Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) Online Workshop
Topics to be Covered

- Introduction
- OPT Eligibility
- Application Timeline
  - OPT Start and End Dates
- Application Process
- OPT Application
- OPT Employment Types
- 17–Month OPT STEM Extension
- Reporting Requirements
- Cap Gap I–20
- Traveling Abroad while on OPT
- Frequently Asked Questions
Introduction: What is OPT?

- Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) is employment authorization approved by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for eligible F–1 students interested in engaging in employment in the U.S. directly related to their field of study after their degree completion.

- F–1 students are eligible for an initial 12 months of OPT per higher degree level achieved.

- Applicants do not need an employment offer to apply for OPT.
OPT Eligibility

To be eligible, F–1 students:

- must have maintained valid F–1 status for at least one academic year
- must **not** have had 12-months of OPT authorization for the same degree level
- must **not** have accrued 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for the same degree level

**NOTE:** Part-time CPT authorization does not affect OPT eligibility.
Application Timeline

- OPT applications may be submitted to USCIS for processing as early as (but no earlier than) 90 days before a student’s program completion date.
- USCIS requires approximately 90 days to approve an OPT application.
- The recommended deadline to submit an OPT application to DCISS is at least 3 months before a student’s requested OPT start date.
- USCIS may accept applications up to 60 days after a student’s program completion date. However, students applying for OPT after their program completion date may not receive the full 12 months of OPT authorization.
Application Timeline

Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

90 days

Program Completion date

Program Completion date
Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

90 days

Program Completion date

60 days

Requested OPT start date must fall within the 60-day grace period
Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date.

Program Completion date

OPT start date

12 months

OPT end date

90 days

60 days

Requested OPT start date must fall within the 60-day grace period.
Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

Program Completion date

OPT start date

12 months

OPT end date

Students must depart the U.S., transfer to another school or change visa status by this date.

Requested OPT start date must fall within the 60-day grace period

Grace period: Students may remain in the U.S. but may not continue employment.

Students may remain in the U.S. but may not continue employment.
OPT Start and End Dates

- Applicants must choose their OPT start date.

- A requested OPT start date can be as early as 1 day after the program completion date and up to 60 days after the program completion date.

**NOTE:** Graduate students may set their program completion date to their defense, filing or the official quarter end date.
OPT Start and End Dates

**Fall 2014 Quarter End Date:** 12/19/2014
- OPT Start Date window: 12/20/2014 – 02/17/2014

**Winter 2015 Quarter End Date:** 03/20/2015
- OPT Start Date window: 03/21/2015 – 05/19/2015

**Spring 2015 Quarter End Date:** 06/12/2015
- OPT Start Date Window: 06/13/2015 – 08/11/2015
OPT Start and End Dates

POST-COMPLETION OPT REQUEST DATES

Start Date: **January 5, 2015**  
End Date: **January 4, 2016**

*Please note: Requested OPT start and end dates cannot be changed once the OPT application has been submitted to the USCIS.*

- [ ] I-795 Form (see attached or complete form on-line at [http://www.uscis.gov/files/fomm1-795.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/files/fomm1-795.pdf))
- [ ] $380.00 check or money order made payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security (write your date of birth and SEVIS ID number on front of the check)
- [ ] 2 copies of your I-94 Arrival/Departure card (front and back sides)
- [ ] 2 U.S. style passport photos (write your name and SEVIS ID number on back of each photo)
- [ ] 1 copy of your most recent I-20 pages 1 & 3 (including all CPT I-20s, if any)
- [ ] 1 copy of your passport ID page
- [ ] OPT Recommendation Form signed by your Academic Advisor (see attached form)
Submit completed application documents to DCISS:
- During a weekly OPT Hand-In Session
  - Mondays from 10 AM – 11 AM
  - Wednesdays from 3 PM – 4 PM
- During a scheduled appointment with an F–1 Counselor

Applicants must return to DCISS 1 week after their submission date to sign their OPT I–20.
- Failure to sign the OPT I–20 on time will result in cancellation of the OPT application

DCISS will send your OPT application to USCIS for processing.
OPT Application

- **OPT Request Form**
- **I–765 Form**
- $380.00 check or money order (made payable to ‘U.S. Department of Homeland Security’. Write your date of birth and SEVIS ID number on front of the check)
- 2 copies of your I–94 Admission Record
  - Electronic I–94: Print online record from [www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94)
  - Paper I–94: Please copy both front and back sides
- 2 copies of your most recent U.S. admission stamp in passport
- 2 U.S. style passport photos (write your name and SEVIS ID number on back of each photo)
- 1 copy of pages 1 & 3 of all CPT I–20s (if applicable)
- 1 copy of passport ID page
- Verification of Degree Completion Form
Please sign form in blue or black ink!
I am applying for:  
☑️ Permission to accept employment  
☐ Replacement (of lost employment authorization document)  
☐ Renewal of my permission to accept employment (attach previous employment authorization document).
Please make sure the mailing address provided here is valid for at least 4 months from the OPT application submission date. This address must be in the U.S. and must not be a P.O. Box address.

