Optional Practical Training

Overview
What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

- **Purpose:** Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a temporary employment authorization for International students in F-1 Student visa status. OPT provides an opportunity for students to apply the knowledge acquired from their academic program to a work experience directly related to their current major field of study.

- **Length:** 12 months at each higher education level. You may become eligible for another 12 months of OPT when you move to a higher education level in the US. Simply beginning another degree program does not automatically confer this eligibility.

- **Jobs:** While on OPT, students’ jobs must be directly related to their current major(s), not minor.

- **How to obtain OPT:** Students must request OPT recommendation from the Office of International Programs (OIP). OIP makes this recommendation by issuing a new I-20 with the requested OPT start and end date. Students must apply for OPT by mailing this new I-20 with other supporting documentation to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

If approved, USCIS will issue an “Employment Authorization Document”, or EAD card to students.
Types of OPT

You can apply for OPT during your program of study, which is known as Pre-Completion OPT, or after you finish your program of study, known as Post-Completion OPT. You also must clearly indicate if you wish to apply for part-time or full-time authorization. Part-time authorization will allow you to work 20 hours or less per week, and full-time authorization will allow you to work for more than 20 hours per week.

**Pre-Completion OPT (Work permission before program completion date):**

- **Vacation OPT (part-time or full-time):** Takes place during summer or winter vacation
- **While School-in-Session OPT (part-time only):** Takes place during Spring or Fall semester while you are studying full-time
- **Thesis OPT (part-time or full-time):** Takes place after you have completed all of your course requirements except for your thesis
Types of OPT

Post-Completion OPT (Work permission after program completion date). Full-time only

- Take place within 60 days of the day you completed your program
- Although you are working full-time without attending school at all, you are still considered in F-1 Student status. You must comply with the F-1 regulations and fulfill your reporting responsibilities while on Post-Completion OPT

Periods of OPT used before the completion of studies will be deducted from the total 12 month period available. For example, if you have been approved for 6 months of full-time Vacation OPT before you complete your program, you will have 6 months of full-time OPT period left after you complete your program.

If you apply for a period of Pre-Completion OPT and you then still have part of your 12 month total remaining, you must submit application and application fee again in order to apply for Post-Completion OPT

- Two months of part-time OPT = One month of full-time OPT
- Example: If you have been approved for 4 months of part-time While-School-in-Session OPT, you will have 10 month of full-time OPT remains
Types of Employment

As we mentioned in the “What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?” section, your job under OPT must be directly related to your current major(s), not minor. If the relationship between the job and your field of study is called into question by USCIS in the future, the burden of proof is on you to demonstrate that relationship.

The types of employment allowed during the OPT include:

- **Paid employment.** Students may work part time (at least 20 hours per week when on post-completion OPT) or full time in a job related to their field of study.
- **Multiple employers.** Students may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the student’s degree program.
- **Short-term multiple employers (performing artists).** Students, such as musicians and other performing artists may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration. If requested by USCIS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing a list of all gigs.
- **Work for hire.** This is also commonly referred to as 1099 employment where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than employment relationship. If requested by USCIS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.
Types of Employment

- **Self-employed business owner.** Students on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. In this situation, the student must work full-time. 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 through an agency.** Students on Post-Completion OPT must be able to provide evidence showing they worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.

**Unpaid employment**

Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns, where this does not violate any labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week for students on Post-completion OPT. These students must be able to provide evidence from the employer that the student worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.

It is recommended that you maintain evidence for each job: the position held, duration of that position, the job title, contact information for the student’s supervisor or manager, and a description of the work. You must always report employment by completing the “Post-Completion OPT Employment Reporting Form “at [http://oip.sfsu.edu/oip/pcptreporting](http://oip.sfsu.edu/oip/pcptreporting)
90-Day Unemployment Limit
For Post-Completion OPT Only


“During Post-Completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial Post-Completion OPT authorization.”

You must work at least 20 hours per week in a qualifying position to be considered “Employed”. If you have a variable schedule, within a month, it should average out to at least 20 hours per week.

