Optional Practical Training
2020-2021 Edition

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION
Optional Practical Training (OPT) Session For F-1 Students
Agenda

Topics That Will Be Discussed:
1. Outline OPT Basics
2. Review Application Process & Timing
3. Discuss work authorization options in US after OPT (H-1B, etc.)
4. Questions?

*READ THE OIE OPT HANDOUT*
What Is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

- OPT is a form of temporary US work authorization. This work authorization is a way for F-1 students to gain practical training directly related to the student's major area of study.

### Types Of OPT
- Pre-Completion
- Post-Completion
- STEM Extension

### OPT Can Be
- Part-time
  - (20 hours a week or less)
  - \textit{OR}
- Full-time
  - (20 hours a week or more)

### OPT Must Be
- Always full-time \textit{after} completion of degree requirements
- Directly related to \textit{YOUR} field and level of study

Carnegie Mellon University
What Do Immigration Rules Define As Work?

Immigration rules define work on Post-Completion OPT as:

**ANY employment, as long as the work is:**
- Related to your degree field and level of study
- 20 hours or more a week

What work can you do on Post-Completion OPT?
- Paid, unpaid, volunteer, contract, etc.
  - **ALL** the above types of employment are allowed on Post-Completion OPT
    - Job title doesn’t matter!
    - **BUT** the nature of the work does!

NO JOB OFFER NEEDED to apply for OPT!
What Do Immigration Rules Define As Work?

The below are types of employment that are acceptable while on Post-Completion OPT:
• Multiple employers.
• Short-term multiple employers (performing artists).
• Work for hire.
• Self-employed business owner.
• Employment through an agency or consulting firm.
• Paid employment.
• Unpaid employment/Volunteer employment (slide 6).*
Volunteer or Unpaid Employment

- A student may work as a **volunteer** or **unpaid intern** on Post-Completion OPT, where this practice does not violate any labor laws.
  - The work must be at least 20 hours per week or more for a student on Post-Completion OPT.
  - The work must be related to the student’s degree/major and provide practical experience in their field.
  - A student must be able to provide evidence (job offer letter, etc.) acquired from the student’s employer to verify dates and hours of employment, as well as a brief job description.
How Is OPT Time Used/Counted?

Immigration rules state that Post-Completion OPT:
• Is allowed for a period of 12 months, per higher degree level
  o i.e. Students cannot have 12 months of Post-Completion OPT after 2nd Master’s degree, if they were already approved for OPT for their previous Master’s degree.
  o Once USCIS approves OPT, then the OPT benefit is considered used! Even if you do not use the full 12 months.
How Is OPT Time Used/Counted?

F-1 Students are ONLY eligible for 365 days of Post-Completion OPT *per degree level!*

- If you applied for a period of Pre-Completion OPT (at your current degree level), you **MUST** deduct that time from your 12-months of Post-Completion OPT.
  - Part-time Pre-Completion OPT deducted at ½ rate.
  - Full-time Pre-Completion OPT deducted at full rate.

**NOTE:** If you are eligible for 12 months of Post Completion OPT and you request less than 12 months of Post-Completion, then the only way you MAY “redeem” the remainder of your 12 months of Post-Completion, is to go back to school, complete another degree program (at same level) and reapply for OPT (Note: approved at the discretion of USCIS).
OPT Application – Three Step Process

1. Complete and submit the “Post-Completion Optional Practical Training Request e-Form” through your MyOIE Portal.
   - The e-form request must include the “Post-Completion OPT Academic Advisor Recommendation Form”, which must be completed and signed by your program coordinator or academic advisor.

2. OIE will create an OPT I-20
   - The new I-20 will have your Post-Completion OPT request listed on page 2.
   - Remember, it takes OIE 5 to 10 business days to process immigration documents.

3. Gather all the needed documents and mail your application to USCIS
   - After you have mailed your OPT application to USCIS, OPT dates you requested **CANNOT** be changed!
   - [Processing Times](#) for OPT applications – 3 to 5 months.
THE GOAL?


NOTE: You can only legally work in the U.S. when:
• You have received your EAD Card, and
• You are within the dates listed on the card
The OPT Application Process – IMPORTANT Timelines!

