Optional Practical Training: Working in the US after degree completion

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Online OPT Resources

www.uwyo.edu/iss

Click here for the most current OPT information and live Reporting Survey Links
Today’s Post-Completion OPT Presentation

- What is Post-Completion OPT?
- Eligibility for Post-Completion OPT
- Application and processing timeline
- Maintaining status while on Post-Completion OPT
- Types of employment allowed on Post-Completion OPT
- Unemployment while on Post-Completion OPT
- Reporting requirements while on Post-Completion OPT
- Resources for students, advisors, and employers
- Enrolling at UW while on OPT or after change of status
- Completing the Post-Completion OPT application
What is Post-Completion OPT? The Basics

- OPT is designed to allow an F-1 student to remain in the US and gain experience in their field for one year after completion of their program.

- Student remains in F-1 status for the duration of the OPT.

- One OPT is allowed for each degree level.

- Student is allowed to travel while on OPT.

- Student must be employed while on OPT.

- Those who completed a program in a designated STEM field may apply to extend their OPT for 24 additional months if they, and their employer, meet the criteria. Two OPT extensions are allowed per lifetime.

- OPT allows student to apply for change of status; allows cap-gap extension with submitted H1B petition by non-cap-exempt employer.
Eligibility for Post-Completion OPT

- Student must have maintained lawful status, including being enrolled on a full-time basis at a U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) approved school, for at least one full academic year.

- Student must be graduating or completing required coursework in an accredited Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Doctoral program within 90 days of application date.

- No offer of employment is required for application, but the student should be actively seeking employment to begin as soon as the OPT is approved.

- Student must not have completed 365 days of full-time CPT during degree. Part-time CPT does not affect OPT.
Application and Processing Timeline

- Student should begin planning for OPT application at least one year before completion of their degree. Specifically important for graduate students who will enroll in less than 9.0 credits to finish thesis/dissertation.

- Student must attend an ISS OPT Information and Application workshop before submitting application.

- Meet with ISS staff to submit application **90 days before** completion of degree/graduation. Can take THREE months or more for OPT approval.

- May submit application up to **60 days after** graduation.

- Employment is not allowed after graduation/completion date until OPT EAD is received and start date has been reached. This includes graduate assistantships and “on-campus” employment!
Application and Processing Timeline

- Receipt notice from USCIS approximately two weeks after application is received by USCIS. Will be emailed to student by ISS staff. Electronic notification from USCIS will arrive approximately one week after application is received by USCIS.

- Track your application online at www.uscis.gov.

- Approval notice/EAD card received by ISS approximately 90 days of receipt date. ISS will email student THE DAY the card is received at ISS, approximately 10 days after OPT approval noted in online tracking.

- Employment may begin only after EAD card is received and the start date on the card has been reached.
Once OPT start date on EAD is reached, status is maintained by employment, regardless of enrollment in credits to finish degree!

- Employment must be directly related to major field of study
- Must work at least 20 hours per week. Multiple jobs are allowed but each job should be at least 20 hours per week if possible
- Do not exceed 90 days of unemployment during post-completion OPT
- Report changes to contact information and employment within 10 days of any change
- Beginning a new degree program automatically terminates OPT, even part time. Notify ISS of intent to begin a new degree so that SEVIS record can be updated/transferred appropriately
- Notify ISS of any application or approval for change of status
Types of Employment Allowed on Post-Completion OPT

- Regular paid employment – multiple employers allowed
- Payment by multiple short-term employers ("gigs")
- Work for hire/contractual employment
- Self-employed business owner
- Employed through an agency
- Volunteering or unpaid employment

*Note: STEM OPT extension does not allow self-employment, working for an agency, or volunteer/unpaid employment*
Unemployment While on Post-Completion OPT

- Must not exceed 90 days of unemployment while on post-completion OPT
- Unemployment days begin counting on the start date on the EAD and stop on the start date of the job. Each day between employment when changing from one job to another also counts
- Weekends and holidays ARE included in unemployment days before official employment start date
- Cannot stop the “unemployment clock” by leaving the US for a period of time
- Official vacation days, sick days, office closures and weekend days do not count as unemployment days after official employment start date
- Unemployment days must be reported and MUST match the official human resources records of your employers
Reporting Requirements While on Post-Completion OPT: Contact/Personal Information

- Must report no more than 10 days after any change
- Physical address – not a PO or mail box
- Mailing address – PO or mail box
- Email address
- Phone number

