
Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization before completing their academic studies (pre-completion) and/or after completing their academic studies (post-completion). However, all periods of pre-completion OPT will be deducted from the available period of post-completion OPT.

Types of OPT

All OPT must be directly related to your major area of study. If you are an F-1 student, you may be eligible to participate in OPT in two different ways:

Pre-completion OPT: You may apply to participate in pre-completion OPT after you have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year at a college, university, conservatory, or seminary that has been certified by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) to enroll F-1 students. You do not need to have had F-1 status for the one full academic year; you can satisfy the "one full academic year" requirement even if you had another nonimmigrant status during that time.

If you are authorized to participate in pre-completion OPT, you may work part time (20 hours or less per week) while school is in session. You may work full time when school is not in session.

Post-completion OPT: You may apply to participate in post-completion OPT after completing your studies. If you are authorized for post-completion OPT, you may work part time (20 hours or less per week) or full time.

If you participated in pre-completion OPT, USCIS will deduct that amount of time from your post-completion OPT authorization period. For example, if you participated in 10 months of pre-completion OPT, you would be eligible for only up to 2 months of post-completion OPT.

Applying for OPT: See OPT Application Procedure

Generally, you must:

1. Request that your designated school official (DSO) at your academic institution recommend the OPT. Your DSO will make the recommendation by endorsing your Form I-20, Certification of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status, and making the appropriate notation in the [Student and Exchange Visitor Information System \(SEVIS\)](#).
2. Properly file [Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#) with USCIS, accompanied by the required fee and the supporting documentation as described in the form instructions.

OPT Important Information:

1. **An F-1 student must have been enrolled for one full academic year to be eligible**
2. **Employment must be directly related to the student's major area of study**
 - a. SEVP recommends that students maintain evidence for each job documenting the position held, proof of duration of that position, the job title, contact information for the student's supervisor or manager, and a description of the work

- b. If it is not clear from the job description that the work is related to a student's degree, SEVP recommends that a signed letter be obtained from the student's hiring official stating how the work performed is related.
3. **CPT Reminder:** F-1 students who engage in an aggregate of 12 months or more of full-time curricular practical training at the same educational level become ineligible for optional practical training at that level.
 - a. If you have participated in CPT you should review your eligibility with your DSO
4. **The Form I-765 must be completed by the student and a copy maintained in with the student's file.**
 - a. The Form I-765 can be filed with USCIS up to 90 days before the program end date and up to 60 days after the program end-date.
 - b. The Form I-765 must be received by the USCIS no later than 30 days of the date the DSO enters the OPT recommendation.
5. **F-1 students are still required to maintain their status and reporting requirements while on OPT**

SEVP Portal for OPT and Reporting

OPT SEVP Portal: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/assets/sevp_portal_student_user_guide.pdf

On March 23, 2018, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) launched a new [SEVP Portal](#) to assist F-1 students on post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) and STEM OPT to report limited personal and employer information to their Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) immigration record.

There are a few things you should know about this new SEVP Portal:

1. The new SEVP Portal is designed to help students meet specific OPT reporting requirements. The new portal will allow you to report your US residential, mailing addresses, and phone number, and to add or edit your OPT employer (for post-completion OPT only).
2. Use of the SEVP Portal will allow you to report *some* of your required information directly to SEVP and to monitor your record of employment in SEVIS. If you choose to create a SEVP Portal account, you will have view access to the employer information listed in your SEVIS record and will be able to make updates to certain fields.
3. You are still required to report personal information and OPT employer information to Jackson College throughout the duration of your OPT. Whether or not you choose to create a SEVP Portal account, you must still take the following steps to meet your reporting requirements and keep your Jackson College and SEVIS records up-to-date:
 - a. Maintain an up-to-date "US Immigration" and "OPT Employer" address
 - b. Submit a copy of your approved Employment Authorization Document (EAD), and end of employment notifications
4. **Watch for an email invitation sent to you directly from SEVP.** Once your OPT or STEM OPT is approved and the start date of your OPT is current, you will receive an email to set up a SEVP Portal account from the email address: do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov. Please make certain that you are **only** responding to emails and opening links from this trusted email address.

OPT Reporting and General Requirements

1. **You must report all employment**, including employer name, location, and description of work. It is recommended that all records be retained if needed to prove how work is related to the students major. This can be done through the student portal. This should be completed within 10 days of any change.
2. **You must report all interruptions of employment.** This will count toward the aggregate total of 90 days of unemployment for a student on OPT.
3. **Restrictions on Unemployment:** If you are approved for post-completion OPT, you may not accrue more than an aggregate of 90 days of unemployment during the entire 12-month OPT period. **You must be engaged in at least 20 hours of OPT activity per week to count as active employment; periods with activity of less than 20 hours per week will be counted toward unemployment accrual.** We strongly recommend that you keep thorough and accurate records of your OPT experience/employment in case you are ever required to show proof of your OPT activities.
4. **There are no restrictions on the maximum hours you may work once you have been authorized for post-completion OPT;** you may work part-time (at least 20 hours per week), full-time or overtime, and may work for multiple employers. You may only work after receipt of the EAD, only for the dates as specified on the EAD, and only in the field of study related to the degree on which you OPT was recommended
5. **Traveling outside the U.S.** You should consult with your international student institute DSO BEFORE traveling outside the U.S. if you have applied for OPT to begin after the completion of your studies. You should not travel outside the U.S. after completing your studies unless you have received your EAD. In order to reenter the U.S. in F-1 status during OPT after completion of studies, you will need their EAD, Form I-20 with the OPT endorsement, a travel signature less than six months old signed after receiving the EAD, a valid F-1 visa, and a valid passport. You should also carry proof of your employment or other valid OPT activity, or a job offer. If you have not yet secured OPT employment in your major field, we would advise you not to travel abroad after your degree completion as you may not be readmitted to the U.S. in F-1 status.
6. **Beginning a new program of study.** Authorization for OPT is automatically terminated if you officially transfer your SEVIS record to another school or begin study at another educational level.
7. **H-1B “Cap-Gap” Extension of Status and Work Authorization.** Your F-1 status and OPT employment authorization will be extended if you are the beneficiary of a timely filed H-1B petition requesting change of status and an employment start date of October 1st of the following fiscal year. This benefit applies to all students on post-completion OPT. The extension of status and work authorization automatically terminates upon the rejection, denial or revocation of the H-1B petition filed on your behalf.
8. **60-Day Grace Period.** Once you have completed your period of OPT, you are permitted to remain in the United States for up to sixty days to prepare for departure from the U.S. You are not permitted to continue employment during this period. Departure from the country while end the 60 day period. You may choose to transfer or change a program level during the 60 day grace period.

9. **Change of Program Level.** If you intend to continue your education immediately following completion of OPT, you must obtain an I-20 for the new program of study within 60 days of the end of your OPT and must begin the new program of study within five (5) months of the end of your OPT. If your program of study will begin more than five months after the end of the OPT, you will need to leave the U.S. within the 60-day grace period and request a new “initial attendance” I-20 to reenter to begin the new program of study.