OPT
WORK AUTHORIZATION FOR F-1 VISA HOLDERS

WHAT IS OPT? Temporary work authorization

The purpose of OPT is to gain training in your field of study for up to *12 months*

*If you did any pre-completion OPT, you would not be eligible for the full 12 months

ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY FOR OPT

- Job offer NOT required
- Full-time enrollment for at least 1 year of academic study
- Takes place after completion of ALL degree requirements (or in final stages of thesis/ dissertation completion)
- Present in the United States at time of application
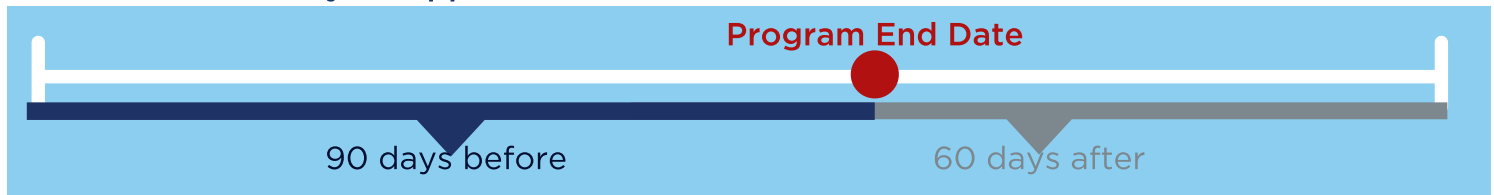
You are not eligible for OPT if you had:

- Full-time CPT for more than 364 days at current education level
- Already been awarded OPT at the same or higher degree level

SELECTING YOUR START DATE

Know your I-20/Program End Date because it determines the OPT application timeline.
- Earliest start date can be day after program end date
- Latest start date can be 60 days after program end date

USCIS must receive your application within this time frame:

Program End Date

90 days before | 60 days after

AND within 30 days after ISSS issues your new I-20

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS - 2 STEPS

Step 1 - Apply to ISSS
- Submit Optional Practical Training (OPT) record through ISSS Portal with the following:
    - Form I-765 (follow these tips here)
    - $150 12 month OPT processing fee

Step 2- Apply to USCIS
- ISSS will give you a new I-20, suggestions for your I-765, and a checklist of documents to send to USCIS. View the list of documents here.
- Mail everything (including $410 filing fee) to USCIS
- Processing time can be at least 90 days

OPT

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
ONCE YOU HAVE APPLIED

EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS

Your position must be:

- In your field of study
- Appropriate to level of education
- Full-time (more than 20 hours/ week)**

During the pandemic, the government is allowing students on OPT to work for less than 20 hours/ week

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- Update ISSS when you
  - Receive an EAD
  - Receive new immigration documents (visa, passport, name change etc.)
  - Start a new position/ end a position*
  - Address change - within 10 days after move
  - Depart U.S.
- Submit OPT Employment Update record with changes in employment
- Updates to ISSS are required | SEVP Portal is optional

You are allowed a maximum of 90 days of unemployment

TRAVEL ON OPT - NOT Recommended

Only travel if:
- You are employed in your field of study AND
- Have a valid F-1 Visa

If you travel, you must have the following documents:
- Valid Passport (valid for 6 months after reentry)
- Valid visa
- I-20 with OPT recommendation and travel signature
- Valid EAD
- Employment verification letter

60 DAY GRACE PERIOD

When OPT ends, within 60 days:
- Depart the U.S. before 60 day grace period ends
- Transfer to a new academic program
- Apply for change of status to another visa type

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