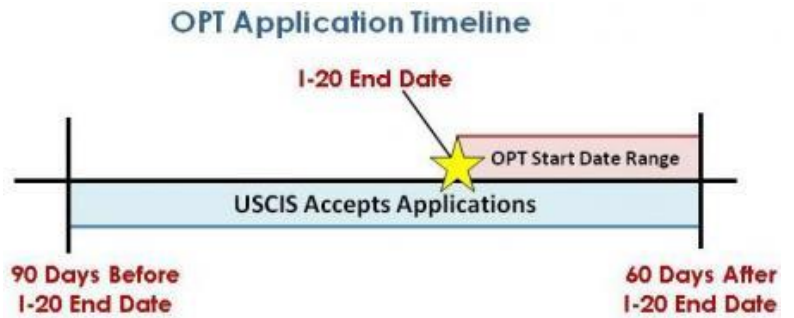


POST-COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) APPLICATION PROCESS

Eligibility for OPT - Prerequisites and Limitations:

1. The OPT application **MUST** be received by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) no sooner than 90 days before and no later than 60 days after the program end date stated on your I-20.

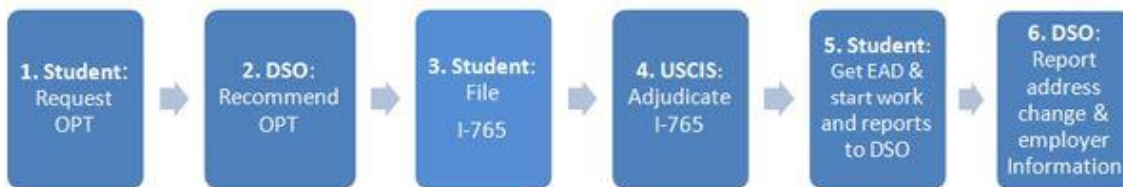
- Please note that your I-20 program end date may need to be extended or shortened, depending on your final day of classes.



2. F-1 student has been “in lawful status” for at least one academic year.
3. F-1 student has completed all course requirements needed to graduate (excluding thesis or equivalent).
4. Employment must be directly related to F-1 student’s major.
5. Optional Practical Training is limited to a maximum of 12 months at each academic level (bachelor’s, master’s, etc.).
 - Exception: Students with an eligible STEM major (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math) may extend their OPT employment beyond the initial 12 months for an additional 24 months.

Follow these OPT Application STEPS:

The OPT application can either be submitted to USCIS online or by mail. Application procedures will change slightly depending on which method you use.



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STEP 1: Complete the following checklist & send all documents except the filing fee to a DSO (Designated School Official) at iss@uwosh.edu for review.

IF FILING ONLINE (RECOMMENDED), have PDF copies of the following documents **EXCEPT** the credit/debit card or bank details:

- Passport-Style Photo Taken Fewer Than 30 Days Before Submitting the Application. You can use this [Photo Tool](#) to confirm whether it meets requirements.
- Copy of Passport Biographical Page. Your passport must be valid.
- Copy of F-1 Visa. Expired visas are acceptable.
- Most Recent [Form I-94](#).
- Copy of all previous I-20s: Especially I-20 that include CPT approvals.
- IF APPLICABLE:** Copy any previous Employment Authorization Documents (EAD)
- New I-20 issued by DSO **AFTER** review of the completeness of the application documents.
- You must use a credit/debit card or your bank account details to pay the \$410 filing fee online.

IF FILING BY MAIL, have physical copies of the following documents:

- Form [I-765](#). It is recommended you type your responses except for the signature section. Sign with BLACK INK.
- 2 Passport-Style Photos Taken Fewer Than 30 Days Before Submitting the Application. Lightly print your full name on the back of both photos.
- Copy of Passport Biographical Page. Your passport must be valid.
- Copy of F-1 Visa. Expired visas are acceptable.
- Most Recent [Form I-94](#)
- Copy of all previous I-20s: Especially I-20 that include CPT approvals.
- IF APPLICABLE:** Copy any previous employment authorization documents (EAD)
- New I-20 issued by DSO **AFTER** review of the completeness of the application package
- \$410 Check or Money Order (payable to: Department of Homeland Security) or pay by credit card: <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450>.

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STEP 2: A Designated School Official (DSO) in ISS reviews your application documents and issues a new I-20 with an OPT Recommendation printed on page 2

Schedule an appointment with a DSO by contacting iss@uwosh.edu.

Once ISS has reviewed your application, you will receive an I-20 with an OPT recommendation on the second page. **Do not apply for OPT through USCIS before you receive this recommendation on your I-20.** Your application will automatically be denied and your application fee would not be refunded.

