

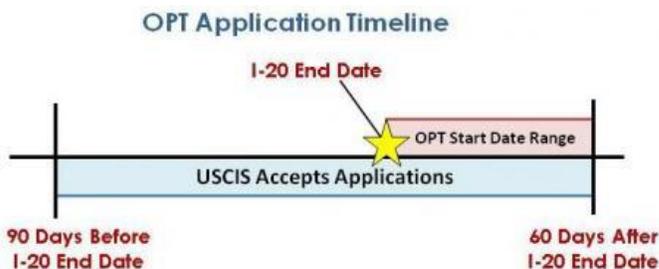
## OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) PROCESS

### Eligibility for OPT - Prerequisites and Limitations:

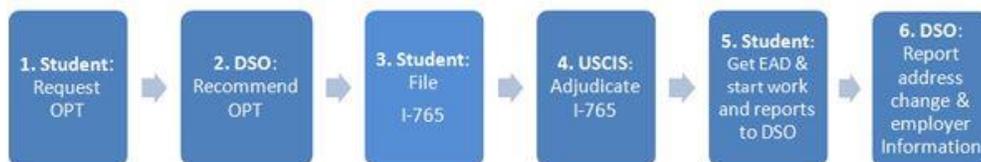
1. The OPT application **MUST** be received by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) no sooner than 90 days before and no later than 60 days after the program end date stated on your I-20 or your last day of classes, whichever is sooner.

E.g. If your I-20 ends **May17th**, USCIS accepts applications **Feb18th** but no later than **July10th**

2. It usually takes **3-5 MONTHS** from when USCIS receives your Application until you receive the EAD card.
3. F-1 Student has been “in lawful status” for at least one academic year or 9 consecutive months.
4. F-1 Student must have graduated = completed all course requirements for the degree
5. Employment must be directly related to your major field of study and level of education.
6. Optional Practical Training is limited to a maximum of 12 months.
  - Exception: Students with a STEM approved major (science, technology, engineering, or math) may extend their OPT employment beyond the initial 12 months for an additional 24 months.
  - Note: A student who completes a degree and engages in 12 months of OPT may become eligible for an additional 12 months only if he/she completes a degree program *at the next higher level* (Example: BS→MS).



### Follow these **OPT Application STEPS**:



**STEP 1:** Complete this checklist & send all documents except the filing fee to a DSO (Designated School Official) at the OIE or [iss@uwosh.edu](mailto:iss@uwosh.edu) for review 1-2weeks prior to submission to USCIS.

### Checklist of Required OPT Application Documents:

- Completed OPT Application (=THIS FORM)
- Form **I-765**([www.uscis.gov/i-765](http://www.uscis.gov/i-765)) (fill with BLACK INK!; see “important notes” here on page 2)
- 2 Photos (passport size; max 30days old; lightly print your full name on the back of both photos)
- Copy of current (and previous) Passport Photo Page (Passport must be valid for over 6 more months)
- Copy of current (and previous) US-Visa
- Copy of I-94(<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94>)
- Copy of all I-20s (especially I-20 that include CPT approvals)
- If applicable: Copy any previous employment authorization documents (EAD)
- Optional: Form G-1145(<https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>): “I-797Notice of Action - USCIS has received application”
- New I-20 issued by DSO AFTER review of the completeness of the Application package
- \$550** Check or Money Order (payable to: Department of Homeland Security) or pay by credit card: <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450>  
Review Fee here: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> and click on “Filing fee”

**IMPORTANT NOTES that assist with correct completion of Form I-765:**

- Part 1, Line 5, use address that you are 100% sure you will still be able to be reached at 3-5 months after today.
- Part 2, Line 5.a. If your mail is send to somebody else please include an "In Care Of Name"
- Part 2, Line 27. For Post-Completion OPT enter: ( c ) ( 3 ) ( B )
- Part 3, Line 7.a. Handwritten signature within the small box (not touching any lines!; with black ink!)
- Part 6: Line 3.a. Page Number 3; 3.b. Part Number 2; Line 3.c. Item Number: 26;  
Line 3.d. "List all prior CPT/OPT approval and previous SEVIS numbers"; List your Degree level/CPT/OPT: "Associate Degree/Bachelor's Degree/Master's Degree", No previous CPT/OPT or Previous CPT: Part-Time 01/01/2001-31/12/2001"
- Part 6: Line 4.a-d, 5a-d ONLY if you need to list several SEVIS ID's