- Not yet eligible to apply for Post-OPT
- USCIS Accepts Post-Completion
- OPT Applications
- Requestable
- OPT Start Date
- 90 Days
- 60 Days
- OPT Applications
- I-20 Program End Date/Program Completion
- 60 Day Grace period
- No longer eligible to apply for Post-OPT

- 60 Days
- 90 Days
The OPT Application Process – IMPORTANT Timelines!

OPT Application and the 60-Day Grace Period

- 60-day grace period only applies if a student remains physically in the U.S. at the start of the grace period and remains in the U.S. during the grace period.

If OPT is denied before end of 60-day grace period, it MAY be possible to apply again.

If OPT is denied after 60-day grace period, your OPT benefit is forfeited.

OIE recommends applying for OPT before the grace period is reached.

OPT Applications & the 60-Day Grace Period

No longer eligible to apply for Post-OPT
# The OPT Application Process – IMPORTANT Timelines!

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*NOTE: PhD Students Program End Dates Can Vary*
PhD Students – Potential End Dates

- Date of defense
- Date corrections will be completed
- Date you turn in dissertation and committee signs off
- **OR** your employment start date
  - *If* you have completed all your requirements, **EXCEPT** thesis/dissertation

PhD students can apply for Post-Completion OPT *no earlier* than 90 days *before* one of the above examples listed *and no later* than 60 days the above examples listed.
ARE YOU WORKING ON-CAMPUS!?! DO YOU RECEIVE A STIPEND!?!?

If you are currently working for CMU, and if the Program End Date on your new OPT I-20 has changed,...

Then you MUST give a copy of your New I-20 to The CMU HR Service Center and to your CMU Department Human Resources Team Administrator!
IMPORTANT!

The **ABSOLUTE LAST DAY** you can work on campus at CMU, is the **Program End Date** listed on your Post-Completion OPT I-20!

**REMEMBER,**
ALL WORK MUST STOP ON THE YOUR I-20 PROGRAM END DATE!

Unless – you have an approved EAD Card and are within the dates listed on the card!
MyOIE Portal – OPT e-Form Request

1. **REMEMBER – YOU MUST ATTEND AN OPT INFORMATION SESSION BEFORE YOU SUBMIT THIS E-FORM!***
2. **Login to your MyOIE Portal account:**
   - Click “F-1 Practical Training”
   - Click “Post-Completion Optional Practical Training Request Form”
3. **Next complete the Post-OPT e-form as required**
   - Remember, it takes OIE 5 to 10 business days to process immigration documents.

*You must attend an OPT information session before submitting the e-form.*
MyOIE Portal – OPT e-Form Request

Confirm your current residential address
• If the address listed is incorrect, then you must STOP filling in your e-form, login to SIO, and update your off campus residential address – **BEFORE** – submitting your OPT e-form request. After making the update, its ok to continue with the e-form.

Next continue with the Post-OPT e-form as required
• Personal email address, **OPT Start and End Dates you are requesting**, Department, Passport Expiration (Passport **MUST** be valid), Do you have multiple majors/degrees, Have you had OPT before, etc.

Finally, you must upload the required documents, confirm how you want to receive your OPT I-20, and you must **CERTIFY** that all the information you submitted is accurate and correct.
• **NOTE:** Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, OPT I-20s will be delivered through email until further notice.

*If needed, you can save this e-form as a DRAFT*
OPT e-Form Request Documents To Upload

1. Copy of previously issued EAD Card(s)

2. Copy of most recent I-94 Record (NOT Travel History)
   - Confirm information on your I-94 Record is correct!
   - Contact OIE if there are any mistakes!

![I-94 Information Form]

- Admission (I-94) Record Number: 280410763
- Most Recent Date of Entry: 2014 May 18
- Class of Admission: F1
- Admit Until Date: D/S
- Details provided on the I-94 Information form:
  - Last/Surname: Carnegie
  - First (Given) Name: Andrew
  - Birth Date: 12/31/1979
  - Passport Number: GBR45678911
  - Country of Issuance: United Kingdom

Effective April 26, 2013, DHS began automating the admission process. An alien lawfully admitted or paroled into the U.S. is no longer required to be in possession of a preprinted Form I-94. A record of admission printed from the CBP website constitutes a lawful record of admission. See 8 CFR § 1.4(d).

If an employer, local, state or federal agency requests admission information, present your admission (I-94) number along with any additional required documents requested by that employer or agency.
Finally, you must upload a completed and signed Academic Advisor OPT Recommendation Form.

