Special instruction for OPT applicants (Spring 2020 graduating students only)

Last updated: April 1, 2020

This document provides answers to frequently asked questions for F-1 international students who are graduating in Spring 2020 and wish to apply for the 12-month Post-Completion OPT. Due to the fluid nature of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) situation, the answers in this document may be subject to change.

Q: What if this is my last semester, can I apply for OPT while abroad?

By law, you are not allowed to apply for OPT while you are out of the U.S. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has not indicated any exceptions for international students applying for OPT outside the U.S.

Therefore, if Spring 2020 is your last semester at SF State and you decide to go home, you must apply for OPT BEFORE you leave the U.S. Otherwise, you may lose your OPT eligibility.

Q: How do I apply for OPT as a Spring 2020 graduate?

Step 1: Submit Documents to OIP

- You must submit your OPT application via email at f1@sfsu.edu as the F-1 International Student Advisors will be working remotely at this time until further notice. Please email scanned copies of the following items:
  - **OPT Request Form** (signed by your Academic Advisor or an email from your Academic Advisor)
  - If you choose to apply for OPT without an advising signature, note that OIP will continue with your request, but if you are not eligible to apply for OPT, your OPT will be denied and you may lose your opportunity to apply again.
  - Most recent I-94: printout from www.cbp.gov/i94
  - Email us your Passport expiration date (No need to scan your passport)

- You are not required to email a copy of your passport, I-20, and/or Form I-765, since there is sensitive personal data on them. If you choose to send them to us, OIP will review these documents for you.

- What start date should you choose? You have the flexibility of choosing a start date **between June 3, 2020 to August 1, 2020**. However, due to the evolving and unknown
situation, we suggest that you choose a late OPT start date. The OPT start date can be as late as August 1, 2020 with an end date of July 31, 2021.

**Step 2: Receive documents from OIP via email**

- OIP will email you a digital copy of your I-20 with OPT recommendation. **Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, SEVP is officially authorizing OIP to email this document to you as a one-time exception.** Please print out this I-20, sign it with BLUE ink, and follow the instruction to mail the I-20 with OPT supporting documents to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as soon as possible.
- OIP will keep the original documents and have it available to you when the university re-opens. Please note that this is not a typical procedure, but we are emailing your I-20 as an exception to the current circumstances.
- Once OIP resumes regular operation hours, email f1@sfsu.edu with your full name, ID, and mailing address you would like us to mail your I-20. At this point, you may choose to purchase E-ship. Note that we cannot process E-ship requests until the OIP resumes regular operation, so please do not submit a request until you receive an email from OIP that we have resumed our normal hours of operation.

**Step 3: Mail documents to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)**

- Make sure to mail your application to USCIS as soon as possible using the “**Mail your application to USCIS**” instructions on the website. Your application will be denied if USCIS does not receive it within 30 days of your OPT Requested I-20 print date.

**Step 4: If you wish to travel after applying for OPT**

- You must receive your I-797C Notice of Action (OPT receipt) from USCIS before you leave the U.S.
- Fill out a **F-1 Document Request Form** for an Updated OPT I-20. You may email the request to f1@sfsu.edu. The typical process time is 5 business days. You will receive an OPT Pending I-20
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will provide the most up to date information on Travel plans. Please click on the link for more information: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html)