Family Name	First Name	Middle Name
UW Oshkosh ID#:	Degree (BS/BA/MA)	Major:
E-mail Address (Primary)	E-mail Address (Other)	

**Expected Completion Date of all Degree requirements :**  
(This date must match the I-20 end date)

Requested OPT Employment Dates:  
**Beginning Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Ending Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

*"I am aware that I am required to inform [iss@uwosh.edu](mailto:iss@uwosh.edu) in case I might not graduate by the I-20 end date AND will Process a Program Extension Application (<http://www.uwosh.edu/oie/iss/iss-documents/programextension.pdf>) at least 15 days prior to the I-20 Program end date – which would require the cancellation of THIS OPT application"*  
*"I understand that ANY on campus employment or approved CPT must end on the I-20 end date"*  
Please sign here: \_\_\_\_\_ (Student's signature required)

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

Once the OIE has reviewed your application and the I-20 is issued you will RECEIVE an email to pick up your I-20 at the OIE front desk.

**STEP 3:** Sign the new I-20; make a copy of the new I-20; keep the original and send the I-20 copy along with the payment and the complete OPT application (see checklist on page 1) to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Phoenix Lockbox for adjudication

**For U.S. Postal Service (USPS):**  
USCIS  
P.O. Box 21281  
Phoenix, AZ 85036

**For FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:**  
USCIS  
Attn: NFB AOS  
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S  
Suite 100  
Phoenix, AZ 85034

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

**STEP 4:** Wait for positive USCIS adjudication (OPT approval notice & OPT card arrival).

If OPT is approved, an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will be issued valid for the employment start and end dates that you request with this application.

If you plan to **travel abroad** during the application process or after your OPT is approved please review **Bulletpoint 8** of the **appendix**! If you have questions or you need a travel signature please contact [iss@uwosh.edu](mailto:iss@uwosh.edu) right away.

**STEP 5:** Once you received the OPT card you are required to send a copy of the front and back of the Employment Authorization Document (EAD-Card) to [iss@uwosh.edu](mailto:iss@uwosh.edu)

**STEP 6:** Ensure you comply with all post completion OPT employment limitations

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 90days of unemployment or you fail to report your employer to [iss@uwosh.edu](mailto: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 (including weekends) during the period when OPT authorization begins and ends that the student does not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment.
  - b. OPT authorization begins on the employment start date shown on the student's EAD card.
  - c. 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 employed during a period of leave authorized by an employer or traveling as part of the employment.

**STEP 7:** Comply with all **OPT reporting requirements:**

Students on post completion OPT are required to **report any new employment, change of name, address, phone number or interruption of employment within 10 days of a change to [iss@uwosh.edu](mailto:iss@uwosh.edu) or the SEVP Portal** until the OPT end date. *Please review the appendix on page 4 for examples what you need to report to [iss@uwosh.edu](mailto:iss@uwosh.edu)*

*"I have been informed of OPT employment limitations and OPT reporting requirements and I will comply with them. I understand that if I don't meet these requirements my F-1 status will expire. I am aware that this would lead to the "accrual of unlawful presence" in the U.S. which can prevent me from being able to reenter the US in the future."*

Please sign here: \_\_\_\_\_ (Student's signature required)

STEP 8: OPTIONAL! If you think you are eligible for a 24month STEM OPT Extension please read through this link:

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-extension-overview> to

1. verify that you would be eligible to apply
2. make sure you understand the application process, deadlines
3. and the STRICTER reporting requirements!
4. Send [iss@uwosh.edu](mailto:iss@uwosh.edu) your STEM OPT application 90days prior do the expiration of your OPT.