Your academic advisor completes this section. OPT CANNOT begin before your I-20 Program End Date.

**Primary Academic Advisor(s) or Authorized Department Personnel(s) Information:**

- **Level of Study (Bachelor/Master/PhD/Other):**
- **Student's Primary Degree/Major Field of Study:**

**Student is expected to complete this degree/major requirements at the END of (Fall/Spring/Summer Term):**

20

**OR** Student is expected to complete primary degree/major requirements at the END of this specific date (if different from the END of semester date - e.g. mini 1/2/3/4, PhD’s, etc...) (MM/DD/YYYY):

**“I confirm that the information provided above is true and correct.”**

- **Name of Academic Advisor/Authorized Department Personnel (Print):**
- **Telephone Number and/or Email Address:**

- **Signature of Academic Advisor/Authorized Department Personnel:**
- **Date:**

**Bachelors and Masters Students:**
Semester you will graduate

**PhD Students and some MBA Students:**
Exact Completion Date (if different from end of semester date)
OPT e-Form Request Documents To Upload

Only complete this section of the OPT Recommendation Form if you have a declared 2nd degree/major.

Your academic advisor completes this section. OPT **CANNOT** begin before your I-20 Program End Date.

Most Bachelors and Masters Students: Semester you will graduate.

PhD Students and some MBA Students: Exact Completion Date (if different from end of semester date).

(If Applicable) Secondary Degree/Major Academic Advisor or Authorized Department Personnel Information:

Student's Secondary Degree/Major Field of Study:

Student is expected to complete this major's degree requirements at the END of (Fall/Spring/Summer Term):

OR Student is expected to complete secondary degree/major requirements at the END of this specific date (if different from the END of semester date - e.g. mini 1/2/3/4, PhD's, etc...) (MM/DD/YYYY):

"I confirm that the information provided in this section is true and correct."

Name of Secondary Academic Advisor/Authorized Department Personnel:

(Print):

Signature of Secondary Academic Advisor/Authorized Department Personnel:

Date:
IMPORTANT! Choosing OPT Dates!

Choose OPT Dates CAREFULLY!

- **YOU CANNOT CHANGE OPT DATES** after you have mailed your OPT Application to USCIS.

OPT Pending?

- Then you are OK to stay in the U.S.
- But **NO WORK** without your approved EAD Card!

"Should I Choose A Early Start Date?"

- Work permission soon after completion
- To continue on-campus work

OR

"Should I Choose A Late Start Date?"

- More time to find a job
- Possible travel plans
- Won't cut into days of unemployment (90 days)

Carnegie Mellon University
IMPORTANT! Choosing OPT Dates!

REMEMBER!

<table>
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*NOTE: PhD Students Program End Dates Can Vary*
IMPORTANT! Choosing OPT Dates!

If there is a GAP between your I-20 PROGRAM END DATE and your EAD CARD START DATE…

(example below)

I-20 Program End Date

HAVE NOT GRADUATED

GAP BEFORE EAD CARD START DATE

NO WORK!

NOTE: YOU are still in a Valid STATUS inside the U.S. While OPT Application is PENDING.

EAD CARD HAS ARRIVED!

WORK OK!

As long as you are within the dates listed on the EAD Card!
“I Submitted My OPT e-Form Request. Now What?”

Begin preparing your OPT application to USCIS
- Be ready to file OPT application when you receive your OPT I-20 (30-day rule)!
  - Instructions can be found on the OIE website.

It will take OIE 5 to 10 business days to process your new OPT I-20
- You will receive an email once your OPT I-20 is ready.
- However, your OPT I-20 will not be released to you prior to the earliest date your OPT application can reach USCIS (see below).

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*NOTE: PhD Students Program End Dates Can Vary*
“I Submitted My OPT e-Form Request. Now What?”

✓ CHECK YOUR OPT I-20 FOR ACCURACY!

✓ You will find your OPT Requested Dates listed on page 2 of your new OPT I-20.

✓ Once your Post-Completion OPT period has begun, the Travel Signature on your most recently issued I-20 is only valid for 6 months.
IMPORTANT! The 30-Day OPT I-20 Rule!

