



Office of International Affairs & Studies

Eligibility

As an F-1 student, you have the opportunity to apply for employment authorization from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This employment authorization, known as Optional Practical Training (OPT), allows you to work in the U.S. following the completion of your degree. You are eligible for one year of OPT for each higher degree level achieved.

OPT Employment Types

All OPT employment must be related to your degree program:

- Paid employment – you may work part-time (at least 20 hours per week) or full-time
- Unpaid employment – you may work as volunteers or unpaid interns and the work must be at least 20 hours per week

Application Timeline

You can apply for OPT as early as 90 days before your completion date and until 60 days after your completion date. Please be aware that USCIS takes approximately 3 months to approve your OPT application. Therefore, we encourage you to apply early enough to avoid delays or loss of time of your OPT.

Application Procedures

Step 1: Attend the OPT Workshop

Step 2: Prepare all Application Materials (listed on page 2) and be sure to keep copies of everything for your own records

Step 3: Make an appointment with the Director of International Affairs and Studies to discuss OPT and receive an updated I-20 with OPT recommendation. Take all Application Materials to meeting.

Step 4: Mail the Application Materials to one of the addresses listed below:

For U.S Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:

USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For Express Mail and courier deliveries:

USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034

Application Materials

- Fee of \$410. Make check payable to “US Department of Homeland Security”. You may send a money order or personal check from a US bank. NO CASH. Attach check to front of I-765 with paper clip, not a staple.
- 2 U.S. Style Passport Photos. In pencil, write your name and admission number (1-94#) on the back of each photo. Photo requirements: must be taken professionally within 30 days of submitting the application, color photo with white background, 2” x 2”
 - Original I-765 form (which you can download from <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>). Use BLACK pen for signing and/or filling out form by hand. Post-completion OPT eligibility category: (c)(3)(B)
- A copy (NOT original) of page 1 and 2 of the new I-20 from the Office of International Affairs and Studies with the recommendation for OPT on page 2. This I-20 cannot be more than 30 days old or OPT could be denied!
- A copy of ALL previously issued I-20 documents dating back to beginning of F-1 status
- A copy of your I-94 record
 - Both sides of your I-94 card (even if blank) OR
 - Printout of the electronic I-94 record from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home#section>
- A copy of the photo page (identification page) of your passport
- A copy of the most recent F-1 visa page in your passport (even if expired)
- A copy of any previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD) OPT card, IF you had one
- Evidence of program completion (copy of diploma or transcripts – see STEM requirement).

Choosing a Start Date

You are eligible to pick an OPT start date any time within the 60 days after your program completion date, as noted on the OPT Recommendation Form. Factors to consider when choosing a start date:

1. For standard post-completion OPT, the requested employment start date may not be more than 61 days after the student's program end date, and all standard post-completion OPT must be completed within the 14-month period following the completion of study.

2. Choose the earliest day that you might want to start working (you CANNOT begin to work BEFORE the start date on your EAD). If you choose a start date farther into the future and then receive an earlier offer, you will not be able to change the date.

3. If you want the latest possible day to start your work authorization, the last day you may choose as your start date for the EAD is 60 days after your program completion date.

*You may not change your OPT dates once you have filed the application with USCIS!

Reminders:

- **REQUIRED UPDATES.** You are required to report addresses, name changes, employment information (including employer name, address and start date), and any interruption in employment, within 10 days so that the Office of International Affairs and Studies can update SEVIS.
- You have a total of 90 days of unemployment from the start date of your EAD card to find employment. Each day (including weekends) that you are not employed is counted toward the 90-day unemployment limit.
- You should not leave the country while OPT is pending (you must have your EAD card) and without a job offer.
- SEVP recommends that the student maintain evidence for each job documenting the position held, proof of the duration of that position, the job title, contact information for the student's supervisor or manager, and a description of the work.