Post-Completion

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

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*Last Updated Fall 2018*
Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a type of 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 major 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.
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 or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for the same degree level

**NOTE:** Part-time CPT authorization does not affect OPT eligibility.
When To Apply

- 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.

- OPT applications may be submitted to DCISS for processing as early as 1 week before USCIS will accept applications (97 days before a UCLA F-1 student’s program completion date). DCISS requires 1 week to process OPT I-20s.

- USCIS requires approximately 90 days to approve an OPT application.

- It is highly recommended that students submit their OPT application to DCISS 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
Application Timeline

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

60 days
Application Timeline

Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

90 days

Program Completion date

Program Completion date

12 months

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

OPT End Date

60 days
Application Timeline

Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

90 days

Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

Program Completion date

60 days

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

12 months

OPT End Date

60 days

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

Grace period: Students may remain in the U.S. but may not continue employment
Applicants must choose their OPT start date at the time of application.

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 date, filing date or the official quarter end date.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPT Start Date Window</th>
<th>Degree Completion</th>
<th>Program End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/15/2018 – 02/12/2019</td>
<td>Fall Quarter 2018</td>
<td>12/14/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/23/2019 – 05/21/2019</td>
<td>Winter Quarter 2019</td>
<td>03/22/2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>05/10/2019</td>
</tr>
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<td>06/15/2019 – 08/13/2019</td>
<td>Spring Quarter 2019</td>
<td>06/14/2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/14/2019 – 11/12/2019</td>
<td>Summer Quarter 2019</td>
<td>09/13/2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Select any date within this period as your OPT Start Date.
POST-COMPLETION OPT REQUEST DATES

Start Date: 12  15  2018
End Date: 12  14  2019

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

☐ $380.00 check or money order made payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security (please write your date of birth and SEVIS ID number on the front of the check)

☐ Copies of your I-94 Admission Record
  - Electronic I-94: Access and print record here: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/request.html
  - Paper I-94: Please copy both front and back sides

☐ 2 Copies of your most recent U.S. entry stamp in passport

☐ 2 U.S. style passport photos. Please see U.S. Style Passport Photo Guidelines (please write your name and SEVIS ID number on back of each photo)

☐ 1 Copy of all OPT I-20s (if applicable)

☐ 1 Copy of your passport photo page

☐ Verification of Degree Completion Form
How To Apply

Application Process

STEP 1: Complete DCISS Online OPT Workshop
STEP 2: Pay the DCISS OPT Administrative Processing Fee Online
STEP 3: Prepare and complete OPT Application Materials
STEP 4: Submit completed OPT Application to DCISS during a weekly OPT Hand-In Session:

Every Wednesday from 3PM – 4PM
Every Thursday from 3PM – 4PM

If you are unable to attend an OPT Hand-In Session, please contact DCISS at 310-825-1681 to schedule an appointment with an F-1 Counselor to submit your OPT application.
OPT Application Materials

- $40 OPT Administrative Processing Fee – Paid Online (Print Payment Receipt)
- [OPT Request Form](#)
- [I-765 Form](#)
- $410 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 record from [CPB I-94 website](#)
  - OR Paper I-94: Copy both front and back sides
- 2 copies of the most recent U.S. entry stamp in your passport
- [2 U.S. style passport photos](#) – Photos must have been taken within 3 months of OPT application submission. Write your name and SEVIS ID number on back of each photo.
- 1 copy of all CPT I-20s (if applicable)
- 1 copy of passport photo page
- [Verification of Degree Completion Form](#)
The DCISS OPT Administrative Processing Fee is paid to maintain systems required by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to maintain a student’s F-1 SEVIS record during their OPT period.

SEVIS maintenance fees are covered for current, enrolled UCLA students through enrollment fees. Since students will not be enrolled at UCLA during their OPT period, they will be charged an OPT Administrative Processing Fee by DCISS, as SEVIS record maintenance is still required during a student’s OPT period to allow DCISS to process F-1 benefits such as travel authorization, I-20 requests, STEM OPT Extension and Cap Gap requests, and OPT employment and address updates.