- Leaving the US before the end of the OPT with no intention of returning (abandoning the OPT)
- Admission to start a new academic program. ISS must update SEVIS and/or transfer your record before you may begin your new program
- Any application for, or change to, your immigration status – H1B, US Permanent Resident, etc
Reporting Requirements While on Post-Completion OPT: Employment Information

- Must report no more than 10 days after any change
- Employment start and end date – must match official human resources record
- Employer information
  - Name – Name of company
  - Address
  - Employer ID Number (EIN) – This is NOT your personal employee number!
  - Job Title
- Supervisor information
  - Name
  - Phone number
  - Email address
- How is the employment related to your major field of study?
  - Be brief but thorough – two sentences
How to Report Updates While on Post-Completion OPT

1. Directly to ISS via www.uwyo.edu/iss/opt  (recommended)

- Online survey links allow easy reporting of information directly to ISS
- Surveys require specific information to make sure that all SEVIS fields can be completed by ISS staff
- Students receive automatic confirmation email when information is successfully submitted. ISS staff strives to complete the update in SEVIS within one week of receiving the information.
- Surveys are required if a student chooses to leave the US and abandon the OPT so that ISS is notified directly.
- Students should notify ISS directly via email if they change status.
OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

What is Optional Practical Training?
Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a temporary employment benefit contained in the United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) regulations governing the F-1 visa category. Students who have maintained their status will have an opportunity to obtain work experience directly related to their major area of study in order to enhance their educational experience in the United States. Students of F-1 status are eligible for OPT.

Post-completion OPT; and OPT extension for recent graduates. There is a maximum total period of 12 months. Becomes eligible for another 12 months of OPT when...

Resources for Individuals Currently on Post-Completion OPT

Information for Continued Enrollment at UW while on OPT
Tips and Requirements for Post-Completion OPT
List of STEM-Approved Majors
OPT Extension Responsibilities for Students and Employers
Cap Gap Extension Request Form

Report: Update Your Contact Information - address, phone, and email
Report: Update Employment - new employment, employer update, end of employment, or leaving the US / terminating OPT early
2. Directly to SEVIS via the SEVP Student Portal

- Online portal allows student to review SEVIS OPT record and report information directly to SEVIS

- Students receive email from SEVIS once their OPT has been approved and the start date has been reached

- Email contains a secure link that can only be used ONCE to set up the initial student portal account. Set-up must be done within 30 days or a new link must be requested from ISS

- Use of the student portal is **OPTIONAL**. Students may continue to report directly to ISS using the online surveys if they want (recommended)
What Can Be Reported in the Student Portal?

**Biographical Information:**

- Physical and mailing address, phone numbers

**Employer Information:**

- First employer on OPT, additional employer, change from one employer to another, leave employment (begin unemployment) – *Student MUST also contact ISS to notify them of employment change so a new I-20 can be issued*

- Official start and end dates of employment

- Address of employer, Employer EIN, Supervisor information

- How employment is related to major field of study

*Reporting of employer information is limited while on STEM OPT extension*
ISS Portal Update Recommendations

- You *can* “delete” an employer. ISS advises that you do NOT do this! Only in rare cases (where you were never actually hired) should an employer be deleted. Contact ISS if you feel an employer needs to be deleted from your record.

- Employment End Date – If you are leaving employment and will leave the US and not use any more OPT (abandon OPT) you MUST report this to ISS via the online survey or via email so that we may properly end your F-1 SEVIS record in the system.

- You cannot update your email in the SEVP Portal. If you change your email address, please complete the online update survey on the ISS OPT website. We will update your SEVIS record and you will receive a new email from do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov prompting you to login to your SEVP Portal account using the new email address. This email will be sent to your NEW email address as entered by ISS. If you have trouble logging into the SEVP Portal after an email update, please contact ISS.

- EVERY TIME that you log in to the SEVP Portal you should double check your address and phone number. This will ensure that you don’t forget to change your address when you move to start a new job!

