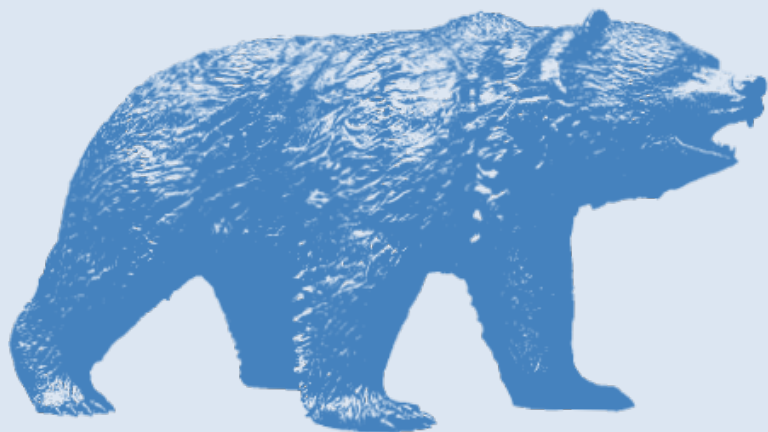# Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) Online Workshop

What is OPT?

- 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 may be eligible for an initial 12 months of OPT per higher degree level achieved.

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

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible, F-1 students:

- Must have maintained valid F-1 status for at least one academic year.

- Must <u>not</u> have had 12-months of OPT authorization for the same degree level.

- Must <u>not</u> have accrued 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorization for the same degree level.

  - Part-time CPT authorization does not affect OPT eligibility.

  - Heavy CPT usage (either part-time or full-time) can cause your OPT application to be subject to additional scrutiny.

    - Must be completing a UCLA degree program in the next 90 calendar days.

    - Must be within the U.S. with F-1 status while OPT application is pending with USCIS.

    - USCIS must receive OPT application materials before the 60-day grace period ends. The 60-day grace period begins after your "program end date" listed on page 1 of the OPT I-20.

Application Process

STEP 1: Review the entire OPT Workshop PDF on the Dashew Website

and/or attend the OPT Webinar

STEP 2: Pay the $340 Dashew Center OPT Administrative Processing Fee*

STEP 3: Submit OPT I-20 request documentation to the Dashew Center

STEP 4: Receive OPT I-20 from the Dashew Center

STEP 5: Prepare and complete OPT application forms and supporting documents

STEP 6: Submit OPT application to USCIS timely for processing

- Students may request an OPT I-20 from the Dashew Center as early as 90 days before their program completion date (as confirmed on your Verification of Degree Completion Form)

  - It is <u>highly recommended</u> that students submit their OPT I-20 request to the Dashew Center 90 days before their degree completion date.

- USCIS requires approximately 3+ months to approve an OPT application. You can check recent processing times on USCIS's website.

OPT I-20 Request Procedures

To request an OPT I-20, please:

- Update your email address in **MyUCLA** (make sure that you will have access to this email address after graduation, because it will be listed in your F-1 SEVIS record and used to create your SEVP Portal account)

And email the following documents to **dcissf1unit@saonet.ucla.edu**:

❑ $340 OPT **Administrative Processing Fee** payment confirmation*

❑ **OPT I-20 Request Form**

❑ **Verification of Degree Completion Form** (signed by college academic advisor)

       ❑ **OPTIONAL F-1 Document Shipping Request Form** (only required if you would like a paper-format OPT I-20 shipped to your address)

       Your OPT I-20 will be issued within 10 business days of a completed submission request.

You must choose your OPT start date to request your updated OPT I-20.

Please indicate your requested OPT start date on your OPT I-20 Request form.

UCLA Dashew Center for International Students & Scholars

106 Bradley International Hall
417 Charles E. Young Drive West
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1379
310-825-1681

POST-COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)
I-20 REQUEST FORM

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____
(as it appears on passport)   (as it appears on passport)

UCLA ID#: _____ SEVIS ID#: N_____

Major: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Country of
Citizenship: _____ Expected Degree Completion Term: _____

Degree Objective: ☐ Bachelor's   ☐ Master's   ☐ Doctorate

REQUESTED OPT AUTHORIZATION DATES

When choosing your requested OPT authorization dates, please consider USCIS' current processing times and review the OPT start date window listed in the OPT Workshop.