Enter your I-94 number here. See sample I-94 Admission Records in the following slides.
Sample: Paper I–94 Admission Record

I–94 number

Place of last entry to the U.S.

Date of last entry to the U.S.
Sample: Electronic I–94 Admission Record

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Securing America’s Borders

Admission (I-94) Number Retrieval

Admission (I-94) Record Number: 0001234567 11
Admit Until Date (MM/DD/YYYY): D / S

Details provided on Admission(I-94) form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Name:</th>
<th>MASUNIIYO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First (Given) Name:</td>
<td>GEORGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Date (MM/DD/YYYY):</td>
<td>10/23/1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passport Number:</td>
<td>K0123456Z9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passport Country of Issuance:</td>
<td>BRUINLAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Entry (MM/DD/YYYY):</td>
<td>09/13/2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class of Admission:</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individuals can visit [www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94) to retrieve a copy of their electronic I-94.
### I-765 Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please refer to your I-94 Admission Record and passport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code for Post-Completion OPT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 12. Date of Last Entry into the U.S. (mm/dd/yyyy)
- **September 1, 2011**

#### 13. Place of Last Entry into the U.S.
- **LAX**

#### 14. Manner of Last Entry (Visitor, Student, etc.)
- **Student**

#### 15. Current Immigration Status (Visitor, Student, etc.)
- **Student**

#### 16. Go to Part 2 of the Instructions, Eligibility Categories. In the space below, place the letter and number of the category you selected from the instructions. (For example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii), etc.).

| Eligibility under 8 CFR 213-12 | c | 3 | B |

#### 17. If you entered the Eligibility Category, (c)(3)(C), in item 16 above, list your degree, your employer’s name as listed in E-Verify, and your employer’s E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number in the space below.

| Degree: | 
| Employer’s Name as listed in E-Verify: | 
| Employer’s E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number: |
Please sign within the lines, like the sample signature.
U.S. Style Passport Photo

- Frame subject with full face, front view, eyes open
- Photo must present full head from top of hair to bottom of chin; height of head should measure 1 inch to 1–3/8 inches (25mm to 35mm)
- Eye height must be between 1–1/8 inches to 1–3/8 inches (28mm to 35mm)
- No shadows on the face or in the background of photo
- White background only
- Hair must be pulled back (forehead, eyes and ears must be fully visible)
- Neutral expression only
- Center the head within the frame
- Write your name and SEVIS ID number on back of the photos.
Josie Bruin
417 Bruin Walk Way #1
Los Angeles, CA 90095

Pay to the order of: U.S Department of Homeland Security

Three Hundred Eighty and 00/100 Dollars

Date of birth: 12/31/1989
SEVIS ID#: N0000000000

Check 2011

Date

$380.00

JosieBruin

Do not write on the back of the check or money order
Forms must be signed by an Academic Counselor or Student Affairs Officer and must confirm the student’s program completion date.
After Submitting an OPT Application to DCISS

- Applicants must return to DCISS one week after their OPT submission date to sign their OPT I-20
  - Failure to sign the OPT I-20 on time will result in cancellation of the OPT application
- DCISS will mail completed OPT applications to USCIS for processing only after the OPT I-20 has been signed.
- Applicants will receive a Notice of Action receipt from USCIS approximately 3–4 weeks from the date the OPT application was received by USCIS. The status of an OPT application can be viewed online with a Receipt Number:
  https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard/CaseStatus.do
Notice of Action Receipt

WAC07-116-52869

Received Date
September 30, 2014

Notice Date
October 15, 2014
After Submitting an OPT Application to DCISS

- Applicants will receive their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card approximately 3 months from the date the OPT application was received by USCIS.

- Copies of the front and back of the EAD card must be submitted to DCISS in-person or via e-mail to dcissf1unit@saonet.ucla.edu

- An OPT Audit Report must be submitted to DCISS as soon as the OPT start date has been reached.
Sample: EAD Card
Students may not begin employment until they have received their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card and the start date as indicated on the EAD card has been reached.