If you are unsure of what to enter into the Portal, just complete the ISS survey!
Resources for Students, Advisors and Employers

- UW ISS website: [www.uwyo.edu/iss/opt](http://www.uwyo.edu/iss/opt)
  Presentation slides, OPT applications, STEM degree list, information reporting links, sample letter for advisor, OPT extension information for students and employers

- STEM OPT Hub: [https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub)
  Form I-983 tutorial and information for students and employers about the OPT extension application and requirements. Students will work with UW ISS to process the extension application and continue to report changes to ISS while on extension

  Instructions and videos to assist students with approved OPT who want to report information directly to SEVIS via the SEVP portal
Enrolling at UW While on Post-Completion OPT: Undergraduates Who Fail a Course in Final Semester

- If you do not officially graduate in the semester planned
  - If the OPT has not been approved, student may submit a letter to ISS asking the OPT be cancelled. Letter must be forwarded to USCIS and received by them before the OPT is approved in order to cancel the OPT request. Application fee will not be refunded
  - If the OPT has already been approved, student must continue to participate in OPT, meeting all requirements, with the exception of hours per week. Student will be limited to working no more than 20 hours per week until completion of their degree
  - Any undergraduate who enrolls at UW while on OPT is required to pay the tuition, fees, and international student health insurance until completion of their degree. This cannot be waived
Enrolling at UW While on OPT: Graduate Students Who Must Enroll to Graduate

- If you must complete writing, defense, etc
  - Students may enroll in one credit of continuous registration (on or off campus does not matter) as a “place holder” so that they may officially graduate*
  - Student will be charged for the tuition, fees and international student health insurance
  - Student may petition to have the insurance removed, and the fees if the insurance is removed, at the beginning of the semester. This request must be made BEFORE the end of the add/drop period. The determination will be made by the Student Insurance Advocate, stuins@uwyo.edu, on a case-by-case basis. Most commonly, insurance and fees are waived for those living outside of Wyoming and/or those who have a job that provides insurance at coverages equal to or greater than UW’s policy coverage
Enrolling at UW After Change of Status:

- **Students who change status to H1B or other non-resident status**
  - Please notify ISS of any change of status so that your status in the UW computer system and the SEVIS system may be updated. As an H1B, or any other non-resident status, you are still considered an international students and will be charged the tuition, fees and for the international student health insurance.
  - Student may request a waiver of the insurance and fees. See previous slide for details. Request MUST be made BEFORE the end of the add/drop period.

- **Students who change status to US Permanent Resident or US Citizen**
  - Please notify ISS immediately so that your status in the UW computer system and the SEVIS system can be updated. US Permanent Residents and US citizens should not be automatically charged for the fees or the student health insurance. Please review your bill carefully to make sure these charges do not appear. Contact ISS right away if these charges appear on your bill so that we can make sure that your record was updated correctly.

*Refunds will not be given for those who change status in the middle of a semester*
Completing the Post-Completion OPT Application – Checklist!

- Complete USCIS Form I-765
- Complete Tips and SEVIS Requirements while on Post-Completion OPT form
- Complete Form G-1145 for electronic notification of application receipt
- Undergraduate students must provide a letter from their Degree Analyst in the Office of the Registrar verifying the anticipated graduation date
- Graduate students must provide a letter from their Academic Advisor verifying the completion of their required coursework and the anticipated date of completion of all requirements - Sample on the ISS OPT website
- Copy of current passport, most recent visa, all I-20s with CPT (see Form I-765 slide), current I-94 printed from www.cbp.gov/i94 or I-94 card if in passport, any other documents you have such as I-797 for change of status or previous OPT EADs
- Two passport photos according to USCIS requirements, taken within the last 30 days. Make sure these are good quality photos that meet requirements before you accept them
- Filing fee of $410.00. A check or money order payable to “US Department of Homeland Security”. Or Form G-1450 Credit Card Authorization Form. *Cash cannot be accepted

Download forms from www.uwyo.edu/iss/opt for most current and pre-completed forms!
Form I-765

Type or Print in black ink only!
If you have questions about how to answer a field, leave it blank and ask during your OPT appointment.

Enter “none” or “N/A” where appropriate. Form will give warning that symbols are not allowed. Click OK and continue and form should accept it. If not, hand write it.

Part 1. Reason for Applying
1.a. Initial permission to accept employment – always choose this!

Part 2. Information About You
Your Full Legal Name: Enter your name as it is on your official documents (Form I-20)

Other Names Used: Only enter other names used on official documents in the US
5. Your US Mailing Address: Enter the ISS address as given. This is where your documents will be sent so that they are not lost if you move.

6. Is your current mailing address the same as your physical address? Click “No” and complete “U.S. Physical Address” 7.a. – 7.d. with your current physical address.

8. Alien Registration Number (A-number) – most students will not have this. If you have had previous OPT or changed status within the US, you will have an A-number.