Students are required to pay the DCISS OPT Administrative Processing Fee each time they apply for Post-Completion OPT or STEM OPT Extension.
The DCISS OPT Administrative Processing Fee for the initial 12-Month Post-Completion OPT application is $40.00

To Pay the fee:

- Log in to your DCISS account
- Click on the ‘Pay’ link for ‘F-1 OPT: Initial 12-Months’
OPT Administrative Processing Fee

- Follow the instructions on the payment site to pay the OPT Administrative Processing Fee by debit or credit card.

- To review your payment submission, click on ‘My Payments’ and a record of your payment submission will appear.
Receipt of your payment will be sent to your email address from UCLA Corporate Financial Services.

Print a copy of your payment receipt for your OPT application submission.
Please type and print the I-765 Form, or if completing by hand, use black ink only!
Select “Initial permission to accept employment”
Provide your full legal name as shown on your passport

Provide all other names you have ever used, including aliases, maiden name, and nicknames.
• The mailing address here must be valid for at least 4 months into the future from your OPT application submission date.
• This address must be an address in the U.S.
• This address may be a residential, commercial, or P.O. Box address.
• The EAD card will be shipped to the address you provide here.

If you listed a ‘U.S. Mailing Address’ that is NOT your current, physical address, select “No” and complete #7.a – 7.d.
If you answered “No” for Question #6, please provide your physical address here.
If you have ever applied for benefits from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, you may have an A-Number (also known as a USCIS-Number).

F-1 students usually do not have a USCIS Online Account Number.

- Check “No” if you have never applied for an EAD from USCIS.
- Check “Yes” if you have previously applied for an EAD. You must provide copies of your previous EADs.
- This question does not apply to previous on-campus employment or CPT.
13.a. Has the Social Security Administration (SSA) ever officially issued a Social Security card to you?

Yes ☐ No ☐

NOTE: If you answered “No” to Item Number 13.a., skip to Item Number 14. If you answered “Yes” to Item Number 13.a., provide the information requested in Item Number 13.b.

13.b. Provide your Social Security number (SSN) (if known).
If you currently do not have a Social Security Number and would like to apply for one with your OPT application, please check ‘Yes’ for Questions #14 & 15 and complete #16.a. - 17.b.

You will receive your Social Security Card in the mail 2 weeks after you receive your EAD card.

Check ‘No’ for Questions #14 & 15 if you do not want a new or replacement Social Security Card.
List all countries of citizenship, as applicable. Use Part 6 of the I-765 Form if you have more than two countries of citizenship.

List the name of the country as it was named when you were born, even if its name has changed.

Make sure your Date of Birth is in the correct format: MONTH/DAY/YEAR

(01/31/1998 not 31/01/1998)
### Information About Your Last Arrival in the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21.a</td>
<td>Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record Number (if any)</td>
<td>Enter your I-94 Number here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.b</td>
<td>Passport Number of Your Most Recently Issued Passport</td>
<td>This should match the country of citizenship on your I-20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.c</td>
<td>Travel Document Number (if any)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.d</td>
<td>Country That Issued Your Passport or Travel Document</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.e</td>
<td>Expiration Date for Passport or Travel Document (mm/dd/yyyy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Date of Your Last Arrival Into the United States, On or About (mm/dd/yyyy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Place of Your Last Arrival Into the United States</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Immigration Status at Your Last Arrival (for example, B-2 visitor, F-1 student, or no status)</td>
<td>Immigration status at your last arrival and current immigration status should be ‘F-1 Student’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Your Current Immigration Status or Category (for example, B-2 visitor, F-1 student, parolee, deferred action, or no status or category)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Number (if any)</td>
<td>You can find your SEVIS number on the top left side of your current I-20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample

Electronic I-94 Admission Record

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

Most Recent I-94

---

Admission (I-94) Record Number: 123456789 11
Most Recent Date of Entry: 2017 January 02
Class of Admission: F1
Admit Until Date: D/S
Details provided on the I-94 Information form:

Last/Surname: BRUIN
First (Given) Name: JOE
Birth Date: 1996 January 01
Passport Number: A123456789
Country of Issuance: Bruinland

I-94 Number

Retrieve a copy of your Electronic I-94 Admission Record on the CBP Website:

https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home
**Most Recent U.S. Entry Stamp**

- **Date of Last Entry to the U.S.**
- **Place of Last Entry**

**Sample**
Información sobre tu categoría de calificación

27. Categoría de calificación. Refiera a la Who May File Form I-765 sección del Formulario I-765 Instrucciones para determinar la categoría de calificación apropiada para esta solicitud. Ingrese la letra apropiada y el número para su categoría de calificación en la caja de texto correspondiente (por ejemplo, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii)).

(c) (3) (B)

Use the code (c)(3)(B) for post-completion OPT

Skip questions 28 – 31.b.
Select 1.a. to indicate that you have read and understood the questions.

Applicant’s Statement

NOTE: Select the box for either Item Number 1.a. or 1.b. If applicable, select the box for Item Number 2.

1.a. ☒ I can read and understand English, and I have read and understand every question and instruction on this application and my answer to every question.

1.b. ☐ The interpreter named in Part 4, read to me every question and instruction on this application and my answer to every question in

[ ] a language in which I am fluent, and I understood everything.

2. ☐ At my request, the preparer named in Part 5, [ ]

[ ] prepared this application for me based only upon information I provided or authorized.

Applicant’s Contact Information

3. Applicant’s Daytime Telephone Number

4. Applicant’s Mobile Telephone Number (if any)

5. Applicant’s Email Address (if any)

6. ☐ Select this box if you are a Salvadoran or Guatemalan national eligible for benefits under the ABC settlement agreement.

Provide your information as requested.
Applicant’s Declaration and Certification

Copies of any documents I have submitted are exact photocopies of unaltered, original documents, and I understand that USCIS may require that I submit original documents to USCIS at a later date. Furthermore, I authorize the release of any information from any and all of my records that USCIS may need to determine my eligibility for the immigration benefit that I seek.

I furthermore authorize release of information contained in this application, in supporting documents, and in my USCIS records, to other entities and persons where necessary for the administration and enforcement of U.S. immigration law.

I understand that USCIS may require me to appear for an appointment to take my biometrics (fingerprints, photograph, and/or signature) and, at that time, if I am required to provide biometrics, I will be required to sign an oath reaffirming that:

1) I reviewed and understood all of the information contained in, and submitted with, my application; and

2) All of this information was complete, true, and correct at the time of filing.

I certify, under penalty of perjury, that all of the information in my application and any document submitted with it were provided or authorized by me, that I reviewed and understand all of the information contained in, and submitted with, my application and that all of this information is complete, true, and correct.

Applicant’s Signature

7.a. Applicant’s Signature

7.b. Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy)

NOTE TO ALL APPLICANTS: If you do not completely fill out this application or fail to submit required documents listed in the Instructions, USCIS may deny your application.

Hand sign your name and provide the date of the signature

Read the entire declaration carefully
### Part 4. Interpreter’s Contact Information, Certification, and Signature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.a.</th>
<th>Interpreter’s Full Name (Last Name)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.b.</td>
<td>Interpreter’s Given Name (First Name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Interpreter’s Business or Organization Name (if any)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpreter's Contact Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.a.</th>
<th>Street Number and Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.e.</td>
<td>City or Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.d.</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.f.</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.g.</td>
<td>Postal Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.h.</td>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpreter’s Certification**

I certify, under penalty of perjury, that:

- I am fluent in English and which is the same language specified in Part 3, Item Number 1.b.
- I have read to this applicant in the identified language every question and instruction on this application and his or her answer to every question. The applicant informed me that he or she understands every instruction, question, and answer on the application, including the Applicant's Declaration and Certification, and has verified the accuracy of every answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7.a.</th>
<th>Interpreter’s Signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.b.</td>
<td>Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part 5. Contact Information, Declaration, and Signature of the Person Preparing this Application, If Other Than the Applicant (continued)