Students may not continue working beyond the end date of the EAD card.

**NOTE:** Students with a timely filed, pending 17-month OPT STEM Extension application or a valid Cap-Gap I-20 may continue working beyond their OPT end date without receiving a new EAD card.
Students on OPT have a total of 90 days (including weekends and holidays) of allowed unemployment during their 12-month OPT period that begins on the start date of their OPT (as indicated on their EAD card).

Students with an authorized 17-month OPT STEM Extension have an additional 30 days, for a total of 120 days of unemployment during their 29-month OPT period.
OPT Employment

- OPT employment must:
  - be directly related to the F–1 student’s degree program.
  - be appropriate for the F–1 student’s degree level.
OPT Employment Types

- **Paid employment:** A student may work part time (at least 20 hours per week), or full-time.

- **Multiple employers:** A student may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the student’s degree program.

- **Short-term multiple employers (performing artists):** A student, such as a musician or other type of performing artist, may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration.

- **Work for hire:** This is commonly referred to as 1099 employment, where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than employment relationship. If requested by DHS, the student must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract period and the name and address of the contracting company.
OPT Employment Types

- **Self-employed business owner:** A student on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. The student must be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to the student’s degree program.

- **Employment through an agency or consulting firm:** A student on post-completion OPT must be able to provide evidence showing he or she worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.

- **Unpaid employment:** A student may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, where this practice does not violate any labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week. A student must be able to provide evidence acquired from the student’s employer to verify that the student worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.
Recipients of Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctorate degrees in certain STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields may be eligible for a one-time 17-month extension of post-completion OPT, for a total of 29 months of OPT authorization.

**NOTE:** For a list of designated STEM degrees, please see: [http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/stem-list.pdf](http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/stem-list.pdf)
17–Month OPT Extension Eligibility

- USCIS must receive a student’s application by the end date of the student’s initial 12–month OPT period (as indicated on their EAD card).
- Student must have completed a designated STEM degree.
- Student must have a job or job offer from an E–verified employer.
  - **NOTE:** To learn more about E–verify, please see [www.uscis.gov/everify](http://www.uscis.gov/everify)

To apply for the 17–month OPT STEM Extension, please see the OPT STEM Extension Guidelines:
**OPT STEM Extension Employment**

- **Multiple employers:** A student may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to his or her degree program and all employers must be enrolled in E-verify.

- **Work for hire:** This is commonly referred to as 1099 employment, where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. The company for whom the student is providing services must be registered with E-Verify. If requested by DHS, the student must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract period and the name and address of the contracting company.

- **Self-employed business owner:** A student on a 17-month extension can start a business and be self-employed. In this situation, the student must register his or her business with E-Verify and work full time. The student must be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to his or her degree program.

- **Employment through an agency or consulting firm:** A student on a 17-month extension may be employed by an employment agency or consulting firm. The employment agency or consulting firm must be registered with E-Verify, but the third parties contracting with the agency or firm (for which the student is providing services) need not be.
F−1 students are required to report the following information within 10 days of any change during their OPT period via the online OPT Audit Report on the DCISS website:

- OPT Employment Status
- Change of Address
Cap Gap I–20

- Cap Gap I–20 – a period in which a student’s F–1 status and OPT is automatically extended to bridge the gap between the end of their F–1 status and the start of their H–1B status.

- The most common situation occurs when a student’s OPT ends in the spring or summer and his or her F–1 status expires 60 days later, leaving a gap of several months before the start of the student’s H–1B status on October 1.

- The Cap Gap I–20 will extend a student’s F–1 status and OPT authorization without requiring a new EAD card.
Cap Gap I–20 Eligibility

- The Cap Gap is available to F–1 students in all fields of study engaging in OPT with pending or approved cap–subject H–1B petitions.

- Please contact the Dashew Center to request a Cap Gap I–20:
  - dcisf1unit@saonet.ucla.edu
  - 310–825–1681
Traveling Abroad During OPT

- Documents required to re-enter the U.S. in valid F–1 status BEFORE degree completion:
  - Valid Passport
  - Valid F–1 Visa
  - Endorsed I–20 (each travel authorization signature is valid for 6 months from the date it was last signed and must be valid at the time of entry to the U.S.)