With the new November 2015 SEVIS updates, an F-1 student who fails to report employment information may be “auto terminated” by SEVIS after 90 days due to the 90-day unemployment limit. For this reason, you must take care to keep your employment information current with OIP.
90-Day Unemployment Limit
For Post-Completion OPT Only

To avoid violating F-1 status, prior to reaching the 90-day unemployment limit, a student should take one of the following actions:

- Apply to continue his or her education by a change of level or transferring to another SEVP-certified school
- Depart the United States
- Take action to otherwise maintain legal status

If one of those actions is not taken, a student who has exceeded the period of unemployment is considered violated his or her status. The student must depart the US immediately as there is no grace period will allow the student to legally remain in the US once the he or she has reached the 90-day unemployment limit!
Apply for OPT
Eligibility

You must meet the following criteria in order to be eligible to apply for OPT:

- **Be in valid F-1 status**
- **Enrolled full-time.** Minimum 12 units for undergraduate students or 8 units for graduate students. You are also eligible to apply for OPT if you have approved Reduced Course Load (RCL)
- **Fulfilled one year full-time requirement.** You must have been enrolled full-time for at least one full academic year prior to submitting an OPT application. One year enrollment may be fulfilled at SF State, a previous university, or between multiple universities
- **Be in good academic standing.** Defined as a minimum G.P.A. of 2.0 (Undergraduate students) or 3.0 (Graduate students)
- You are physically maintaining F1 status and attending classes in the US. No studying abroad or taking online classes in your final semester at SF State
- You have not completed more than 364 days of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
- You have not already been approved for 12 months of OPT at the current degree level
- Job offer is not required
Program Completion Date

The timing to apply for OPT is usually determined by when would you like your OPT authorization to start, and when is your program completion date.

The program completion date is NOT the date your graduation application is approved nor the date SF State grant your degree. Program completion date is the date that you complete all your program requirements. For OPT application purpose, here is a list dates that are considered program completion date:

- The last day of final exams (Undergraduate and graduate students)
- The day you submit the thesis/final project (Graduate students only)
- The day you do your oral defense (Graduate students only)
- The day you give your final recital (Graduate students only)
Determine Your OPT start date

**Pre-Completion OPT:** You can pick any date to start OPT during the year as long as they are eligible. Pre-Completion OPT must end on or before the program completion date.

**Post-Completion OPT:** Your requested start date must be within 60 days of your program completion date. For example, if your program completion date is December 18, 2015, the earliest date you can request your OPT to start is December 19, 2015 and the last date is February 16, 2016. Post-Completion OPT will end 12 months (if you did not use any OPT time during your study) from the start date, or within 14 months of the program completion date.

As we mentioned in the OPT overview section, you will need to obtain an I-20 with OPT recommendation from OIP, then send the new I-20 and OPT application to USCIS. Please note it takes up to 5 business days for OIP to issue you an I-20 with OPT recommendation, an at least 90 days/3 months for USCIS to process your application and mail the EAD to you. **Plan ahead to avoid unnecessary stress!**
Your I-20 with OPT Recommendation

Once OIP determine you are eligible to apply for OPT, we will issue a new I-20 with your requested OPT start and end date.

If you are completing your program and are applying for Post-Completion OPT, we will also change the expiration date of your I-20 to your program completion date. This means:

- Only apply for Post-Completion OPT if you are 100% sure that you graduating. Once the expiration date of the I-20 has been changed you are expected to complete your program before this expiration date. You cannot request I-20 extension once the expiration date has passed
- If you requested an I-20 with OPT recommendation and later found out you cannot complete your program on time, you must contact OIP immediately!
- You will still be using this I-20 for travel while you are on Post-Completion OPT even though the expiration date has been changed to your program completion date and has passed already
When to Apply for Pre-Completion OPT

For Pre-Completion OPT, we recommend you to submit your application to USCIS at least 90 days before your requested OPT start date:

- Prepare your OPT application
- Apply 90 days before OPT start date
- OPT start date

One year of full-time requirement meet

Period allowed for Pre-Completion OPT

Program completion date
When to Apply for Post-Completion OPT

For Post-Completion OPT, we recommend you to submit your application to USCIS up to 90 days before your program completion date. You may also submit application during the 60-day grace period after the program completion date.