STEP 3: Sign the new I-20 and send a copy, along with the payment and application supporting documents, to USCIS. These can be submitted either online or by mail to the appropriate lockbox location.

IF FILING ONLINE, you must use the “File Online” function on the [USCIS Website](#).

IF FILING BY MAIL, you must send your application package to the following address, depending on which mail carrier you use:

U.S. Postal Service (USPS)

Attn: I-765 C03
P.O. Box 805373
Chicago, IL 60680-5374

FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:

USCIS
Attn: I-765 C03 (Box 805373)
131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor
Chicago, IL 60603-5517

USCIS must receive your application within 30 days of the date your I-20 with the OPT recommendation was issued!

STEP 4: Wait for USCIS adjudication.

- All correspondence from USCIS will be sent by mail. Those who file online can also check their application status using their MyUSCIS account.

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- In general, applicants will receive mail from USCIS in this order:
 1. Receipt Notice: evidence the filing fee has been paid.
 2. Approval/Denial Notice **OR** Request for Information
 3. **If Approved:** Employment Authorization Document (EAD)

STEP 5: Once you received the EAD card, please send a copy of the front and back to iss@uwosh.edu.

STEP 6: Ensure you comply with all Post-Completion OPT regulations.

1. Employment is authorized as OPT to begin after a student receives the EAD card in the mail and only during the validity dates listed on the EAD card.
2. F-1 status is dependent on full-time employment or volunteer service while on Post-Completion OPT.
 - a. Work **MUST** be a **OVER** 20 hours/week in order to not count towards unemployment
 - b. A student may not be unemployed for an aggregate of more than 90 days.
 - c. If you exceed a total of 90 days of unemployment or you fail to report your employer to iss@uwosh.edu in time your SEVIS record will be terminated and you are required to leave the country immediately.
3. Employment must be directly related to your major field of study and degree.
 - a. It is recommended by SEVP that students keep documentation showing that their OPT employment is directly related to their degree program.
 - b. SEVP recommends that students maintain evidence - for each job - of the position held, proof of the duration of that position, number of hours worked per week, the job title, contact information for the student's supervisor or manager, and a description of the work.
 - c. If it is not clear from the job description that the work is related to the student's degree, SEVP highly recommends that the student obtain a signed letter from the student's supervisor or manager or the employer's hiring official stating how the student's degree is related to the work performed.
 - i. This same evidence could also be used to establish that the limit on unemployment has not been exceeded (see below for more information on unemployment regulations).
4. Counting of Unemployment Days:
 - a. Each day a student is not actively employed in an eligible OPT job or internship. This does **NOT** include regular days off, such as weekends and earned vacation/leave.
 - b. Time spent outside the United States during an approved period of Post-Completion OPT counts as unemployment against the 90 day limit, unless the student is either on earned vacation/leave authorized by an employer or traveling as part of the employment.

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STEP 7: Comply with all OPT reporting requirements:

Students on post completion OPT are required to report any new employment, end of current employment, change of legal name, address, email address, or phone number within 10 days of a change to iss@uwosh.edu.

OPTIONAL - STEP 8: STEM OPT Extension

STEP 8: OPTIONAL! If you think you are eligible for a 24-month STEM OPT Extension please read through this link: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/additional-resources/stem-opt-extension-overview>.

Take the following steps:

1. Verify that you would be eligible For STEM OPT.
2. Make sure you understand the application process, deadlines, and the reporting requirements!
3. Send iss@uwosh.edu your STEM OPT application 90days prior do the expiration of your OPT.

Additional Information

1. Below is a sample list of activities that are considered allowable employment on standard Post-Completion OPT (provided it also meets the above requirements). While a student engages in such activity during a period of Post-Completion OPT, he/she is not considered "unemployed":
 - a. Regular paid employment in a position directly related to the student's program of study for OVER 20 hours per week.
 - b. Students may work for multiple employers, as long as they are directly related to the student's program of study.
 - c. Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns, where this practice does not violate any labor laws. A student should be able to provide evidence, acquired from the student's employer, to verify that he or she worked OVER 20 hours per week during the period of employment.
2. Finding Employment:
 - a. Work with [UWO Career and Professional Development](#) to receive information about searching for jobs, writing resumes and cover letters, and interviewing skills.
 - b. Review resources on the UW Oshkosh website for the student's major.
 - c. Network with students in student organizations related to the student's major.
 - d. Discuss employment options with academic and faculty advisors.
 - e. Use the [GoinGlobal](#) job board, which is free to use for UWO students.
3. Employment on OPT that is not directly related to the major area of study is a status violation.
4. SEVP Portal: After OPT approval you should receive an email from "do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov" which provides instructions on how you can sign up for the SEVP portal. The usage of the SEVP portal is optional.