Start Date: **08/13/2024** _____ End Date: **08/12/2025** _____
                 Month   Day   Year   Month   Day   Year

* Requested OPT start and end dates cannot be changed once your OPT application has been submitted to USCIS.

OPT I-20 Request Checklist (submit via email to dcissf1unit@saonet.ucla.edu)

☐ Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) I-20 Request Form (correctly completed)
☐ $340 Online OPT Administrative Processing Fee Payment Receipt (copy of email payment confirmation)
☐ Update your email address in MyUCLA (make sure that you will have access to this email address after graduation - it will be listed in your F-1 SEVIS record and used to create your SEVP Portal account)
☐ Verification of Degree Completion Form

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	INIT: _____	DATE: _____	
	☐ Restriction Holds	☐ Current Enrollment	☐ Past Enrollment	☐ Current I-20

A Department of Student Affairs

- Students must choose their OPT start date before submitting their OPT I-20 request to the Dashew Center.

- Requested OPT start date must fall within the 60-day grace period, based on the end date listed on your [Verification of Degree Completion Form](#).

- If you find that you will not complete your degree on time or do not wish to move forward with your OPT request / application, [contact the Dashew Center](#) or schedule an appointment with an International Student Counselor for more details.

- Graduate students may set their program completion date to their defense date, filing date, or the official quarter end date.
  - Please consult with your Student Affairs Officer (SAO) to select an appropriate program completion date.

OPT Start Date Selection

Degree Completion	Program End Date	OPT Start Date Window
Fall Quarter 2023	12/15/2023	12/16/2023 – 02/13/2024
(earliest submission to the Dashew Center: 09/16/2023)		
Winter Quarter 2024	03/22/2024	03/23/2024 – 05/21/2024
(earliest submission to the Dashew Center : 12/23/2023)		
Law School Spring 2024	05/10/2024	05/11/2024 – 07/09/2024
(earliest submission to the Dashew Center : 02/10/2024)		
Spring Quarter 2024	06/14/2024	06/15/2024 – 08/13/2024
(earliest submission to the Dashew Center : 03/16/2024)		

Select any date within this period as your OPT Start Date.
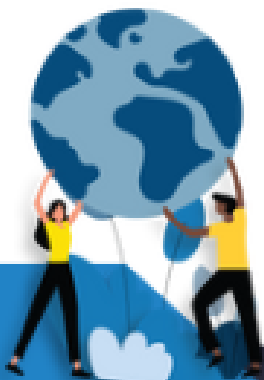
Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

Program Completion date

90 days

Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

Program Completion date

90 days

60 days

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

Application Timeline

Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

Program Completion date

90 days

OPT End Date

12 months

60 days

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

Application Timeline

Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

Program Completion date

90 days

60 days

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

12 months

OPT End Date

Students must depart the U.S., transfer, begin a new degree program, or change visa status by this date