You must be physically in the US while applying for OPT. If you leave the US during the 60-day grace period without submitting the OPT application to USCIS, you lose your opportunity to apply for OPT.
When to Apply for Post-Completion OPT

For Post-Completion OPT, we recommend you to submit your application to USCIS up to 90 days before your program completion date:

1. **Prepare your OPT application**
2. **Apply 90 days before program completion date**
3. **OPT start date must be within 60 days of the program completion date**
4. **Program completion date**
5. **One year of full-time requirement meet**
6. **OPT will end 12 months from the start date, or within 14 months of the program completion date**
Typical Scenarios for Post-Completion OPT

Scenario 1:
Student with a job offer submits OPT application early

On February 18, John mails his application for Post-Completion OPT to USCIS. He is completing his program on May 18 and chooses June 15 as the OPT start date because he has a job offer beginning that day.

He receives the EAD on May 1. His employer is pleased to see proof of the work permission early even though he cannot start working until June 15, as noted on the EAD.

John decides to go home for one month to celebrate his program completion.
Typical Scenarios for Post-Completion OPT

Scenario 2:

Student with no job offer submits his OPT application rather late

John doesn't have a job offer or time to search for one until after he finishes school. He chooses the latest date possible to start his Post-Completion OPT -- July 17 -- which is the 60th day after his program completion date: May 18. He knows that he will be legal to stay in the US as long as he has submitted the OPT application on time. John finally mails his OPT application on June 15.

On July 17, John still hasn’t received his EAD, so he can’t work. He receives his EAD on September 15 and it expires the following year on July 16 (14 months from May 18).

John has lost 13 days of his 12 month OPT because his application was approved after the latest available OPT start date.
Deadlines

USCIS takes deadline very, very seriously. Any applications received after the deadline will be denied without the possibility for appeal.

- OIP will stop accepting request for I-20 with OPT recommendation 50 days after your program completion date. This deadline will be posted on the [website](#).
- USCIS must receive your application within 60 days after your program completion date.
- USCIS must receive your application no later than 30 days after your I-20 with OPT recommendation issue date – this means you should mail your application to USCIS quickly!
- Once your submit your OPT application to the USCIS, the OPT dates cannot be changed. Please be thoughtful when choosing the dates. If you wish to withdraw your OPT application please contact OIP. The application fee will not be refunded to you.

**Helpful Tips**

- **Apply for Pre-Completion OPT at least 90 days before the date you wish to start work.**
- **Apply for Post-Completion OPT at least 90 days before you complete your program.**
Prepare Your OPT Application
Steps to Apply for OPT

**Step 1: Understand OPT and how it works**
All applicants are required to review this OPT online information workshop to complete the necessary forms and put together the application.

**Step 2: Prepare and submit OPT materials to OIP**
Submit your completed application to OIP for an I-20 with OPT recommendation.

**Step 3: Mail your application**
An F-1 International Student Advisor will review your application materials and issue a new I-20 for your OPT application.

You will need to pick up your new I-20 and all the application materials at the OIP front desk once we contact you (within 5 business days, excluding weekends and holidays), and then mail them to the USCIS.
OPT Application Checklist

Submit the following documents to OIP:

- A blank envelope (at least 9 inches by 11 inches) – the envelope must be big enough to fit all your OPT application materials
- OPT Application Cover Sheet
- Completed and signed Optional Practical Training Authorization Form (2 pages)
- Completed & Signed Form I-765 (click Form I-765 (606 KB PDF) to download Form I-765)
- Original or photocopy of your most current I-20
- Photocopy of the identification page(s) in your passport (must include name, current expiration date, and photo)
- I-94. Print your I-94 from https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/. If you entered the U.S. prior to April 30, 2013, provide a front and back copy of the I-94 card stapled to inside of your passport
- Photos: Two 2" by 2" US Passport style photos. Write your name and I-94 number gently on the back of each photo

Additional documents, if applicable:

- Photocopies of any SF State I-20 which shows Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorization
- Photocopies of your previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
Choose the type of the OPT you wish to apply. Check ONE box only

- Pre-Completion OPT
  - Part-time during the student’s summer or winter vacation if you intend to register for the following semester
  - Full-time during the student’s summer or winter vacation if you intend to register for the following semester
  - Part-time while school is in session

- Post-Completion OPT
  - Full-time after completion of graduate course work requirements excluding a thesis or dissertation
  - Full-time after completion of all degree requirements (Post-Completion Practical Training, PCPT)

I would like OPT work authorization from 12/20/2015 to 12/19/2016

Write down your requested OPT start date and end date. The OPT end date is always a year from the requested start date, minus a day.

