

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT): General Information



Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an opportunity for you as an F-1 student to work in the United States for one year in an area related to your course of study. OPT is usually done after the educational program is complete (post-completion OPT), but may also be done while the educational program is still in progress (pre-completion OPT). To participate in OPT, you must apply for and receive an **Employment Authorization Document (EAD card)**. Read more about [OPT: General Information](#).

OPT GUIDELINES

- To be eligible for OPT, you must have been enrolled full-time and maintaining F-1 status for one full academic year.
- OPT must be directly related to your major area of study.
- OPT lasts up to 12 months, and must be completed no later than 14 months after completing your educational program.
- No offer of employment is required to apply for OPT, but you are expected to work during OPT. For post-completion OPT, **you are limited to a maximum of 90 days of unemployment**.
- If you cannot find a job while on OPT, speak with International Programs as soon as possible.
- Please note: students at the associate's level are not eligible for the 17-month STEM extension.

OPT APPLICATION

- You may apply for post-completion OPT **up to 90 days before** completing your educational program, and **no more than 60 days after** completing your educational program.
- First, you will need to submit an OPT Request Form to International Programs. This form is available in the D2L Sandbox for F-1 International Students.
- Next, International Programs will recommend you for OPT and issue you a new Form I-20 showing the OPT Recommendation. You will need to pick up a copy of this signed Form I-20.
- Then, you must submit the Form I-765 and supporting documentation to USCIS, including all issued Forms I-20. See [OPT: How to Apply](#) and [Form I-765 instructions](#) for details.
- USCIS must receive your application **no later than 30 days after International Programs recommends you for OPT in SEVIS**.
- Be sure to keep a copy of your application for your records, and ask the post office for delivery confirmation if you chose to mail the application. Note: Online submission is also available.
- Speak to International Programs before planning any travel outside the U.S. while you are applying for OPT.

AFTER RECEIVING YOUR EAD CARD

- You may not begin work until after you receive your EAD card.
- It is important that International Programs has accurate contact information for you and your employer while on OPT. Notify International Programs of any changes in address, phone number, or employment. International Programs will then update SEVIS with your most current information.
- Keep detailed records of your employment and employment dates.
- Speak to International Programs before traveling outside the U.S.