60 days

Grace period: Students may remain in the U.S. but may not continue employment
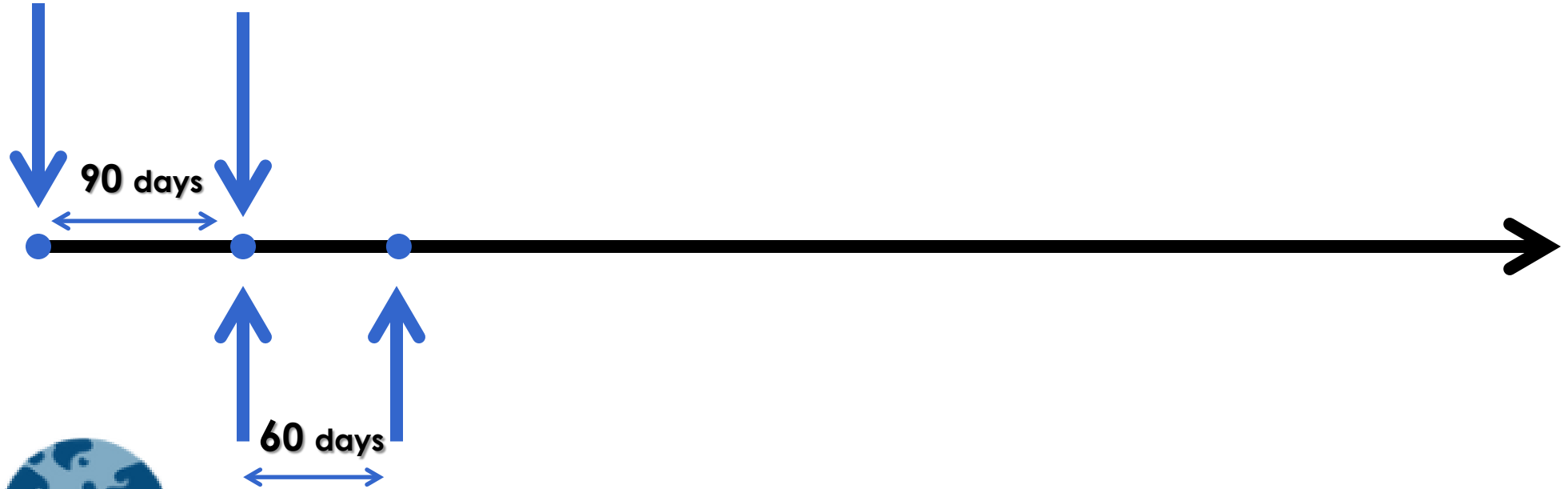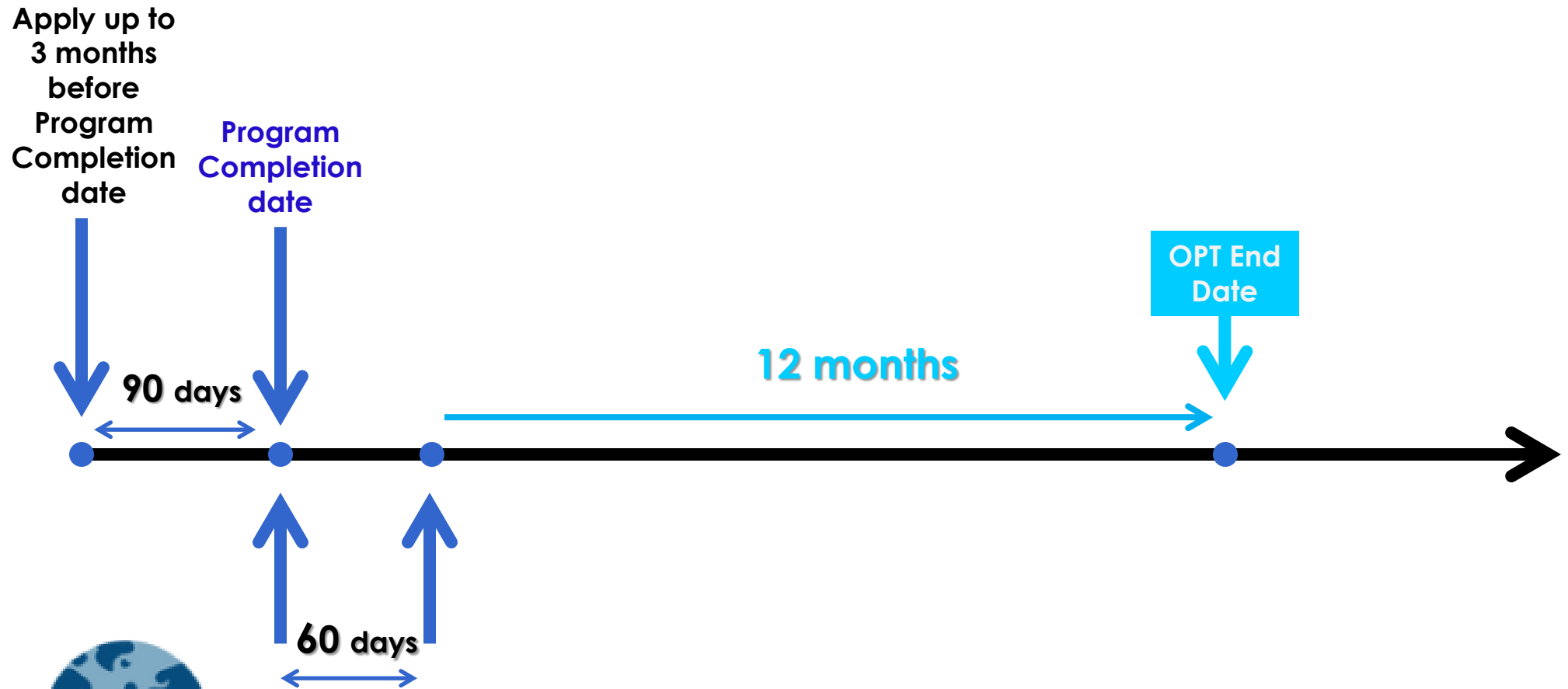