an email from a *do-not-reply-SEVP* email address with instructions on how to set up your SEVP portal and update your employment information. You will receive this email on or around the start date of your OPT.
    - If your start date has passed but you didn't see the SEVP email, first check your junk/spam folder! If you still don't see it, email your immigration advisor. You can also contact your immigration advisor if you lock yourself out of your SEVP portal account.
* **Remember:**
  + you have 90 days of unemployment allowed throughout your 12 months of Post-OPT which begins on your OPT start date (listed on your EAD card)! You must not exceed this unemployment time. In addition, if you use all 90 days, you lose your 60-day grace period at the end of your OPT.
* Finally:
  + Report your employment to your immigration advisor by emailing them the following information.
  + Your immigration advisor will then issue you an updated I-20 and send it to you via email.
    - This employment MUST be reported **within 10 days of your job start date**.
    - If you need to report employment that began more than 10 days ago, your immigration advisor must report the employment in your SEVIS record for you.
* Explain how employment is related to your course of study:
  + Employer Name:
  + Job Title:
  + Number of hours per week:
  + Start Date:
  + End Date (if known):
  + Employer Physical Address:
  + Supervisor Last Name:
  + Supervisor First Name:
  + Supervisor Telephone Number OR Email Address:
  + Current U.S. Physical Address:
* If you change employers during OPT, be sure to update your SEVP portal and let your immigration advisor know. Always feel free to reach out to your advisor if you have any questions about your status while on OPT!

**What happens while you are in OPT**

* **Employer Change:**
  + If you change employers during OPT, be sure to update your SEVP portal and also let your immigration advisor know. Always feel free to reach out to your advisor if you have any questions about your status while on OPT!
* **Keep your I-20 Updated:**
  + If your employment changes, first update your SEVP portal and then email your immigration advisor to receive a new I-20.
  + You must get an updated travel signature on your I-20 every 6 months
* **Unemployment**:
  + - You **cannot** exceed your 90 days of unemployment time, or you will immediately be in violation of F-1 status.
    - Once you reach 90 days of unemployment, you also lose your 60-day grace period
* **Grace period**:
  + After your OPT end date, you enter a 60-day grace period. This allows you to remain inside the US for 60 days after completing OPT. During this time, you can make plans to depart the U.S., transfer your SEVIS record to a new school for a new program of study, or apply to change your status to a different visa type.
  + You are ineligible for this grace period if you use all 90 days (or more) of your unemployment time.
* **Travel During OPT**
  + While it is not recommendable to travel while in OPT, because **there are specific risks if the student leaves the U.S. during their OPT period** however, students still can still travel abroad and re-entry is permitted if:
    - The student has a valid EAD card.
    - They have a valid passport, visa, and I-20 form signed by their DSO.
      * Note: **It is recommended to carry proof of employment or job offer for re-entry.**
* **Insurance:**
  + After you graduate, you would need to pay your insurance through [JCB website](https://jcbins.com/)
    - **Remember:** you won’t be charged from Student Financial Services anymore.
    - There will be a dropdown option for OPT (Optional Practical Training).
* **Violations and Consequences**
  + Violating OPT/CPT regulations or working without proper authorization can lead to the termination of your F-1 status, deportation, and future visa ineligibility.
  + It's important to adhere strictly to the rules regarding employment, work hours, and the field of study.

**Common Mistakes**

Watch out for these common mistakes when filing your OPT application:

* Submitting the OPT application without meeting with immigration advisor first.
* Passport pictures:
  + Older than 30 days old and/or are incorrectly sized.
* Forgetting to sign/date the OPT I-20 from your immigration advisor before uploading it
  + OR uploading the wrong I-20
* Providing an incorrect mailing address, or not updating USCIS if you have moved after filing
* Failing to include the full set of required supporting documents, or forgetting to fully complete the I-765
* Failing to apply for OPT within the filing deadlines
* **Catching Error After Submitting Application**
  + If you realize you made a mistake in your OPT application after submitting, but USCIS is still processing, you may still have time to submit a correction.
    - If you filed online:
      * You can upload supplemental unsolicited evidence including the corrected information in letter format.
        + We recommend contacting your immigration advisor for support through this process.
  + **EAD Card Error**
    - If you receive an EAD from USCIS that has an error on it, you **must** correct the error to avoid having any problems in the future.
      * If the mistake was a result of your own error, for example if you incorrectly typed the wrong date of birth on your application, you may need to submit a completely new application.
        + Contact your immigration advisor for advice. To correct an error that USCIS has made, follow the instructions listed.
* **Step 1:** Write a Letter of Explanation

Write a letter to USCIS explaining the situation and include the following:

The date;

The address of the USCIS office as indicated on your approval notice;

Your personal identifying information:

Full name as indicated on your I-20,

Date of birth,

SEVIS ID number,

USCIS Receipt Number for the OPT EAD with the error;

A detailed explanation of your situation (for example, that the EAD was issued with incorrect dates, or a typo in your name), and note that supporting documentation is enclosed. Be sure to specify what the error was, and what the correct information should be

A statement requesting USCIS to mail the new corrected EAD card to you;

The US address that you would like the new EAD card to be mailed to;

Your signature

List your enclosed supporting documentation (for example, a copy of your incorrect EAD card, a copy of your previous Post-Completion OPT I-20 and previous Pre-Completion OPT EAD card)

* **Step 2:** Photocopy Your Supporting Documentation

Make a photocopy of the original incorrect EAD card and your letter for your records before mailing to USCIS.

* **Step 3:** Send Your Correction Request to USCIS

Send your letter, EAD card with the error, and other supporting documents via FedEx or UPS so that you can track the package. Keep a copy the shipment tracking information for your records.

* **Step 4:** Report to ISC Once You Receive Your Corrected EAD

Once you receive the corrected EAD card, scan it, and scan email the correct EAD card to ISC. Your ISC advisor will then correct your SEVIS record and confirm with you once this is complete.

**Source:**

* [**USCIS Website**](https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/optional-practical-training-opt-for-f-1-students)
* [**Study in the States**](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students/training-opportunities-in-the-united-states)
* [**OPT for F1 - ISC**](https://seattleu.instructure.com/courses/1598972)
* [**https://redhawks.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-GlobalEngagement/SitePages/OptionalPracticalTraining.aspx**](https://redhawks.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-GlobalEngagement/SitePages/OptionalPracticalTraining.aspx)