**Preparer’s Full Name**

1.a. Preparer’s Full Name (Last Name)

1.b. Preparer’s Given Name (First Name)

2. Preparer’s Business or Organization Name (if any)

**Preparer’s Contact Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.a.</th>
<th>Street Number and Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.e.</td>
<td>City or Town</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.d.</td>
<td>State</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.f.</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.g.</td>
<td>Postal Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.h.</td>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Preparer’s Certification**

By my signature, I certify, under penalty of perjury, that I prepared this application at the request of the applicant. The applicant then reviewed this completed application and informed me that he or she understands all of the information contained in, and submitted with, his or her application, including the Applicant’s Declaration and Certification, and that all of this information is complete, true, and correct. I completed this application based only on information that the applicant provided to me or authorized me to obtain or use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8.a.</th>
<th>Preparer’s Signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.b.</td>
<td>Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 6 needs to be completed ONLY if:
• You have previously had other SEVIS IDs
• You have ever been authorized for CPT or OPT

If neither of these apply to you, leave Part 6 blank and you are done with the I-765

If you have previously been authorized for OPT, provide your USCIS # here

If applicable, list all previously used SEVIS numbers from all previous F/J programs in the U.S., including high school, short stays, community colleges, or previous I-20s at UCLA

If you have had previous CPT and/or OPT, write ‘see attached documentation for CPT and/or OPT authorizations’ and include copies of all previous CPT and OPT I-20s and EAD cards.

(you may need to contact your previous schools if you are missing any of this information)
You have completed the I-765 Form!

Review all the information on the form for accuracy. You must submit ALL 7 pages of the I-765.

Make a copy of your completed I-765 application to keep for your records, in case there is a problem with the application.
USCIS accepts the following payment methods for the $410 OPT application fee:

- **Personal Check**: Use a check from your personal debit/bank account. Funds will be drawn directly from your personal bank account.

- **Cashier’s Check**: Go to your local bank (where you have your debit account) and request for a Cashier’s Check. A Cashier’s Check is a draft guarantee drawn from your bank’s own funds. Your bank will withdraw funds from your personal account to create the Cashier’s Check.

- **Money Order**: A money order can be purchased at a U.S. post office, Western Union or CVS/pharmacy. Cash will need to be exchanged to obtain a money order for a specified amount.

**Note**: DCISS recommends using a Personal Check or Cashier’s Check. A Personal Check or Cashier’s Check can be tracked, and are more secure payment methods since they are guaranteed by a bank.
Note: Do NOT write on the back of your Personal Check or Cashier’s Check.

Write your Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY) and your SEVIS ID # in the memo section.
U.S. Style Passport Photos

Photo Requirements
- Photo must be new and recent (taken within 3 months of your OPT application submission)
- Photo cannot be the same photo used for your F-1 Visa or Passport
- Photo must be 2 inches by 2 inches
- White background only
- Neutral expression only
- Eyes and ears must be visible
- No glasses or eyewear

Recommended locations to have your photo taken:

Campus Photo Studio
Ackerman Union A-Level
310-206-8433

FedEx Office Ship & Ship Center
Westwood Location:
10924 Weyburn Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90024 • 310-443-5501

Wilshire South Location:
1520 Westwood Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90024 • 310-475-0789

Write LAST NAME, First Name and SEVIS ID Number on back side of photos.
Form must be signed by an Academic Counselor or Student Affairs Officer (SAO). Your Academic Counselor or SAO must confirm your expected program completion date.

Undergraduate students must be enrolled in at least one degree required course taken on campus during their final quarter.
Next Steps  After OPT Application Submission to DCISS

- Return to DCISS to sign OPT I-20
  - Applicants must return to DCISS one week after their OPT submission date to sign their OPT I-20.
    - **Note:** Failure to sign the OPT I-20 on time will result in the cancellation of the OPT application.

