

## Interested in POST-Completion OPT (Optional Practical Training)?

### POST-Completion OPT

- To be eligible, you must be on an F-1 visa, be in status in SEVIS, and will have completed all requirements for your degree or certificate before your OPT start date.
- After completing every requirement for a degree or certificate, standard, post-completion OPT can be authorized for up to 12 months.
- OPT can be authorized with or without an offer of employment. In other words, you can apply for OPT before finding a job.
- You must apply for OPT for any type of work, even unpaid jobs, often called volunteering or internships.
- OPT employment must relate to your field of study (your major).
- You must work more than 20 hours per week. SEVIS/USCIS considers 20+ hours of work in a week to be full-time. Fewer than 20 hours per week is part-time.
- Employment can be for multiple employers.
- OPT employment can be anywhere in the U.S.
- OK to travel while on OPT – AFTER you have received your EAD card! Your I-20 still requires an endorsement (signature) on page 2 for travel, as usual. However, while on OPT, the endorsement is good for 6 months (instead of the usual 12 months).
- A SEVIS transfer to a new school immediately ends OPT. Change to a new education level also terminates OPT authorization.
- Never work past your date of authorized employment!.

### Completing the Requirements for a Degree

“Completing a program” means that you must have completed each and every requirement to receive a degree or certificate before working.

The date that you can call your last day of the program depends on what requirements your program has. Obviously, you must take and pass all required courses for your degree or certificate. Some programs require a comprehensive exam or final project during your last term as well as regular classes.

- If passing a Comprehensive Exam (the “Comps”) is required to earn your degree, the (last) day you take the comps counts as the date of your last requirement. (Of course, if you do not pass the comps, do not apply for OPT, or cancel your OPT application if you have already applied.)
- If a thesis or a project is required, then the day you complete that requirement is the day you complete your program.
- If your last semester of regular classes completes the program, then the day you are in your last class is the day you complete the program requirements.
- The graduation ceremony does **not** count as a requirement.

*Note: Throughout the rest of this handout, “Degree” will be used to mean “Degree or Graduate-Level Certificate.” Students in the GCBA, Graduate Certificate in Business Administration, program are eligible for everything discussed on this handout, with one important thing to keep in mind: If GCBA students use OPT after earning the GCBA, they are not eligible for OPT after earning a master’s degree. They have used all of their graduate-level OPT.*

## Timing and Deadlines

***There are specific times you can APPLY for Post-Completion OPT, and there are specific times you can WORK while on OPT. These are different time periods with different deadlines.***

### **Time You Can APPLY for OPT**

You can SUBMIT an APPLICATION for OPT:

- Up to 90 days prior to completing your degree program OR
- Up to 60 days after completing your degree program

### **Time You Can REQUEST OPT EMPLOYMENT to begin**

You can REQUEST to START WORKING ON:

- Any day within the 60 days following completion of your program requirements.

### **USCIS must RECEIVE the OPT application packet**

- Within 30 days after the OPT recommendation was entered into SEVIS. See page 2 of your printed Form I-20 for the date it was entered.

## Steps to Apply for Post-Completion OPT

**1. The first step in applying for OPT is determining your START DATE. Request to start employment on any day within the 60 days following completion of your program requirements.**

- Students who already have a job lined up usually want their start date to be right after finishing their last requirement. You can ask for OPT to start as early as the day after you complete your program.
- Conversely, students who will be looking for a job usually want their start date to be late into the 60-day grace period. You can ask for OPT to start up to day 59 of the 60-day grace period.
- Request OPT by submitting a Post-Completion OPT Request form to ARC in EU 200.
- If eligible for OPT, a DSO in ARC recommends OPT in SEVIS and then your I-20, showing OPT information on page 2, is reprinted. The DSO and you sign page 1 of the I-20. This is the I-20 that is sent to USCIS as part of the application packet (see #3 below).

## Steps to Apply for Post-Completion OPT - Continued

### 2. Fill out Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization.' Form I-765 is the application for Post-Completion OPT. Make sure you use the most current edition of Form I-765.