Example:
- Start Date: 12/20/2015
- End Date: 12/19/2016
OPT Authorization Form

The 2nd part of the form needs to be completed and signed by your Academic Advisor at Major Department (Not the Advising Center).

If you are a business or HTM major: This form must be signed by the advisor in Student Services Center, College of Business (Room 112), not your faculty advisor. If you are an MBA/MSA major this form must be signed by Christopher Kingston, Director of Student Services, Business Graduate Programs.

TO BE COMPLETED BY ACADEMIC ADVISOR AT MAJOR DEPARTMENT

*Business and HTM major students must get a signature from BUS 112*

This form is being presented by an F-1 international student who is seeking authorization from USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) for a period of practical training related to her/his field of study.

I verify that the student is currently in good academic standing and is making normal progress toward the degree.

Expected program completion date: 12/18/2015 (This is the last day of final exams/oral exam submission of thesis).

Graduate Students Only:

Please complete this section if the student is applying for Post-Completion Thesis Practical Training:

Completion date of all required course work except for thesis or dissertation:

Date

"I hereby confirm that the information provided in this section is true and correct. I would like to recommend that this student be allowed to apply for Optional Practical Training in order to secure a position in his/her field of study."

Advisor’s Signature

Name & Title (please print clearly)

Department (please print clearly)

Phone
date

San Francisco State University
Office of International Programs

OPT Authorization Form, Page 1
Read the OPT Student Responsibilities Checklist on the 2nd page of the OPT Authorization Form.

Check each box to indicate that you fully understand your responsibilities, and sign at the bottom (in the signature box).
If you are applying for OPT for the very first time, check the box for “Permission to accept employment”

- Fill out the I-765 on the computer and print it out. Do not fill it out by hand.
Item # 3: U.S. Mailing Address

The address you put here is where the EAD will be mailed.

- This address needs to be valid for at least 3 months, the length of time it may take to process your OPT application.
- If you think you might move in the months after you mail your application, use a reliable friend or family member's address to receive your EAD. Put your friend or family member’s name in the Other Name Used field. C/O means “in care of”
- The address you put here be in California. If you wish to use an address outside the California, visit [http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses](http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses) for the appropriate USCIS lockbox to send your OPT application.
- You may change your mailing address after you receive a [Form I-797C, Notice of Action](http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses), a receipt notice with your case number, from USCIS.
**Item # 9: Social Security Number (SSN)**
If you have never worked in the U.S., you may not yet have a SSN. If this is the case, you can put “N/A” (“Not Applicable”). You will be able to apply for your SSN when you get the EAD.

**Item # 10: I-94 Number**
On this item, you will use your current I-94 number. This is an 11-digit number found on the top left corner of your I-94 card. If you entered the U.S. after April 30, 2013, you can also obtain this number at [https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/)

**Item # 11: Previous Employment Authorization**
Check “yes” if you have received an EAD. Fill in the next two lines with the information related to that previous work permit. A photocopy of that EAD must be included with your application package. If you have lost your EAD, write “lost EAD” in this space. If you have never had an EAD, check the “no” box here. If you have worked on campus or have used CPT, you will still check “no” here.
Item #12: Date of Last Entry into the U.S. or about (mm/dd/yyyy)
This is the date of your most recent entry into the U.S. This entry date can be found on the admission stamp on your passport or on http://www.cbp.gov/i94

Item #13: Place of Last Entry into the U.S.
This is the name of the city where you landed in the U.S. This information is also can be found on the admission stamp on your passport (usually as a code like “SFR” for San Francisco). If you drove across from Canada or Mexico, write the name and the city where you entered

Item #14: Status at Last Entry
This is the status you had upon entering the U.S. For example, you may have last entered with a H-4 dependent visa and changed status to F-1
Item # 15: Current Immigration Status

Your current status should be F-1 student. If you are not in F-1 status or is currently out of status, you should speak to an advisor at OIP.