- DCISS can **only** mail out your OPT application to USCIS for processing after you have signed your OPT I-20.

- Applicants will receive a I-797 Notice of Action Receipt Notice from USCIS within 4 weeks from the date the OPT application was received by USCIS.
Applicants can check the status of their OPT application online using the receipt number in their I-797 Notice of Action Receipt Notice: USCIS Case Status: [https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do](https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do)

Applicants will receive a Notice of Approval letter from USCIS within 3 months from the date their OPT application was received by USCIS.

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

Once your OPT application has been approved and your OPT start date has been reached, you will receive an email from SEVP with a link to create a SEVP Portal account. Follow the instructions provided in the email to create your account. If you are locked out of your SEVP Portal account, email [OPT@saonet.ucla.edu](mailto:OPT@saonet.ucla.edu) for assistance.
Note: You may only begin employment once you have physically received your EAD Card and your EAD Card ‘Valid From’ date has been reached.
EAD Card Restrictions

- 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.

**Exception**: Students with a timely filed, pending 24-month OPT STEM Extension application or a valid Cap-Gap I-20 may continue employment beyond their OPT end date without receiving a new EAD card.
Students on OPT have a total of **90 calendar days** (including weekends and holidays) of allowed unemployment time during their 12-month OPT period that begins on the start date of their EAD card.

OPT employment must be directly related to the student’s degree program/major field of study (employment directly related to minor fields of study is not allowed).

OPT employment must be appropriate for the 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. Employment for 1 employer must be at least 20 hours per week.

- **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. Employment must be at least 20 hours per week.

- **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. Employment must be at least 20 hours per week.
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 must be at least 20 hours per week.

- **Employment Through an Agency or Consulting firm:** A student on 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 U.S. 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.
After you receive your EAD:

Submit Copy of EAD Card to DCISS
- Submit a copy of the front and back sides of your EAD card to DCISS by email: OPT@saonet.ucla.edu

F-1 students on OPT are required to report the following information within 10 days of any change during their OPT period through the SEVP Portal:

1. OPT Employment Status
   - Job title and description of how the job is related to your degree
   - Start and end dates of employment
   - Company name, Employer Identification Number (EIN), address and phone number

2. Change of Contact Information
   - Change of residential address or U.S. telephone number
Cap Gap – a period in which a student’s F-1 status and OPT authorization 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 their 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 automatically extend a student’s F-1 status and OPT authorization without requiring a new EAD card.
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.

Submit the following to DCISS to request a Cap-Gap I-20:
1. Completed I-20 Request Form
2. Copy of H-1B Receipt Notice or Approval Notice from USCIS
3. Copy of front and back of EAD Card
4. Report any/all OPT employment through the SEVP Portal
5. Current Shipping Address with Postal Code
   - Select Preferred Delivery Method:
     Option 1: Regular USPS Mail (no mail tracking or expedited delivery services, free-of-charge)
     Option 2: FedEx Express Mail (tracking and express delivery services, must provide DCISS with a FedEx Account # to cover shipping fees)
     Open a FedEx Account #:
       • Online: www.fedex.com
       • In-Person: Go to a local FedEx Office location to open an account
Travel Abroad During OPT

F-1 students who have applied for OPT are able to travel overseas and return to the U.S. in F-1 status as long as they have the required documents for re-entry:

Documents required to re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 status BEFORE degree completion indicated on OPT I-20*:
- Valid Passport
- Valid F-1 Visa
- Endorsed OPT 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.)

* DCISS does not recommend students to travel abroad until they have received their OPT application I-797 Notice of Action Receipt Notice from USCIS.

Documents required to re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 status AFTER degree completion date indicated on OPT I-20:
- Valid Passport, Valid F-1 Visa, Endorsed OPT 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.)
- EAD Card
- Proof of Employment or Offer Letter (Verification document from an employer verifying your job title, job duties, duration and start date of employment written on company letterhead)
Visa Status During OPT

- F-1 students engaging in OPT will still hold F-1 status in the U.S.