9. USCIS Online Account Number – most students will not have this.

14. Do you want the SSA to issue you a Social Security card? This is optional. If you do not already have a social security number/card it is recommended that you select “yes” and have one issued. This replaces applying in the SSA office.
   - If you choose “yes” for #14, completed #15-17.
   - If you choose “no” for #14, skip to #18.
Part 2. Information About You (continued)

21.c. Travel Document Number: F-1 students do not have a travel document

24. Immigration Status at Your Last Arrival (most recent arrival to the US): Most will be “F-1 student”. If you have changed to F-1 status within the US and have not traveled since then, enter your status at your last entry.

25. Your Current Immigration Status or Category: Current status MUST be “F-1 student” to be eligible for OPT

26. SEVIS Number: Enter ALL numbers in your SEVIS number

27. Eligibility Category: ALWAYS (c)(3)(B) for Post-completion OPT
Part 3. Applicant’s Statement, Contact Information, Declaration, Certification, and Signature

Applicant’s Statement
1.a. I can read and understand English...: Most students should check this box.

7.a. and 7.b. Applicant's Signature, and Date of Signature: Complete in BLACK ink.

Part 4. Interpreter’s Contact Information...
Only complete this if you checked 1.b. and 2 above
Part 4. Interpreter’s Contact Information, Certification, and Signature

Part 5. Contact Information, Declaration, and Signature of the Person Preparing this Application, If Other Than the Applicant

Only complete this page if you do not speak English well and have had an interpreter read and complete the form for you.

ISS staff will help you note “N/A” on this form during your OPT appointment, before submitting the application to USCIS.
Part 5. Contact Information, Declaration, and Signature of the Person Preparing this Application, If Other Than the Applicant (continued)

Only complete this page if you do not speak English and have had an interpreter read and complete the form for you.

ISS staff will help you note “N/A” on this form during your OPT appointment, before submitting the application to USCIS.
## Part 6. Additional Information

Complete this page ONLY if you have:
- Previous CPT Authorizations (any degree level)
- Previous OPT Authorizations (any degree level)
- Previous SEVIS Number(s)

### Previous CPT Authorizations:

3.a. Page Number: 3  
3.b. Part Number: 2  
3.c. Item Number: 27  
3.d. Include header “CPT Authorizations:”  
   Degree level, employer name, start date and end date on CPT I-20, part-time or full-time  
   “Evidence Attached”

Include copies of all I-20s with CPT on the back (even from past schools)
At the top of each I-20:
- Print your name and “Page: 3, Part: 2, Item: 27”
- Sign your name and print the date
Part 6. Additional Information

Complete this page ONLY if you have:

- Previous CPT Authorizations (any degree level)
- Previous OPT Authorizations (any degree level)
- Previous SEVIS Number

**Previous OPT Authorizations** (use #4 if you also had previous CPT):

3.a. Page Number: 3
3.b. Part Number: 2
3.c. Item Number: 27
3.d. Include header “OPT Authorizations”

Degree level, Post or Pre-completion or STEM OPT, start date and end date on OPT EAD “Evidence Attached”

Include copies of all OPT EADs (even from past schools)

At the top of each page:

- Print your name and “Page: 3, Part: 2, Item: 27”
- Sign your name and print the date
**Form I-765**  
**Page 7**

**Part 6. Additional Information**

Complete this page ONLY if you have:
- Previous CPT Authorizations (any degree level)
- Previous OPT Authorizations (any degree level)
- Previous SEVIS Number

**Previous SEVIS Number** (use #4 or 5 if you had previous CPT or OPT):
3.a. Page Number: 3
3.b. Part Number: 2
3.c. Item Number: 26
3.d. Include header “Previous SEVIS numbers:”

SEVIS number, visa type (F-2, F-1, J-1, etc)
Tips and SEVIS Requirements While on OPT form

Copy will be given to the student to keep.

Make sure to use a NON-UW email address. This is the email that ISS will use to notify you when your documents arrive and for updates while you are on OPT.
Form G-1145

To receive direct electronic notification of receipt of application by USCIS – approximately one week after receipt date

If you do not want to receive text messages about your application, leave the Mobile Phone Number field blank.
Form G-1450

Optional: To pay the $410 fee using your credit or debit card.

Form will be mailed to USCIS with your application.

Please keep a copy for yourself as proof of correct submission. ISS will NOT keep a copy of this form!