Item # 16: Eligibility Category

Use the following codes depending on the type of OPT you are requesting:

- (c)(3)(A) Pre-Completion OPT
- (c)(3)(B) Post-Completion OPT
- (c)(3)(C) 17-month STEM Extensions

Item # 17: (c)(3)(C) Eligibility Category

Only those individuals who are currently applying for the 17-month extension need to complete this section.

If you entered (c)(3)(A) or (c)(3)(B) on item #16, you are not required to fill out this item.
Sign your name, fill in your telephone number and the date of your signature at the bottom of the form.

Your signature must fit between the lines on the form. If your signature is too big, your application will be returned to you and delay your work permission. Be conservative and use a signature smaller than your normal handwriting.
Two 2” by 2” US Passport Style Photos

The photos you are required to use for the OPT application **MUST** meet the specifications of US passport style photos. Write your name and I-94 number lightly on the back of each photo in case they get separated from your application.

- To see a full description of these specifications, go to the U.S. Department of State web site at [http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/photos.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/photos.html)

- Most places that take passport photos are already familiar with the specifications.
Two 2” by 2” US Passport Style Photos

- Your photo should show your full face, front view, eyes open
- Make sure the photo shows your full head from top of hair to bottom of chin; height of head should measure 1 inch to 1-3/8 inches (25 mm to 35 mm)
- Your head should be centered head within frame
- Make sure eye height is between 1-1/8 inches to 1-3/8 inches (28 mm and 35 mm) from bottom of photo
- The background should be plain white or off-white
- There should be no distracting shadows on the face or in the background
- Make sure you have a natural expression
Pick Up Your OPT Application Materials

➢ After you submit the completed OPT application materials to OIP, your request will be reviewed by an F-1 International Student Advisor. Once OIP determined you are eligible for OPT, a new I-20 with OPT recommendation will be issued within 5 business days (excluding weekends and holidays)

➢ You must come back to OIP and pick up your new I-20 and the rest of the OPT application materials at OIP front desk 5 business days (excluding weekends and holidays) from the day you submitted the OPT application materials

➢ If your new I-20 and the rest of the OPT application materials are ready for pick up in less than 5 business days, OIP will e-mail you a pick up notification

➢ The Pick-up notification from OIP will only be sent to your SF State e-mail account. The notification will NOT be sent to your Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo, QQ, 163 or any other none SF State e-mail accounts
Mail Your OPT Application
Prepare Your OPT Application for Mailing

Step 1: Prepare your OPT application

- Form I-765
- Photos: Two U.S. passport-style photographs. Write your full name and I-94 number gently at back of your photos and place the photos in a small envelope.
- Filing Fee: USD$380. Fee can be paid by personal check. Make check payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”. Your photos and the personal check should be paper clipped on top of the Form I-765
- Photocopies of the I-20: make photocopies of your new I-20 and sign it with a blue ink pen. Sign under the “Student Attestation” section at the bottom of page 1
- I-94. Print from http://www.cbp.gov/i94 or attach photocopies of both the front and back sides of your I-94 card
- Photocopy of your passport. The photocopy must include name, current expiration date, and your photo

Additional Documents (if applicable)

- Photocopies of the I-20(s) with Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorization
- Photocopies of your previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
Mail Your OPT Application to USCIS

STEP 2: Mail Your OPT Application

If your address is in California, mail the above documents to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For U.S. Postal Service:</th>
<th>Private Courier (FedEx, DHL or UPS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USCIS, PO Box 21281</td>
<td>USCIS, Attn: AOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85036</td>
<td>1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S, Suite 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(OIP recommend that you to send your application by Certified Mail and request Return Receipt – additional fee will apply)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your address is outside California, visit [http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses](http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses) for the appropriate USCIS lockbox to send your OPT application.
Read the Mailing Instruction!

- A **“OPT Application Mailing Instructions”** will be placed on top of your OPT materials.

- Read the instructions carefully before you mail your application fee and OPT application to USCIS!