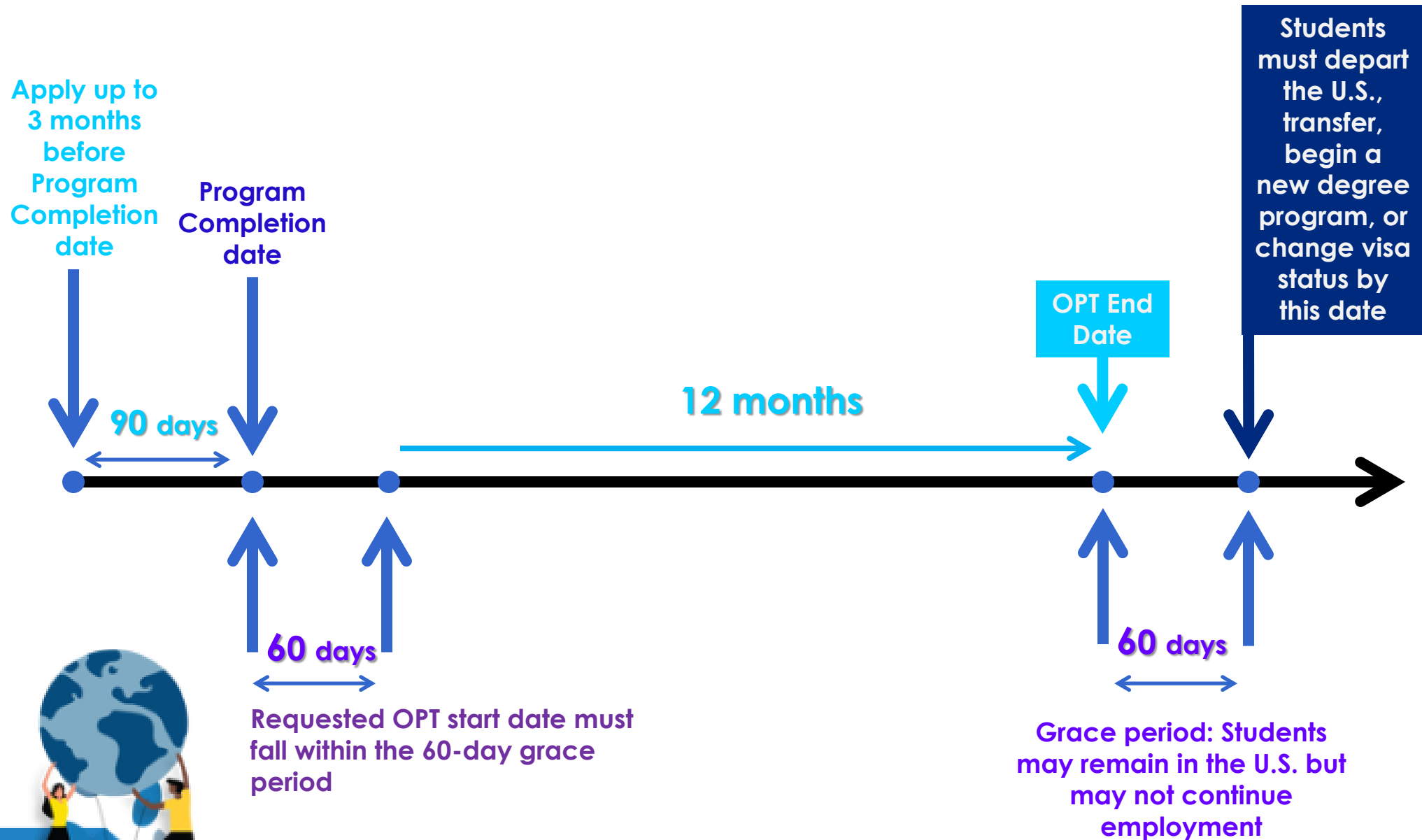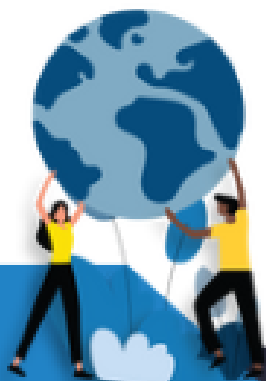
This form must be completed by an Academic Advisor / Student Affairs Officer (SAO).

