

## **Frequently Asked Questions Pertaining to OPT Extension:**

### **When should I apply for OPT Extension?**

An applicant for OPT extension can apply for the OPT extension up to 90 days before the end date of the post-completion OPT as given on the EAD card. Student will work with ISS to complete the OPT Extension application process and all required documents must be gathered and reviewed before the new I-20 can be issued and the application sent in; including the training plan and all documentation from the employer. The application **MUST** be received by USCIS on or before the end date on the post-completion EAD card. Apply 90 days before your end date, or as soon as possible. USCIS will make **NO EXCEPTIONS** to the deadlines.

### **EMPLOYMENT**

#### **What kind of work qualifies as employment while on OPT Extension?**

- **Regular paid employment** for more than 20 hours per week in a position directly related to the student's major field of study. Students may work for multiple employers, as long as all jobs are directly related to the student's major field of study, all jobs are at least 20 hours per week, and a Form I-983 is submitted for each job.
- **Note:** Self-employment, short-term employment, work for hire volunteering (unpaid employment) and employment through an agency are **NOT** allowed while on OPT Extension.

#### **How do I document my employment?**

It is recommended that you obtain and keep copies of all hiring paperwork and termination paperwork as proof of your actual dates of employment. All employment must be reported to ISS, including termination/leaving a job, so SEVIS will have a complete record of your employment. The dates you report to ISS must match the official hiring and termination records of your employer.

#### **Can I change employers during the OPT Extension period?**

A student may change employers during the OPT extension period, but all employers must meet all requirements and complete all forms including E-Verify, I-983 training plan, etc. New I-983 Training Plan must be submitted to ISS within ten days of beginning a new job.

#### **What counts as Unemployment for OPT regulation purposes?**

Each day between the start and end date on the EAD card that the student does not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment. Unemployment days are counted by calendar days and do include weekends and holidays. The SEVIS system tracks the unemployment days and the SEVIS record/immigration status will be automatically terminated by the system when 150 unemployment days are reached. Students who are unemployed for 150 days are required to leave the US.

#### **What about time between jobs?**

Unemployment days begin on the day following the last date of employment and continue until the first date of employment with a new employer. Per USCIS guidance, there is not an uncounted allowance for 10 days between jobs!

#### **What if I'm outside of the United States?**

Time spent outside of the US while unemployed does count as unemployment. A student cannot stop the unemployment clock by exiting the country. If a student travels during a period of leave/vacation authorized by their employer or as part of their employment, time spent outside the United States does not count as unemployment.

### **SCHOOL & OPT**

#### **May I start a new program while on OPT Extension?**

You may not begin a new degree program while on OPT. You may take a class, but may not be enrolled as a degree-seeking student.

#### **What triggers the OPT termination if I decide to go back to school?**

A student's authorization for OPT ends on the date the SEVIS record is transferred to a new school. However, if you are only changing degree levels at the University of Wyoming, your OPT can be valid until the first day of classes of your new program. If you will begin a new degree after your OPT, you must notify ISS so that they can transfer your record or change it to the new degree program before the end of your 60 days grace period after OPT.