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**OPT APPLICATION MAILING INSTRUCTIONS**

Note: this instructions sheet is NOT part of your application.

**STEP 1: Prepare Your OPT Application**

- **Form I-765**
  - Write your full name and I-94 number gently at back of your photo and place the photo in a small sleeve.
  - Filming Fee: **US$85.** Fee can be paid by personal check. Make check payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security.” Your photos and the personal check should be stapled or clipped to the top of the Form I-765.
  - Photocopies of the I-94 front and back sides of your I-94 card.
- **Photocopy of your passport.** The photocopy must include name, current expiration date, and your photo.

**Additional Documents (if applicable)**

- Photocopies of the I-20 with Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorization.

Keep your OPT Application Cover Sheet, OPT Authorization Form, original I-20 and this instruction sheet with you. Do not send them to USCIS.

**STEP 2: Mail Your OPT Application**

If your address is in California, mail the above documents to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For U.S. Postal Service</th>
<th>PrivateCourier (FedEx, UPS, or DHL)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USCIS, PO Box 21241</td>
<td>USCIS, Attn: AOE9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85010</td>
<td>100 E.leigh Ct, Suite 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(OIP recommends that you send your application by Certified Mail and request Return Receipt – additional fee will apply.)

If your address is outside California, visit [http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses](http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses) for the appropriate USCIS location to send your OPT application.

It is your responsibility to send your application to USCIS as soon as possible. Your application must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the I-20 issue date. Your OPT application must be received no later than 30 days after you complete your degree requirements. Failure to send your OPT application in timely manner may result in denial. If you change your mind and decide not to proceed with your OPT application, you must inform USCIS.

**STEP 3: Follow Up With Your OPT Application**

USCIS will mail Form I-797 Notice of Action to you after they receive your OPT application. Your receipt number is printed on this I-797. You can check the status of your OPT application by entering your receipt number under “Check your case status” at [http://www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).

Reminder: F-1 regulations require you to inform OIP on the names and address of each employer during the Post-completion OPT. Please report your employment information at [http://oip.dfaa.edu/oip/postoptreport](http://oip.dfaa.edu/oip/postoptreport).
With Certified Mail, you may track your application package online. In some cases, it may take up to 10 days for your application sent through the USPS to be officially received.
Follow Up and Approval
As long as you have submitted your application to USCIS, your F-1 student status remains valid while you are waiting for the approval even if there is a gap between your completion date and the start date of the OPT. During this “gap,” you can remain in the US or travel abroad and re-enter in F-1 status.

USCIS will mail Form I-797C Notice of Action to you after they received your OPT application. This is the proof that your application is being processed and your application fee has been received by USCIS. You will need it to inquire about the status of your OPT application and for travel outside the US.

Your receipt number (usually starts from “WAC”) is printed on this I-797C. You can check the status of your OPT application by entering your receipt number under “Check your case status” at http://www.uscis.gov/.

The Received Date on the Notice of Action: This is the date when the USCIS begins processing your application. It may not be the actual date they received your application but it is when your case was entered into the system.

The Notice Date on the Notice of Action: This is the date the Notice of Action is issued.

If you do not get your Notice of Action within 6 weeks after mailing your application, call USCIS National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283.
If there is a problem with your application, USCIS will send you a notice by mail called the “Request for Evidence (RFE).” In most cases, the USCIS will not call you at the telephone number you put on the Form I-765.

We strongly advise you to contact a F1 adviser at OIP if you receive an RFE. An RFE does not mean that your application has been rejected. It simply means that you need to provide the missing documents before your EAD can be issued.

USCIS give applicant 30 days to respond to RFE. Your OPT application will be denied if you fail to provide missing documents within 30 days of RFE issue date.

Getting an RFE will delay the processing of your OPT application usually by 4 weeks. For this reason, you should read the “OPT application mailing instructions” when you pick up the OPT materials at OIP, and send the COMPLETED application package to USCIS.

 Helpful Tips

- The standard processing time for OPT application is 90 days/3 months
- Spring/Summer tends to be peak period
USCIS will send you an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) upon approval.

If you receive the EAD before your start date has arrived, you cannot work until the start date noted on the EAD. You cannot start working until you have received the EAD and your start date is current.