Your Academic Advisor / SAO must confirm your expected program completion date.

Dashew Center staff are not able to complete this form.

Electronic signatures will be accepted.

For enrollment requirements during the final quarter, please see the next slide.

UCLA Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars

VERIFICATION OF DEGREE COMPLETION

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is designed to provide F-1 students an opportunity to gain practical experience in their field of study. Students may apply for OPT as early as 90 days before the completion date of their degree program. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) considers a student's completion date as the date the degree requirements are completed, not the date that students participate in their commencement ceremony. Graduate students may use their defense date, filing date, or the actual quarter end date as their completion date. Graduate students may not continue to work or receive funding/financial support from their department after their completion date.

Student's Name: _____

Last Name   First Name

UCLA ID #: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Month   Day   Year

TO BE COMPLETED BY ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT

I verify that the student is expected to complete their degree requirements by:

_____   Academic Term: _____

Month   Day   Year

Academic Program / Major: _____

Degree to be awarded at time of completion: ☐ Bachelor's   ☐ Master's   ☐ Doctorate

Student's Cumulative GPA: _____ Number of Units Currently Completed: _____

Additional Comments:

_____   _____

Name of Student Affairs Officer (SAO)   Signature of SAO or Academic Counselor
or Academic Counselor

_____   _____   _____

School / Department   Phone / Extension   Date

106 Bradley International Hall ☐ 417 Charles Young Drive West, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1379 ☐ Phone: 310-825-1681 ☐ dcissf1unit@saonet.ucla.edu

- Students must be enrolled in at least one in-person degree-required course taken on campus during their final quarter.

- If under enrolled during the final quarter, all students must provide a final quarter **Reduced Course Load (RCL)**.

- Students are not able to have more than one online course. If enrolled in only one course, it must be in-person.

- If a graduate student is on filing fee, filing fee approval must be reflected in the Student Records System.

What does the OPT Administrative Processing Fee cover?

The Dashew Center OPT Administrative Processing Fee pays for systems required by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to maintain a student's F-1 SEVIS record during their OPT period.

SEVIS maintenance fees are covered for currently 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 the Dashew Center, as SEVIS record maintenance is still required during a student's OPT and STEM OPT Extension period to allow the Dashew Center 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 Dashew Center OPT Administrative Processing Fee each time they apply for Post-Completion OPT or STEM OPT Extension per degree level.

The Dashew Center OPT Administrative Processing Fee for the initial 12-Month Post-Completion OPT application is $340.00

To Pay the fee:

- Log in to your Dashew Center account

- Click on the 'Pay' link for 'F-1 OPT: Initial 12-Months'

- 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.

Opt Payments

Payment History

Your payment has been successfully recorded

Order ID	Amount	Order Items	Date
5-UT010101-8DBAAE2C287FC10	$340.00	F-1 OPT: Initial 12 Months:	01/09/23 12:03 PM

URSA FOUR TESTRECORD

» My Account

» Sign Out

OPT Administrative Processing Fee

» OPT Administrative Processing Fee

» My Payments

- **A receipt of your payment will be sent by UCLA Corporate Financial Services to your email address reported in MyUCLA.**
  - Please be sure that your email address is written correctly and valid.

- **A copy of your payment receipt or screenshot of payment history is required for your OPT I-20 Request.**

If you cannot locate the payment receipt email, please provide us a screenshot of the payment history screen from your Dashew Center account.

noreply@finance.ucla.edu <noreply@finance.ucla.edu>
To: ▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨

Receipt Number: ▨▨▨▨
Current Date: 09/05/2023

UCLA eMarket reference number: ▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨

Description	Amount
VISA SERVICES FEE	$340.00
Total	$340.00

Payments Received	Amount
CC	$340.00
Visa XXXXXXXXXXX▨▨	
Authorization # ▨▨	
Total	$340.00

Thank you for the payment.

- After you submit your **OPT I-20 Request** documents to the Dashew Center via email, an F-1 Counselor will review and issue your OPT I-20.

- Once you receive your OPT I-20, please print and sign (with wet-ink signature <u>only</u>) the student attestation section at the bottom of page 1 of the OPT I-20. Next, make a copy of pages 1 and 2 to include with your OPT application materials.

- Prepare your OPT application materials for submission to USCIS by following the **OPT Application Submission Instructions**.

