



Optional Practical Training (OPT) Frequently Asked Questions:

What is OPT?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an employment authorization benefit for an F-1 student that allows practical work experience in the field of study. OPT employment authorization can typically be granted for up to 12 months.

This benefit is available at every degree completion level.

What are the different types of OPT?

- Pre-completion OPT – is OPT that is authorized to be worked before the students program end date. Work is limited to 20 hours per week while school is in session. Students who are eligible to register and plan to do so may have approval to work full time when school is not in session. Time spent on Pre-OPT reduces the 12 months available for Post-completion OPT.
- Post-completion OPT – is OPT authorized to be worked after the student’s program end date. Full or Part- time employment (over 20 hours per week) for up to 12 months at each degree level.
- Post-completion STEM Extension – a 24 month extension available for certain degree programs (over the initial 12 months). Employer must be E-verified. Student must apply for an extension to their I-765 with USCIS prior to their post-completion OPT expiration date. Academic Advisor/DSO updates and prints new I-20 with extension request.

Who is Eligible?

- Students in valid F-1 status that have been enrolled full-time for at least one full academic year (two semesters).
- F-1 students in last semester (90 days) of degree program, or within 60 day grace period following their program end date.

What is the Criteria?

- Employment requested must be directly related to the student’s course of study.
- Working hours must be 21 or more hours per week.

When to Apply for OPT?

- A student can apply for OPT up to 90 days prior to their program end date or up to 60 days after his/her program end date.
- Though it is possible to file the I-765 (OPT) application after graduation, it is recommended that you apply no later than 30 days after your program completion date.

- On average it take 90 days for USCIS to process OPT requests. Filing timely ensures that you don't negate any of your OPT eligibility. It's best to work with your Advisor/DSO to ensure you don't miss any filing deadlines.
- You have a 90 day cumulative unemployment restriction that applies during the one year of OPT, an additional 30 days is granted if you receive a 24 month STEM extension.
 - If you accumulate 90 days of unemployment your SEVIS record is auto-terminated.
- You will also need to apply for a social security number (if you don't already have one). Please refer to the Social Security Administration website, www.ssa.gov for more details. Your advisor or DSO can assist with the application process or provide helpful FAQs.

USCIS OPT Application Steps for Student:

1. Consult with the International Student Advisor to discuss options/eligibility and review what materials are needed to apply
2. Complete the Davenport University OPT forms and schedule an appointment with your International Advisor/DSO.
 - a. If you have a position lined up ensure you have an offer letter or job description that details work being completed, dates of employment, hours being worked and name/address/contact number of your employer/supervisor.
 - b. If you don't have a position lined up, it is recommended that you have some job leads/applications submitted at the time of USCIS filing; the 90 days of unemployment begins when USCIS approves your request.
3. Complete the Form I-765 (Application for Employment Authorization) located on USCIS website either hard copy or electronically. Site: www.uscis.gov/forms

How to apply with USCIS: Find the most updated instructions at [USCIS](#)

Complete the I-765 form:

- a) Part 1 of the application: Check appropriate box "I am applying for"
 - Initial permission to accept employment – Pre or Post OPT
 - Replacement – only if lost EAD
 - Renewal of my permission to accept employment - STEM
- b) Part 2 of the application: #1-12 is personal/contact information (#8-9 leave blank)
- c) #13a enter SSN information
- d) If you don't have a SSN you can apply for one at the time of filing, then answer questions 13b-17b
- e) #18-20 is citizenship/birth place information
- f) #21a, the I-94 number can be found at <http://www.cbp.gov/travel/international-visitors/i-94-instructions>. (print copy)
- g) The answers to #'s 21b -23 are in your passport or the info is found on the same site as your I-94 number (select, get travel history, then print).
- h) The answer to #24-25 is F1 student
- i) The answer to #26 is found in the upper left corner on page 1 of your I-20