• Your OPT application MUST be received by USCIS within 30 days of the date your OPT I-20 is issued.
• If I-20 is received by USCIS more than 30 days after its issuance date, your OPT application will be DENIED.
• You must be ready to file OPT application when you receive your OPT I-20!
Timing of Your OPT Application

• Be aware of USCIS processing times!
• USCIS typically takes 3 to 5 months to approve OPT applications...
  • ...or longer if application is returned, something is missing, etc.
• Always check the USCIS website for processing times. Select “I-765...”, and “Potomac Service Center” from the drop-down menus.

NOTE: OPT APPLICATIONS CANNOT BE EXPEDITED!
Timing of Your OPT Application

What Happens If My EAD Card Is Issued After The Start Date I Requested?
• Your Post-Completion OPT EAD Card start date will be the date of OPT approval
  • For example – the OPT dates you requested were: 12/24/2020 to 12/23/2021 \textit{\textbf{but}} USCIS does not process your OPT application until 2/2/2021 \textit{\textbf{\rightarrow}} This means that your EAD card will have updated dates (i.e. 2/2/2021 to 2/1/2022).
• Your Post-Completion OPT EAD Card end date will \textit{\textbf{NEVER}} go beyond 14 months from the program end date listed on your OPT I-20.

\textbf{\textit{NO WORK}} until you have received your EAD Card and you are within start and end dates on the card!
What Do I Include With My Application?
“What Do I Include With My Application?”

What To Include?:

✓ G-1145 Form
✓ *Check (payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security) OR Form G-1450 – to pay by Credit Card. The fee amount is found on the USCIS website. Click the ‘Filing Fee’ tab.
✓ Two U.S. passport-sized photos (No Glasses)
✓ Completed, signed I-765 Form
✓ Copies of all I-20s issued to you from your current degree level
✓ Copy of VALID passport
✓ Copy of F-1 visa sticker
✓ Copy of most recent I-94 Record
✓ Copy of previous EAD (if you’ve applied for OPT before)

Include ALL the materials listed on OIE’s Post-Completion OPT Instructions
G-1145 Form

- G-1145 Form:
  - Should be the 1st page of your OPT application
  - Free to file
  - More like a few days or up to-4 weeks...
  - Disregard the forms expiration date but be sure to download from uscis.gov [website](https://www.uscis.gov).

**When Will I Be Notified?**
We will send the e-Notification within 24 hours after we accept your application

**USCIS**
Form G-1145
Expires 9/26/14
A Personal Check
Prepare Your Check Following the Format of the Image Below

• NOTE: There are different options for paying the I-765 Fee. You can find additional information about this on the USCIS website.
• Checks must be issued by a U.S. bank.
• Confirm the fee amount on the USCIS website. Click ‘Filing Fee’
A Personal Check
Prepare Your Check Like The Image Below

Leave the back of the check **BLANK**
If you wish to pay by credit card – please fill-out the attached G-1450 Form to your application.

"Petitioner" is person applying for the OPT.

Card Holder’s Information
- Can be your information or a friend's → enter that information here.
- Make sure "Card Holder" SIGNS the form!
- NOTE: If there is ONE mistake on this form, then your OPT Application will be rejected and returned. Use this form with caution.

US Banks ONLY!
Type or Print in Black Ink
Photos

*OIE Cannot Check Photos*

- Write your name **AND** I-94 # on the back of the photos!
  - Write lightly – don’t damage the photo!
- Make sure they are the correct size!
- Photos taken within past 30 days!
- NO glasses!
- White or off-white background with no shadows!
- You can include your check & photos in a white envelope, marked with your name and I-94 number.
- Attach envelope to application
- Do not staple photos!
Form I-765

Complete This Form By:

- Form fillable pdf
- Combination of form fillable and Handwritten in black ink

*NOTE: Use the most recent.updated I-765 Form ONLY. If you use an old I-765 Form, your OPT Application will be denied. Download the new form on the uscis.gov website.

https://www.uscis.gov/i-765
Form I-765

Part 1. Reason for Applying

I am applying for (select only one box):

1.a. □ Initial permission to accept employment.

1.b. □ Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document, or correction of my employment authorization document NOT DUE to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) error.

NOTE: Replacement (correction) of an employment authorization document due to USCIS error does not require a new Form I-765 and filing fee. Refer to Replacement for Card Error in the What is the Filing Fee section of the Form I-765 Instructions for further details.

1.c. □ Renewal of my permission to accept employment.(Attach a copy of your previous employment authorization document.)