- DCISS will still maintain and update an F-1 student’s SEVIS record during their approved OPT period.

- F-1 students may continue to request services from DCISS such as advising appointments, support letters and travel authorization during their approved OPT period.

- F-1 students engaging in OPT are still required to obtain a travel signature from DCISS on their I-20 to re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 status after traveling abroad. 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.
Q1: How early can I apply for OPT?
   Answer: You may apply for OPT as early as 90 days before your expected degree completion date. You may submit your OPT application to DCISS as early as 97 days before your program completion date.

Q2: How long will it take USCIS to approve my OPT application?
   Answer: Currently, USCIS requires approximately 3 months to approve an OPT application. DCISS recommends that you apply as early as possible to avoid any delays.

Q3: How do I choose my OPT start date?
   Answer: Your OPT start date can be as early as the day after your degree completion date, or as late as 60 days after.

Q4: What if I submitted my OPT application and will not be completing my degree as expected?
   Answer: If you will not be completing your degree requirements by the expected program completion date indicated 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 (e.g. unemployment time).
Q5: What if I move before receiving the EAD card?
Answer: You may risk losing your EAD card in the mail if you file a change of address with USCIS after submitting your OPT application to USCIS for processing. Please note that the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) does not forward federal mail, even if you request mail forwarding services from USPS. We recommend that you provide an address for your OPT application that will be valid for at least 4 months from your application submission date.

Q6: Can I travel abroad while my OPT application is pending?
Answer: It depends.
Yes, if you have received your OPT application I-797 Notice of Action Receipt Notice from USCIS, 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.
Q7: Which documents do I need if I want travel overseas and re-enter the U.S. after my OPT I-20 End Date?

Answer: 1. Valid Passport
2. Valid F-1 Visa
3. OPT I-20 Endorsed for Travel by DCISS
   *(each travel signature is valid for 6 months from the date it was last signed and must be valid at the time of re-entry to the U.S.)*
5. Employment Verification or Offer Letter

Q8: My F-1 visa expired. Can I travel abroad during OPT?

Answer: Yes, you may travel abroad, but you must apply for a new F-1 visa from an overseas U.S. Embassy or Consulate, as you will require a valid F-1 visa to re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 OPT status.

*Note:* it may be more difficult to obtain a new F-1 visa while on OPT, especially if you have not secured OPT employment. Please expect extended wait times for F-1 visa application processing.
FAQ

Q9: Who determines if my OPT employment is related to my degree?
   Answer: U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) leaves this discretion to students to determine.

Q10: What if my employment is not related to my degree?
   Answer: Working in a field that is not related to your degree (e.g. major) is considered unauthorized employment and is a serious violation of your F-1 status, which may result in the accrual of Unlawful Presence and/or being denied future immigration benefits in the U.S.

Q11: Can I begin employment before receiving my EAD card?
   Answer: No, you may not engage in any employment in the U.S. until you have received your EAD card and your OPT start date has been reached.

Q12: What do I do if I lost my EAD card?
   Answer: You must apply for a replacement EAD card from USCIS, which will require a new I-765 form, $410.00 filing fee, and supporting documents. Contact DCISS to schedule an appointment to apply for a replacement EAD Card.
Q13: When does my 90-day unemployment period start?
   Answer: Your 90-day unemployment period begins on the first day of unemployment after your OPT start date (as stated on your EAD).

Q14: What should I do if I am approaching my 90th day of unemployment?
   Answer: 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.

Q15: Where do I report my OPT employment information?
   Answer: Report your OPT employment status through the SEVP Portal.

Q16: Where do I report my change of address or phone number during OPT?
   Answer: Please report any changes in address or phone number within 10 days of the change through the SEVP Portal.

Q17: What happens after my OPT ends?
   Answer: 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.
Important Reminder

Please return to the Dashew Center one week after your OPT application submission date to sign your OPT I-20.

Contact Us:
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Los Angeles, CA 90095
M – F | 8:30AM – 4:30PM, 310-825-1681
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