If you do not receive your EAD within 90 days of your “Received Date” on Form I-797C Notice of Action, call USCIS National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283.
Maintaining F-1 Status While on Post-Completion OPT
Maintaining F-1 Status

For Post-Completion OPT Only

Although you are not attending school and working part-time or full-time, you are still in F-1 status while you are on Post-Completion OPT. You are required to maintain your F-1 status in order to legally working in the US.

To maintain F-1 status you must:

- Stay employed. You must work at least 20 hours per week to be considered maintaining F-1 status. Your employment under OPT must directly related to your current major(s), not minor
- Report your address change at SF State Student Center. OIP will report your address change to US Immigration
- Request travel signature on the 2nd page of your I-20 before you leave the US. If you are working fulltime and can not submit your travel signature in person, please mail the “F1 Document Request Form” with your most current I-20 to OIP. We will process your request and mail the I-20 back to you. You will also need a valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport in order to return to the US. See the following “Travel Outside the United States” section for details
Maintaining F-1 Status
For Post-Completion OPT Only

➢ Report your employment information by completing the “Post-Completion OPT Employment Reporting Form” at http://oip.sfsu.edu/poptreporting:
  
  o Complete the form and upload an image of your EAD
  
  o You can have multiple employments. The form will allow you to provide up to two employment information. If you have more than two employment or have various gigs, write the additional information in the “Comments” area
  
  o If you changed job please complete the form again

➢ You are not required to provide your salary information nor employment contract to OIP

➢ Report your employment as soon as you found a job – if you do not report your employment or forgot to do so, your SEVIS record will be terminated in 90 days!
Maintaining F-1 Status
For Post-Completion OPT Only

- You can only take recreational/avocational classes (Yoga or Wine tasting classes…etc) while on Post-Completion OPT.
  You cannot enroll in any academic degree nor certificate programs while on Post-Completion OPT. If you plan to obtain a higher degree and your academic program will start before your OPT end date, you must request your SEVIS record to be transferred to your new school. Your OPT will end on the date SF State transfer your SEVIS record out
- You will have 60-day grace period after your OPT end date. You must leave the US or transfer to another school to continue your F-1 status within the grace period
Other Things to Know
For Post-Completion OPT Only

- You should have health insurance while you are in the US. If your employer does not provide health benefits, or you are in the process of looking for jobs, please make sure you still have insurance coverage. You may purchase the CSU-Sponsored Health Insurance plan while you are on OPT or find other insurance plan for yourself.
- You can apply for a Social Security Number (SSN) after you receive your EAD and your OPT has started.
# Travel Outside the United States

## For Post-Completion OPT Only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before Completing Your Program and Before Getting Your EAD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ A valid passport</td>
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<td>✓ A valid F-1 visa stamp</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Your OPT with a valid travel endorsement signed on page 2 by an advisor at OIP. The travel endorsement is valid for 6 months while on PCPT</td>
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<td>✓ The EAD (Employment Authorization Document)</td>
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Travel Outside the United States
For Post-Completion OPT Only

- When OIP issues the I-20 for your OPT application, the DSO will sign the 2nd page. This means it will not be necessary for you to request a travel signature if you are planning to travel soon after you applied for OPT. However, each signature is good for 6 months. You should request another signature if you are travelling outside the U.S. towards the end of your OPT.

- Don’t leave the US for long periods of time during the OPT year. A few weeks of vacation is reasonable, but if you are gone for several months, you may encounter difficulty in re-entering. Remember, unemployment is limited to 90 days.

- Be careful about trying to re-enter the US close to the expiration date of your OPT. You may not be allowed to re-enter as an F-1.

- Students who need to apply for a new visa should consult OIP prior to travel to discuss the visa application process and possible risks.

- Don’t attempt to re-enter the US in a status other than F-1 unless you are willing to give up your OPT permanently.

- Be prepared to tell the US immigration officer at the US port of entry about your plans while on OPT. They may want to know what have you done to find a job? What kind of job do you plan to look for? What will you do after the OPT is expired? How will you support yourself while you are job-seeking?
This is the end of the workshop.

Good luck and we wish you all the best!