

COA OPT

What is post-completion OPT?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a 12-month employment authorization. Post-completion is OPT used after graduation (minus any OPT time used previously at the same degree level). OPT gives F-1 students an opportunity to apply knowledge from the classroom to a practical work experience off campus.

If you have had more than 12 months of curricular practical training (CPT) you are not eligible for OPT.

You do not need a job offer when you apply for OPT.

Life on OPT: How to Maintain Status:

Employment Requirements

- All employment must be directly related to your program of study.
- Employment must be a minimum of 20 hours a week.
- You may begin employment once you have your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and have reached the start date on your EAD.
- You must report to any change in employment or mailing address to OISS within 10 days of that change. A form is provided on the ISS website for this purpose.

Types of Employment

- Typical 9:00 - 5:00 work
- Multiple simultaneous employers
- Short-term multiple employers
 - *Maintain a list of all gigs, the dates, and the duration.*
- Employment through an agency or consulting firm
- Self-employed business owner
 - *Must have proper licenses and the business must be related to your degree program. Consult an attorney.*
- Consulting or independent contractor
- Volunteer and unpaid employment

What if I don't have a job when my OPT starts?

Unemployment on OPT

- You can accrue up to 90 days of unemployment.
- The 90 days is counted cumulatively from the start date to the end date on your EAD.
- If you exceed 90 days of unemployment, you will be considered out of status.
- As proof you have not accrued more than 90 days of unemployment, keep records of the following:
 - offer letters
 - payroll stubs
 - contracts
 - letters describing volunteer activity and hours

International Travel

You can travel and return to the U.S. while on OPT, but you must always travel with the following documents:

- **Valid Passport**
- **Valid F-1 visa**
- **EAD card**
- **I-20:** the ISS Coordinator's signature on page 3 must be within the last 6 months and page 3 must list your current employer.
- **Letter of employment:** Confirmation from your current employer indicating hours, salary, and dates of employment.

*It is highly inadvisable to travel **after** graduation if you have not received your EAD card.*

COA F-1 International Student Application steps for OPT

1. Determine the date your employment will start. It is helpful to think about when you would like it to end, 12 months later.

Post-Completion OPT

Graduating students can file their OPT application with USCIS no earlier than 90 days prior to the program end date and must file no later than 60 days after the program end date. Please note that if you depart from the U.S. during the 60 day period, your eligibility to apply for OPT ends upon your departure from the United States.

2. Collect your passport, I-20, I-94, all previous I-20s.
3. Fill out the OPT application found on the ISS COA website, attain advisor's recommendation (I have a template that can be used by the professor if they wish).
4. Fill out the I-765 form found online (<http://www.uscis.gov/i-765>). Complete, print, and sign the form in blue ink. Then fill out and print the G-1145 E-Notification of Application/Petition of Acceptance.
5. Hand in all these materials to the Coordinator of ISS (Monica Hamm). You will be contacted when the I-20 is ready to be picked up at ISS.
6. You can then send off all these materials (make sure to include a COPY of your new I-20!) to USCIS in your application for OPT. Application processing with USCIS can take up to 90 days. Once you receive your OPT (EAD) card and reached your start date, you are eligible to begin employment.
7. Don't forget to include two portrait photographs that are made according to the specific instructions on USCIS' website:
<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/photos/photo-composition-template.html>
8. And your check for \$380!
9. You can use the checklist found on the ISS website as an aid.