### Appendix:

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 the UW Career Center(<http://career.uwosh.edu/jobs-and-internships/>) to receive information about searching for jobs, writing resumes and cover letters, and interviewing skills.
  - b. Reviewing resources on the UW Oshkosh website for the student's major.
  - c. Networking with students in student organizations related to the student's major.
  - d. Discussing employment options with academic and faculty advisors.
3. Employment (on OPT) that is not directly related to the major area of study is a status violation.
4. The following table consolidates SEVP's suggestions on how to report employment information while on standard post-completion OPT.

Situation	Student Reports to DSO
New job/internship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Name and mailing address of the employer</li> <li>▪ Job Title</li> <li>▪ Start date of employment</li> <li>▪ Average number of hours of work per week</li> <li>▪ Brief explanation telling how the employment is related to your course of study NOTE: this will be copied into your federal SEVIS record</li> </ul>
Change to a new job/internship (less than 10 days between jobs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Name of the previous employer</li> <li>▪ Ending date of the employment with the previous employer</li> <li>▪ Name and mailing address of the new employer</li> <li>▪ Start date of new employment</li> <li>▪ Average number of hours of work per week</li> <li>▪ Brief explanation telling how the employment is related to your course of study NOTE: this will be copied into your federal SEVIS record</li> </ul>
Loss of job (with more than 10 days between jobs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Name of the previous employer</li> <li>▪ Ending date of the employment with the previous employer</li> <li>▪ Record of unemployment days that does not exceed an aggregate of 90 days, including weekends</li> </ul>
Work for hire/Contract work (start)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Indicate "Self-employed work for hire"</li> <li>▪ Indicate the start date of the contract</li> <li>▪ Brief explanation telling how this is related to your course of study NOTE: this will be copied into your federal SEVIS record</li> </ul>
Work for hire (ending more than 10 days between the end of one contract and the beginning of another contract or new job)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Indicate "Self-employed work for hire."</li> <li>▪ Indicate you have no current contract</li> <li>▪ Ending date of the last contract worked</li> <li>▪ Update DSO when a new contract begins</li> </ul>
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"> <li>▪ Indicate "Completing OPT and exiting the United States"</li> <li>▪ Date of exit</li> </ul>

5. SEVP Portal: After OPT approval you should receive an email from "[do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov](mailto: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.

6. International Student Health Insurance: Keep in mind that you are no longer on the university's health insurance plan when you are on OPT since you are no longer a full time student.
7. Students engaged in post-completion OPT may not also attend school full-time.
8. **Travel and OPT: Students have many questions about whether or not 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 or not you have a job offer yet.

### 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 (except for short trips to Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean). 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 an international student adviser 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.

The preamble to the 24-month STEM OPT rule [\[81 FR 13103 par. 774\]](#) states:

“Students on STEM OPT extensions (including those whose application for a STEM OPT extension is pending) may travel abroad and seek reentry to the United States in F-1 status during the STEM OPT extension period if they have a valid F-1 visa that permits multiple entries and a current Form I-20 Certificate of Eligibility endorsed for reentry by the DSO within the last six months. The student’s status is determined by CBP upon admission to the United States or through a USCIS adjudication of a change-of-status petition.”

It is also possible to apply for a new F-1 visa during this time. The Foreign Affairs Manual, which instructs U.S. Department of State officials regarding visa issuance, states at [9 FAM 402.5-5\(N\)\(6\)\(e\)](#)

“As the STEM OPT extension is automatic for the first 180 days following regular post-completion OPT (when the student has properly filed Form I-765), the student may not necessarily have a renewed EAD. Therefore, any students having automatically authorized employment through the OPT extension may not be able to present a valid EAD when they apply to renew their visa. However, F-1 students in this situation can request an updated I-20 from the DSO, annotated for the STEM OPT extension, as well as proof that the I-765 petition was filed in a timely manner. You must confirm that the student’s electronic SEVIS record contains the same information as the updated hard copy Form I-20 before issuing a visa.”

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

- STEM OPT I-20 signed by an ISS adviser within the last six 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.