- Apply on line at <https://myaccount.uscis.dhs.gov/> or go to <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> for a PDF version that can be printed.
  - Remember to sign the form! Be careful when signing it. Keep your signature completely within the box! Use black ink only.
  - If necessary, you can print a blank form and fill it out by hand but you must use a black pen only. Do not use highlighters or white correction tape.
- Where appropriate: If something does not apply to you, write 'none,' or "n/a" for "not applicable." Do not leave it blank. This is to avoid any confusion or questions at USCIS. However, some items clearly do not require 'n/a' or 'none.' Use your own discretion.
- If you have never, not once in your life, received a Social Security Number, answer  
NO – on Item 13.a., and  
YES – on Item 14 and 15  
Go to Items 16 and 17
- If you have received a Social Security Number at any time, for any reason, answer  
YES – on Item 13.a. (even if do not know the number).  
Try very hard to fill in that number on 13.b., and  
NO – on Item 14  
Go to Item 18.
- Item 27 - Use **( c ) ( 3 ) ( B )** for Post-Completion OPT
- Part 6 Additional Information (page 7) – Use this page to report any previous SEVIS ID numbers or previous CPT or OPT. You will attach copies of evidence of any of these, so give a very brief description of each. Use one box for one description; use 3.d., 4.d., 5.d, etc. (skip 1, 2, 3.a., 3.b., and 3.c., etc.)
  - If you had CPT or OPT before, provide the SEVIS ID and a little description.
  - If you had a different SEVIS ID number on an I-20 before, explain ("*I went to school in the U.S. in 2018, a language program in Boston University, on SEVIS ID N0120987654, and returned on a new I-20 (SEVIS ID N0031124567) in 2019*" for example.)
  - If none of these applies to you, leave Page 7 (Part 6) blank.
- Make sure Form I-765 is filled out as completely as possible – and it is signed. If you did not submit it online, send in the original Form I-765.

## Steps to Apply for Post-Completion OPT – Continued

### WHEN APPLYING ONLINE, follow these steps

**3. Prepare required documents for uploading. Use a scanner or take pictures of each document, or as it is called, “evidence.” Be prepared to pay fee by credit card, debit card, or use your U.S. bank routing and checking account numbers for the payment to be taken direction from your checking account.**

**a. Go to <https://myaccount.uscis.dhs.gov/> and begin application.**

**b. Upload the following, as asked:**

- 2 Identical U.S. Passport-Style Photos \*\*
- Your recently issued I-20 that shows OPT dates on page 2.
- Copies from your Passport:
  - Identity pages (with your name, picture, expiration and/or renewal dates, etc.),
  - Visa, and
  - The most recent entry stamp in your passport, or a copy of your electronic I-94, available at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>
- Copies of previous I-20s, especially if you have had other SEVIS ID numbers, or if you have had previous CPT or OPT authorization.
- If applicable, a copy of any previous EAD cards (Employment Authorization Document).

**c. E-sign your application and type your full legal name in the space provided.**

**d. Pay the \$410 application fee.**

- You will receive a receipt notice with your receipt number (it begins with the letters “IOE.”)

**4. Later, log in to your USCIS online account.**

## Steps to Apply for Post-Completion OPT – Continued

### TO MAIL IN OPT APPLICATION, follow these steps

#### 3. Prepare the application packet, assembled in this order:

- \$410 Check or Money Order – payable to “Department of Homeland Security.” Spell it out; do not abbreviate. Write your name and SEVIS number in the Memo section of check or money order. You can check for the most current fee at <https://www.uscis.gov/forms/our-fees>.
- 2 Identical U.S. Passport-Style Photos – In pencil or felt pen, lightly write your name and SEVIS # (or A-Number, if any) along the back edge of the photos.
- Completed Form G-1145, e-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance, available at [www.uscis.gov/g-1145](http://www.uscis.gov/g-1145).
- Original Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization
- Your recently issued I-20 that shows OPT dates on page 2. It is OK to send a copy of your I-20 and keep the original.
- Copies from your Passport:
  - Identity pages (with your name, picture, expiration and/or renewal dates, etc.),
  - Visa, and
  - The most recent entry stamp in your passport, or a copy of your electronic I-94, available at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>
- Copies of previous I-20s, especially if you have had other SEVIS ID numbers, or if you have had previous CPT or OPT authorization.
- If applicable, a copy of any previous EAD (Employment Authorization Document) cards.