Check the box:
- “Permission to accept employment...”
Form I-765

Part 2. Information About You

Your Full Legal Name

1.a. Family Name (Last Name)
1.b. Given Name (First Name)
1.c. Middle Name

Only complete this section if your name has legally changed. i.e. You updated your passport with a new name, etc.
Form I-765

Follow the below instructions **ONLY** if you will use a friend or family member's address on the I-765.

- If you will change addresses within the next 5 months, you are advised to list the address of a trusted friend or family member.
- If you choose to enter your friend or family member's address, you **MUST** fill in 5.a, 5.b, 5.c, 5.d, 5.e with this person's U.S. name and address.
- **NOTE: YOU CANNOT USE OIE'S ADDRESS!**  
  - You would then check box “NO”

- You will enter **YOUR** current U.S. address - where you are living at the time you submit your application to USCIS.

---

**Part 2. Information About You** (continued)

**Your U.S. Mailing Address**

5.a. In Care Of Name (if any)

5.b. Street Number and Name


5.d. City or Town

5.e. State □ 5.f. ZIP Code

(UPS ZIP Code Lookup)

6. Is your current mailing address the same as your physical address? □ Yes □ No

**NOTE: If you answered “No” to Item Number 6, provide your physical address below.**

**U.S. Physical Address**

7.a. Street Number and Name


7.c. City or Town

7.d. State □ 7.e. ZIP Code
Form I-765

If you know that you **WILL BE** at your current address for 5+ months after submitting your OPT application to USCIS – then follow the directions below.

- Enter a US address (where you will be located for the next 5 months)
- You would check box “YES” – if this is the same as your current physical address.

- Leave Blank – **ONLY** if address is the same as listed above!
Form I-765

8. If you have an A-Number, enter that information here. If not, or if you lost this information, then you can leave this blank.

9. Leave Blank

10. Check Gender Listed On Your Passport

11. Check Marital Status

12. Have You Filed an I-765 Before?
   - Check The Appropriate Answer
13.a: Do you have a Social Security Number?  
*Check Appropriate Answer*

- If you check **YES** → then go to 13.b: Enter SSN Number.

- **ONLY** If you check **NO** for 13.a, and would like an SSN Number/Card → Then complete questions 14, 15, 16.a to 17.b
  
  - NOTE: The SSN Number/Card will be mailed to the address input on “Part 2, questions 5.a, 5.b, 5.c, 5.d, 5.e” after your EAD Card has been approved.
Form I-765

18.a: Enter Country of Passport

18.b: Leave Blank – Unless – You Hold Two Passports

19.a: to 19.c: Enter Needed Information

20: Enter Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)
Form I-765

21.a: Write in I-94 Number  
https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home  
21.b: Passport Number  
21.c: Leave Blank  
21.d: Enter Country on Passport  
21.e: Passport Expiration Date *(Passport MUST BE VALID)*  
22 and 23: *Refer to your latest POE stamp in your passport*  
24: **“F-1 Student”** *(This could be different if you changed your status inside the US. Contact OIE with questions)*  
25: “F-1 Student”  
26: SEVIS Number

NOTE: U.S. Point of Entry (POE) outside U.S. is allowed! This is where you entered through immigration. *Can be the full city name or the abbreviation!*
Form I-765

27: Write Post Completion OPT code: (c)(3)(B)

- SKIP Questions 28 through 31.b
- Check Options 1.a to 2 As They Apply To You

3: Current US Phone Number
4: Current US Mobile Number
5: Current “Personal” Email Address *(NOT an Andrew Email Address)*
Form I-765

**Sign** within lines in **dark blue ink** after printing the completed form.

**NOTE:** You will sign your I-765 Form in Part 3 (Page 5), but you should **ONLY** complete Part 4, Part 5 and Part 6 **IF** they apply to you! If they **DO NOT** apply, then leave Part 4, Part 5 and Part 6 **BLANK**.

For Part 6 -> See next slide for an example.

**NOTE:** You **MUST INCLUDE** all 7 pages of the I-765 Form in your OPT application to USCIS.
Form I-765
Part 6 - Page 7

If you have ever had ANY of the following:

- Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
- Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- Previous SEVIS ID Number

Then, complete 1.a, 1.b, and 1.c → Leave #2 Blank and then follow the example picture with YOUR information.