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- International Student Health Insurance: You will NOT be automatically enrolled in the university’s health insurance plan when you are on OPT since you are no longer a full-time student. You will receive an email from the insurance company, Wellfleet, with instruction on enrolling yourself. Enrollment in the university insurance while on OPT is **optional**.
- Students engaged in Post-Completion OPT may not attend school full-time.

Changes to Report to DSO

Situation	Student Reports to DSO
New Job/Internship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name and mailing address of the employer Job Title Start date of employment Hours of work per week Brief explanation telling how the employment is related to your major
Loss of Job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name of the previous employer Ending date of the employment with the previous employer
Student decides to exit the U.S. and complete his or her F-1 status prior to the end date of OPT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statement to DSO indicating you plan to end your OPT authorization. Date you will exit the United States End date of employment, if currently employed
Change in Address, Phone Number, or Email Address	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new address, phone number, and/or email address.

Students have many questions about whether it is okay to travel while OPT is processing and/or during the OPT period. Here are the rules about travel and OPT, depending on your situation:

1. During your final quarter, after you submit your 12-month OPT application:

You can travel and reenter the U.S. as a student during your final registration quarter. You will use the new I-20 with the OPT recommendation printed on page 2, along with the other regular travel documents. If you plan to return to the U.S. **before** the expiration date of the new I-20 (your program completion date), it does not matter whether your OPT application is still processing or is approved, and whether you have a job offer yet.

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2. After graduation, while your 12-month OPT application is processing:

After your final quarter ends, you can travel and reenter the U.S. while your 12-month Post-Completion OPT application is processing, with or without a job offer. You must carry your OPT receipt notice from USCIS, your OPT I-20, and the other regular travel documents. **However, be aware of these risks:**

- USCIS sometimes sends a request to OPT applicants asking for more information or for you to correct a problem with your documentation. These requests are sent by postal mail, so it might be difficult for you to respond if you are not inside the U.S. It is your application, so ISS does not have the authority to respond for you.
- After your OPT application is approved, you must also have proof of employment and your EAD in order to reenter the U.S. If the OPT application is approved while you are abroad, and if you do not yet have proof of employment or your EAD, this could jeopardize your return to the U.S.
- You must have a valid F-1 visa to travel during the OPT year. It is risky to apply for an F-1 visa while your OPT application is pending. If your current F-1 visa is expired, we recommend waiting until your OPT application is approved, and you have a job offer before applying for a new F-1 visa.

3. After graduation, and after your 12-month OPT application is approved:

After graduation, if your 12-month Post-Completion OPT has been approved and your EAD issued, you can travel and reenter the U.S. **only if you have proof of employment.** If you are still looking for practical training opportunities, you should not travel internationally.

For travel, carry the following documents with you:

- OPT I-20 signed for travel by a DSO within the last **6 months.**
 - Proof of employment in your field of study (letter of employment, written job offer)
 - EAD card (on the EAD card, there is a statement “Not Valid for Reentry.” This means the EAD card cannot be used by itself for reentry to the U.S.)
 - Valid passport
 - Unexpired F-1 visa
- You can apply for an F-1 visa during your OPT year. Follow the regular procedures to apply for an F-1 visa outside of the U.S. For the F-1 visa application, plan to provide the documents listed above, as well as proof of financial ability to stay in the U.S. and proof of continuing ties to your home country.

After the OPT approval start date, time spent outside the U.S. will count as unemployment against the 90-day limit. However, travel while employed either during a vacation authorized by an employer or as part of your employment will not count as unemployment. Please keep your primary ISS adviser informed of any travel plans while on OPT that may affect your status.

If you have dependents in F-2 status who will travel without you, be sure they carry a photocopy of your EAD card and proof of your employment along with their updated F-2 I-20 that is properly signed for travel.

4. During your pending or approved STEM OPT extension period (if applicable).

If your STEM OPT extension application is already **approved**, the travel document requirements are the same as those required during the 12-month OPT period (see the list above in scenario #3)

If your STEM OPT extension application is **pending** with USCIS, it is okay to travel internationally. This is true even if your 12-month OPT EAD is already expired.

It is also possible to apply for a new F-1 visa during this time.

For reentry to the U.S. with a pending STEM OPT application, you should carry:

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- STEM OPT I-20 signed by DSO within the last **6 months**.
- USCIS receipt notice for your STEM OPT application.
- Proof of employment.
- Valid passport.
- Unexpired F-1 visa.

You can apply for an F-1 visa while the STEM OPT application is pending (up to 180 days pending status). Follow the regular procedures to apply for an F-1 visa outside of the U.S. For the F-1 visa application, plan to provide the documents listed above, as well as proof of financial ability to stay in the U.S. and proof of continuing ties to your home country.

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