USCIS must receive your OPT application:

- ❑ *Within <u>30 days</u> of your OPT I-20 issue date (as indicated on page 1 of your OPT I-20). Applications received by USCIS later than 30 days from the issuance date on page 1 of the OPT I-20 will be denied.*

- ❑ *Before the <u>60-day</u> grace period ends. The 60-day grace period begins after your "program end date" listed on page 1 of your OPT I-20. Applications received by USCIS after the 60-day grace period will be denied.*

USCIS Online Filing

Once you submit your completed OPT application online, you will be issued an application receipt number and will be able to access your application receipt notice through your **MyUSCIS** account.

If OPT is approved, your EAD card will be mailed to the U.S. mailing address provided on your I-765 Form.

If you would like information about USCIS' Premium Processing of OPT applications, please visit the USCIS website **here**.

Students can file their application online or by mail. DHS recommends online filing. Here are some of the benefits of filing online:

- USCIS receives online forms faster than paper forms
- Receive receipt notice of your application immediately
- Receive USCIS notices online, and sign up for email/text notifications
- Track and review your application after submission
- Pay fees online
- Respond to requests for evidence online
- Send USCIS secure messages about your case
- Easy access to all USCIS correspondence
- Upload additional documentation to application after submission
- Update your mailing and physical address

Passport Photo Requirements

- When filing online, please follow the instructions provided in the I-765 / MyUSCIS application portal.
- You can also reference the Department of State passport photo tool here.

Options to have your passport photo taken near UCLA:

On-Campus

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

Off-Campus

FedEx Office
1520 Westwood Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90024
310-475-0789

CVS
1001 Westwood Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90024
310-209-9141

- Applicants will receive an I-797 Notice of Action Receipt Notice from USCIS after the OPT application was received by USCIS.

- Applicants can check the status of their OPT application online via their MyUSCIS or by using the receipt number in their I-797 Notice of Action Receipt Notice. USCIS Case Status: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do

- Applicants will receive a notice from USCIS with the decision approximately 3+ months from the date their OPT application was received by USCIS.

- If OPT is approved by USCIS, applicants will receive First Class mail containing their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card in about 2-3 weeks after receiving the approval notice.

  - If your OPT application has been approved by USCIS 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 with your full name and UID for assistance.

After you receive your EAD card, submit PDF copies of the front and back of your card to OPT@saonet.ucla.edu (include your UID in your email)

- 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.

<u>Exception</u>: Students with a timely filed, pending 24-month STEM OPT Extension application with USCIS, or a valid Cap-Gap I-20 may continue employment beyond their OPT end date without receiving a new EAD card. For more information, please review the STEM OPT Extension online [workshop](#).

We recommend that you provide a mailing address for your OPT application that will be valid for at least 4 months from your application submission date.

- **If you move before receiving the EAD card you may risk losing your EAD card in the mail, even if you file a change of address with USCIS after submitting your OPT application to USCIS for processing.**

- **Check your address using the USPS Address Tool.**

- **U.S. Postal Service (USPS) does not forward federal mail, even if you request mail forwarding services from USPS.**

- **If you need to change your address, you can do so in your MyUSCIS account or file the form AR-11 with USCIS online.**

If you did not receive an EAD card that USCIS mailed, you may want to contact USCIS and USPS to attempt to locate the card. You can also submit an inquiry on non-delivery of a card.

If unable to locate the EAD card, you can request a replacement EAD card from USCIS online, which will require a new I-765 form, $410.00 filing fee, and supporting documents.

If your EAD is lost, stolen, or destroyed after you received it, request a replacement EAD by filing a new Form I-765 and filing fee (if required), unless a fee waiver is requested and approved.

For more information about lost, stolen, or destroyed EAD cards, please see the USCIS EAD card website.

For other EAD card issues, please contact us at: opt@saonet.ucla.edu.

- Students on OPT have a total of **90 cumulative 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 if employment has not been reported to the SEVP Portal.

  How to calculate your days of unemployment: Add all of the days you have been unemployed from the start date of your OPT (including holidays and weekends) as stated in the SEVP Portal. This is your total unemployment time.
      Employer approved time off does not count as unemployment time. (Examples: Sick leave, vacation time, holiday closures)

  - Exceeding 90 days of unemployment will end the OPT period and you must depart the U.S. Please schedule an appointment with a Dashew Center F-1 Counselor or email OPT@saonet.ucla.edu prior to this happening to discuss options.