(if applies to you) 3.a. and 4.a write:

- Page Number – 3
- Part Number – 2
- Item Number – 27

(if applies to you) 5.a write:

- Page Number – 3
- Part Number – 2
- Item Number – 26

If none of the above applies to you, then leave pg 7 blank and draw a diagonal line across pg 7.

REMEMBER, YOU MUST INCLUDE ALL 7 PAGES OF THE I-765 FORM IN YOUR OPT APPLICATION TO USCIS!
Additional Required Documents – *Photocopies*

- Most recent I-94 Record **Printout**
- **OR** (if applicable) a photocopy of White I-94 Card (front & back)

- Photocopy of your **VALID** passport photo page **AND**
- Photocopy of your most recent F-1 Visa Sticker

- **Photocopy of ALL** I-20s from your current degree level, including your new OPT I-20. Remember to **Sign** all I-20s before photocopying them!
Optional Cover Letter

Cover letter **NOT** required, unless something is missing, or further explanation is required:

- Missing I-20
- Missing EAD

Sample OPT Cover Letter

[DATE OF REQUEST]

[STUDENT NAME]:
[SEVIS ID NUMBER]:
[OPT REQUESTED: PRE or POST-COMPLETION or STEM] [OPT DATES REQUESTED]:

Dear USCIS Officer:

Please accept this cover letter for my F-1 [PRE or POST-COMPLETION or STEM] Practical Training request. I am writing this letter because [REASON FOR LETTER].

Enclosed, please find my [PRE or POST-COMPLETION or STEM] application materials.

Please contact me if you require additional information or documentation to process this request.

Sincerely,

[SIGNATURE OF STUDENT]

[NAME OF STUDENT]
F-2 dependents will receive a new I-20 as well.

F-2 documents **DO NOT** need to be submitted in your OPT application.

F-2 dependent(s) **Must ALWAYS Travel** with:

- Their F-2 OPT I-20, and copies of the F-1’s immigration documents:
  - OPT I-20
  - EAD card(s)
  - Job Offer Letter
Double Check Your OPT Application!

AND

Make a copy of your ENTIRE OPT Application! (Including Your Payment!)

You may need this information in the future! Scan, copy, etc.
**BEFORE** You Mail Your Application...

**DOUBLE CHECK EVERYTHING!**

- Did you check that you are using the most recent/updated I-765 Form?
- Did you check the box at the top of the I-765 Form (page 1) indicating what you are applying for?
- Did you sign and date your I-765 Form on page 5?
- Did you include all 7 pages of the I-765 Form?
- Did you check the USCIS website to make sure that your application fee is correct?
- Did you check the F-1 I-765 mailing instructions on the USCIS website?
Mailing OPT Application – FedEx/UPS

NOTE: OPT Applications **MUST** be mailed from within the United States!

- Make sure that you checked the F-1 (I-765) mailing instructions on the USCIS website?
  - Click on “Foreign Students” and see the row with
  - ‘F-1 Optional Practical Training’ for the most up to date mailing address.
  - Note the distinct mailing address for FedEx, UPS deliveries.

- OIE recommends using Express Mail (FedEx or UPS).
  - That you mail your application packet with **Tracking**.
  - That you save a copy of the Express Mail receipt that you receive from FedEx and UPS.
    - This can help you prove that your application arrived at USCIS.
What Happens After You Mail In Your OPT Application to USCIS?
What Happens After I Mail my OPT Application...

You should receive from USCIS:
• Text message or email with your receipt number
  • (within 2 to 4 weeks)
• Paper Receipt Notice
  • (within 4 weeks)
• Paper Approval Notice
  • (within 3-5 months)
• EAD Card
  • (within 3-5 months)
What Happens While my OPT application is Pending...

“I made a mistake on my OPT Application... Now what!?“

Contact OIE!

And *DO NOT* Mail In Duplicate Applications!
What Happens While my OPT application is Pending...

• Once you receive your Receipt Number from USCIS, you can check your OPT case status on the USCIS website.
• **NOTE: This website is not 100% accurate**
• Case status will stay/remain in “received status” until your OPT has been approved.
Maintaining Your F-1 Status During OPT

1. You **MUST** maintain a valid passport
   • If you need to renew your passport, this can be done from inside the US. You will need contact your Embassy/Consulate for additional information.