#### 4. Mail the OPT application. Make sure to use the type of service that tracks packages.

If you use express mail or a courier service (UPS, FedEx, etc.), send to:

**USCIS**

Attn: NFB AOS  
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S  
Suite 100  
Phoenix, AZ 85034  
(800) 375-5283

If using U.S. Postal Service (USPS), send to:

**USCIS**

P.O. Box 21281  
Phoenix, AZ 85036

### While on OPT

- If OPT is authorized, USCIS sends an EAD card (Employment Authorization Document), or Form I-766, to student, via regular mail, to the U.S. address that was on the application (Form I-765).
- You cannot start work before you have received the EAD, AND you cannot start work before the start date on the EAD card.
- Make sure a DSO has your correct email in SEVIS. That is a field in SEVIS that you cannot edit yourself.
- **Look for an email from SEVP about setting up your SEVP Portal Account. The Portal allows you to update your own physical address, mailing address, and phone number(s), in addition to editing all employment information. This information is vital to maintaining your OPT/SEVIS status!**
- If you have any trouble getting into your SEVP Portal, contact a DSO in ARC.
- Students must report any change of contact information within 10 days of a change.  
DSOs (Designated School Officials) to contact in The Tseng College  
Danielle Keesee      818.677.7482    [danielle.g.keesee@csun.edu](mailto:danielle.g.keesee@csun.edu)  
Lesa Green            818.677.3404    [lesa.green@csun.edu](mailto:lesa.green@csun.edu)  
Ayda Vardumyan      818.677.7649    [ayda.vardumyan@csun.edu](mailto:ayda.vardumyan@csun.edu)
- OPT is authorized for 12 months
  - However, it will be less time if pre-completion OPT has been used.
  - Also it will be fewer than 12 months if you apply late, and OPT is approved after the 60-day grace period. In these cases, the EAD card will have a later start date and will be for fewer than 12 months.
- Must work more than 20 hours per week (20+ hours/week = “full time” in SEVIS).
- You cannot be unemployed for 90 days or more while on OPT. Days of unemployment is counted as an aggregate of all days of unemployment. In other words, the days of unemployment can be 90 consecutive days or a total of 90 days spread out between jobs.
- You must maintain international student health/medical insurance while on OPT.
- It is highly recommended that you keep documentation of each job, name of position held, proof of the duration of each position, contact information for supervisor or manager, and a description of the work. (This is recommended for any type of job, paid or unpaid, and for any type of OPT or work authorization.)

**OPT Information REQUIRED in SEVIS**

To avoid termination, promptly REPORT EMPLOYMENT information. Below is exactly what information must be entered into SEVIS – and kept up-to-date. After you are authorized for OPT, SEVIS sends an email to you directly to set up your SEVP Portal. This enables you to be able to submit and update your own employment information. Also, a DSO can enter the information for you if necessary.

***This is just a guide to help you gather the specific information required in SEVIS:***

Employer (Company) Name \_\_\_\_\_

Employer’s Address \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor’s First and Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor’s Email and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Your Job Title \_\_\_\_\_ Start Date \_\_\_\_\_

Employer EIN (Not Required but Highly Recommended) \_\_\_\_\_

A brief explanation of how this job relates to your major (A maximum of 1,000 characters)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**You can read EVERYTHING about OPT at these sites:**

<p>Instructions for Form I-765 <a href="https://www.uscis.gov/i-765">https://www.uscis.gov/i-765</a></p>	<p>Study in the States: <a href="https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis-help-hub/student-records/fm-student-employment/f-1-optional-practical-training-opt">https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis-help-hub/student-records/fm-student-employment/f-1-optional-practical-training-opt</a></p>
<p>Immigration and Customs Enforcement: <a href="https://www.ice.gov/sevis/employment">https://www.ice.gov/sevis/employment</a></p>	<p>Study in the States: <a href="https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis-help-hub/student-records/fm-student-employment/f-1-optional-practical-training-opt#general_information">https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis-help-hub/student-records/fm-student-employment/f-1-optional-practical-training-opt#general_information</a></p>
<p>SEVP (Student and Exchange Visitor Program), 36-page Guidance <a href="#">SEVP Policy Guidance on OPT</a></p>	
<p>Code of Federal Regulations, CFR 8 CFR <a href="#">214.2(f)(10) - (13)</a></p>	<p>USCIS: <a href="https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/optional-practical-training">https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/optional-practical-training</a></p>