- Documents required to re-enter the U.S. in valid F–1 status AFTER degree completion date/during OPT:
  - All of the documents listed above
  - EAD Card
  - Proof of Employment or Offer Letter (8 CFR 214.2(f)(13)(ii))
F–1 students engaging in OPT will still hold F–1 status in the U.S.

F–1 students on OPT are still required to obtain a travel signature on their I–20 to re-enter the U.S. in valid F–1 status after traveling abroad.
How early can I apply for OPT?
- You may apply for OPT as early as 90 days before your degree completion date.

How long will it take USCIS to approve my OPT application?
- Currently, USCIS requires approximately 90 days to approve an OPT application. DCISS recommends that you apply as early as possible to avoid any delays.

How do I choose my OPT start date?
- Your OPT start date can be as early as the day after your degree completion date, or as late as 60 days after.

What if I submitted my OPT application and will not completing my degree as expected?
- If you will not be completing your degree requirements by the program completion date that was provided on your Verification of Degree Completion form, you may complete your degree requirements during your OPT period while maintaining F–1 status. You will be subject to all OPT regulations during your approved OPT period.
Frequently Asked Questions

What if I move before receiving the EAD card?
- You may risk losing your EAD card in the mail if you file a change of address after submitting your OPT application to USCIS for processing. Please note that the U.S. Postal Service does not forward federal mail. We recommend that you provide an address for your OPT application that will valid for at least 4 months from your application submission date.

Can I travel abroad while my OPT application is pending?
- **Yes**, if your re-entry date to the U.S. is before the degree completion date stated on your OPT I-20 and you have all of the required re-entry documents.
- **No**, if your re-entry date to the U.S. is after the degree completion date stated on your OPT I-20. To re-enter the U.S. after your program completion date, you will need the required documents listed below.

What documents do I need for re-entry during my OPT period?
- Valid Passport
- Valid F-1 visa
- OPT I-20 endorsed by an F-1 Counselor (each travel signature is valid for 6 months from the date it last signed and must be valid at the time of re-entry to the U.S.)
- Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card
- Employment verification or offer letter
Frequently Asked Questions

My F–1 visa expired. Can I travel abroad during OPT?

- Yes, you may travel abroad, but you must apply for a new F–1 visa from a U.S. Embassy or Consulate overseas, as you will require a valid F–1 visa to re-enter the U.S. in valid F–1 OPT status. Please note that it may be difficult to obtain a new F–1 visa while on OPT, especially if you have not secured OPT employment.

Who determines if my OPT employment is related to my degree?

- Department of Homeland Security (DHS) leaves this discretion to students to determine.

What if my employment is not related to my degree?

- Working in a field not related to your degree is a serious violation of your F–1 status, which may result in being denied future immigration benefits from the U.S.

Can I begin employment before receiving my EAD card?

- No, you may not engage in any employment until you have received your EAD card and your OPT start date has been reached.
Frequently Asked Questions

What do I do if I lost my EAD card?
- You must apply for a replacement of the card from USCIS, including a new I–765 form, $380.00 filing fee, and supporting documents.

When does my 90-day unemployment period start?
- Your 90-day unemployment period begins on the first day of unemployment after your OPT start date (as indicated on your EAD card).

What should I do if I am approaching my 90th day of unemployment?
- We recommend the following options: prepare to transfer to another school, depart the U.S., or change your visa status. For other options, please consult with an immigration attorney.

When should I apply for the 17-month OPT extension?
- The earliest you can apply for the 17-month STEM Extension is 120 days before your initial 12-month OPT end date, as indicated on your EAD card. USCIS must receive your OPT STEM Extension application by your initial 12-month OPT end date. We recommend that you apply at least 90 days before your current OPT expires.
Can I change employers during my 17–month OPT STEM Extension period?
- Yes, but your new employer must also be E–verified. Please remember to report any changes in OPT employment via the online OPT Audit/Report.

Where do I report my OPT employment information?
- Please report your OPT employment status via the online OPT Audit/Report.

Where do I report my change of address during OPT?
- Please report any changes in address within 10 days of moving via the online OPT Audit/Report.

What should I do after my OPT ends?
- After your OPT ends, you have an additional 60–day grace period to: transfer to another school, depart the U.S. or change your visa status. For other options, please consult with an immigration attorney.
Career Resources

- UCLA Career Center [www.career.ucla.edu](http://www.career.ucla.edu)
- UCLA Alumni Association [www.alumni.ucla.edu](http://www.alumni.ucla.edu)
Reminder

F–1 students must return to the Dashew Center one week after their application submission date to sign their OPT I–20.