- If you are authorized for OPT, you must work part-time (at least 20 hours per week) or full-time.

- OPT employment must be directly related to your degree at UCLA (major area of study).

  ▪ Who determines if my OPT employment is directly related to my degree?
    ▪ U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) leaves this discretion to students to determine. Should DHS audit your OPT employment and find that your employment is not related to your degree, you will be in violation of your F-1 status.

  ▪ Working in a field that is not related to your UCLA degree (e.g., major) is considered unauthorized employment and is a serious violation of your F-1 status, which can negatively impact future immigration benefits in the U.S.

    ▪ You can refer to UCLA General Catalog or your department's website to check the learning outcomes of your degree program.

- **Paid Employment:** A student must work at least 20 hours per week.

- **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:** 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 (Contractual):** 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.

- **Self-Employed Business Owner:** A student on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. The student must be able to prove that they have the proper business licenses and are actively engaged in a business related to the student's degree program. Employment must be at least 20 hours per week.

- **Third-Party Employers:** Employment must constitute a bona fide employer-employee relationship. A student must be able to provide evidence showing they worked at least 20 hours per week while employed by the third-party employer (e.g., staffing agency, talent agency, consulting firms).

- **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.

*The Dashew Center recommends obtaining job verification documentation for all employment (dates, hours, duties, and other pertinent information)

Submit Copy of EAD Card to the Dashew Center

- Email PDF copies of the front and back sides of your EAD card to: OPT@saonet.ucla.edu

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

1. **OPT Employment Status**

   - Job title and detailed description of how the job is related to your degree
   - Start and end dates of employment
   - Part-time (up to 20 hours/week) or Full-time (more than 20 hours/week) employment
   - Company name, address, and phone number

2. **Update Contact Information**

   - Verify residential address and U.S. telephone number

Re-setting SEVP Portal Account

Within 72 hours of the OPT start date listed on the EAD card, you should receive an email with instructions to access your SEVP Portal for the first time.

If you do not receive an email from SEVP <u>after</u> your start date, please contact the Dashew Center promptly at OPT@saonet.ucla.edu

Note: The SEVP Portal activation link will only be active for 14 days.

- Students may request an updated I-20 from the Dashew Center after they receive their EAD card in the mail. An updated I-20 is not required to maintain F-1 status, but is highly recommended if a student will be traveling internationally and re-entering the U.S. after their program completion date.

  - The updated I-20 will show a student's OPT status as 'APPROVED' on page 2 and will include employment information that has been reported through the SEVP Portal.

- To request an updated I-20, please send an email with your full name and UID with the following documents attached to OPT@saonet.ucla.edu:
  - Copies of the front and back of your EAD card
  - Completed I-20 Request Form
    - Select "OPT/STEM OPT Extension Employer Update" or "Other" and fill in the reason of your request for the updated OPT I-20. Example: "Other: OPT Approved"

- Cap Gap – a period in which a student's F-1 status and OPT authorization is automatically extended by USCIS 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.

- If granted by USCIS, the Cap Gap automatically extends a student's F-1 status and OPT authorization without requiring a new EAD card. The Cap Gap must be reflected in SEVIS before the Cap Gap I-20 can be issued by the Dashew Center.

- 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 (granted by USCIS).

- To request a Cap-Gap I-20:
  1. Report any/all OPT employment through the SEVP Portal
  2. Send an email with your full name and UID with the following documents to OPT@saonet.ucla.edu
     - Completed I-20 Request Form
     - Copy of H-1B Receipt Notice or Approval Notice from USCIS (I-797A or I-797C)
     - Copy of front and back of EAD Card
     - Completed F-1 Document Shipping Request Form (only required if you would like a paper-format I-20 from the Dashew Center shipped to you)

If OPT application is Pending with USCIS: The Dashew Center does not recommend traveling outside of the U.S. once the OPT application has been submitted to USCIS.

After OPT application is Approved by USCIS: Documents required to re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 status after OPT has been approved and EAD card received:

- Valid Passport (with at least 6 months validity from re-entry date)
- 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)

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

- The Dashew Center will maintain an F-1 student's SEVIS record during their approved OPT period.

- F-1 students may continue to request services from the Dashew Center 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 the Dashew Center 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.

Questions?

OPT Webinar

dcissf1unit@saonet.ucla.edu