- j) The answer to #27 is:
 - (c)(3)(A) for Pre-Completion OPT
 - (c)(3)(B) for Post-Completion OPT
 - (c)(3)(C) for STEM extension
 - k) #28a -28c, Must be able to provide STEM degree, the employer's name and E-Verify ID number
 - l) #29-31 are not applicable for OPT applicants
 - m) Part 3, #1a-7b, Signature and attestation. Wait to sign and date the form until your appointment with your advisor
- 4. Bring the following with you to your appointment with your International Advisor:**
- a. The completed Davenport OPT Application and OPT Employer Information Form
 - b. The unsigned Form I-765
 - c. Check or Money order for \$410 filing fee, made out to “**US Department of Homeland Security**”.
 - d. Your passport or a clear copy of your passport identity page
 - e. Your I-94 number (<http://www.cbp.gov/travel/international-visitors/i-94-instructions> print entry page and travel history page).
 - f. Copies of any EAD cards that you have been previously issued.
 - g. The two passport photographs (see note below for requirements).
 - h. Copies of all previous I-20's issued (do not send originals).
 - i. Graduation/Program verification (needed for STEM only).
 - i. Official or Unofficial copy of transcripts.
 - ii. Copy of Diploma that shows Degree level and program of study.
 - j. Please also provide the following information to your DSO:
 - i. Home address in your country and US address.
 - ii. Info regarding traveling outside the U.S. while on post completion OPT.
 - iii. Must make contact with P/DSO at least once every six months to ensure contact and employment information is still valid and correct.
5. The International Advisor/DSO will review the materials and prepare a new I-20 for you, with OPT requested, to include in your packet/application to USCIS.
6. Once I-20 is issued you have 30 days to send in your application and filing fee to USCIS (must be received by day 30 or less) or, prior to the end of the 60 day grace period, whichever comes first. ***Be aware of your dates and don't miss a deadline. It could mean a denial of your application and having to leave the country.***
7. Within 1-2 weeks of sending your application you will receive a Notice of Action (form I-797). This is proof that you have an application pending with USCIS. The Notice of Action will contain your Receipt Number (“LIN number”). You can use this number to check your case status online at www.uscis.gov. or at <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard.do>.
- a. If you receive an RFE (request for evidence) from USCIS you need to provide them additional information – do so immediately to avoid having your application denied.
 - b. Contact your DSO for assistance with your RFE request.

Note: Photograph Requirements: Get two pictures taken as per the instructions in the I-765 application pamphlet. Take the instruction pamphlet to the photographer and have him/her read the instructions before they take the picture. It must be done exactly as indicated.

**Things to Remember:**

1. Part time OPT prior to the program completion (pre-completion OPT) is cut in half to determine full time hours. For example: 6 months part time would equate to 3 months full time, leaving you with 9 months of post completion OPT.
2. Your EAD (employment authorization document) card or RFE will be sent to your US address. If you are traveling (review with DSO first) ensure that someone is able to retrieve your mail and notify you when these arrive. You must present EAD card to re-enter the country. You also have a time limit to respond to the RFE or your application will be denied.
3. The EAD card will show the start date selected by the DSO on your I-20 or the date your application was approved, if after the requested start date. Do not start work prior to the date on your EAD card.
4. If your application was approved after the requested start date your end date will be adjusted to reflect the full 12 months of approved OPT.
 - a. This will only happen if you are still within the 14 month window (2 months grace period plus 12 months OPT availability).
 - b. The EAD card end date can't exceed that 14 month window. So depending on when you apply it could reduce the amount of approved OPT time you will receive.
 - c. For example: if your application is approved after your 60 day grace period, the 12 months of OPT allowed won't fit into that 14 month window, so OPT time will be lost as a result of that.
5. Keep approval and processing time in mind when you are filing your application with USCIS. Even if you don't have employment lined up meet with your Advisor/DSO prior to graduation to ensure you know your options for filing.
6. The DSO can extend the employment start date up to day 59 of the grace period to allow the student time to seek and accept a position.
7. Ensure that once a position is accepted you notify your DSO within 10 days so SEVIS can be updated with the employer information.
 - a. Complete the OPT Employer Information Form.
8. If you change positions, move or any other contact information changes notify your DSO within 10 days of that change so SEVIS can be updated.
9. Once your OPT ends you have 60 days to leave the country or apply for a change of status. If you opt to change status it is advised that you work with an immigration attorney to assist you with that process.
10. Employment beyond the expiration date on your EAD card is a violation of immigration law and cause for termination of status.

For questions please contact your Academic Advisor/DSO or email international@davenport.edu.