2. Follow **ALL** the [OPT rules and regulations](#)
   • The type of ‘qualifying employment’ you can participate in on Post-Completion OPT is extensive.
   • Employment during OPT _only_ requires that your work be 20 hours a week or more and directly related to your degree/major field of study.

3. What does SEVP (immigration) view as ‘qualifying employment’?
   • Immigration defines “qualifying employment” as working for multiple employers, self-employment, employment through a temp or staffing agency or consulting firm, paid employment, or unpaid employment.
Maintaining Your F-1 Status During OPT

You **MUST** activate your [SEVP Portal](#) account within 10 days

- You will only receive an email from SEVP ([do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov)) if you have an approved EAD card and are within the dates listed on the card.
- You must activate it right away or the SEVP link will expire.
- **NOTE:** The first email from SEVP will be sent to your Andrew Email account.

Once you activate your [SEVP Portal](#) account

- You **MUST** report **ANY** employment updates/personal updates through your SEVP Portal. This must always be done within 10 days of **ANY CHANGE**.
- When you report your information through your SEVP Portal account, you are reporting directly to the U.S. government. **BE SPECIFIC** on how your employment is directly related to your major field of study and follow the [guide](#) on the OIE website.

Do you need a new I-20?

- If you update your information through your SEVP Portal account and would like an updated I-20 which lists your employer information (for travel or employer’s request), you must also complete the MyOIE OPT Reporting e-Form. Instructions can be found on the OIE [website](#).

*NOTE: The SEVP Portal (Immigration) and your MyOIE Portal (OIE) are two separate portals. You only need to update one – not both.
Maintaining Your F-1 Status During OPT

Remember, you **CANNOT** exceed more than 90 days of unemployment time

- Your ‘unemployment time’ during Post-Completion OPT begins from the start date listed on your EAD Card and is defined as each calendar day that the student is not employed in qualifying employment.
- In order for your ‘unemployment time’ to stop being counted, you must find qualifying employment and work 20 hours or more a week in a field directly related to your level and field of study.

When reporting your employment information in SEVP Portal account

- **Do NOT** delete employer information in your SEVP account unless you never worked for that employer.

Have additional questions about reporting requirements?

- Visit DHS's [SEVP Portal Guide](#) for additional help.
Maintaining Your F-1 Status During OPT

Keep good records, and continue to report any changes to SEVP.

- **ALWAYS** keep good documentation of your employment for your immigration records (i.e.):
  - Employer/company name, employer address, # hours per week worked, job description, supervisor contact info, etc.
  - For Paid Employment: Paystubs, W-2 forms, etc.
  - For Unpaid Employment: Employer letters, etc.
    - **NOTE:** Employer MAY NOT be able to write letter for unpaid work – check before starting job!
Travel \textit{BEFORE} I-20 Program End Date

If you travel outside the US and return \textit{BEFORE} your I-20 program end date (with your OPT Application pending with USCIS), you will need the below documents to re-enter the US:

- Valid passport (valid for 6 months into the future)
- Valid F-1 visa sticker (not expired)
- I-20 (most recently issued)
- Enrollment Verification Letter from The HUB
  - \text{NOTE: Your I-94 Record will change after your re-enter the US – This is expected and \textit{DOES NOT} impact your OPT Application.}
Travel AFTER I-20 Program End Date

If you travel outside the US and return AFTER your I-20 program end date, you will need the below documents to re-enter the US:

- Valid passport (valid for 6 months into the future)
- Valid F-1 visa sticker (not expired)
- I-20 (most recently issued)
  - Employer information Reported to SEVP and listed on page 2 of your I-20 if your EAD Card has been approved.
  - I-20 Signed for travel within the past 6 months
- EAD Card (or if EAD Card is pending, then your Paper OPT Receipt Notice from USCIS).
- Job offer letter or proof of job search (interviews, etc.)

You can check I.C.E’s website for updated guidance on travel.
Travel (cont.)

Automatic Visa Revalidation (AVR)

- AVR may allow students to be admitted into the US, if they meet certain requirements. See OIE website for more information.

Requirements For AVR:

Students on OPT/STEM OPT, who depart the US, for brief travel of 30 days or less to Canada, Mexico, or adjacent islands, may be admitted back into the U.S. even if their F-1 visa has expired (as long as they have all other required travel documents). You can find additional information on the DoS website.

NOTE: Citizens of some countries are excluded; some adjacent islands are excluded (Cuba).

AVR does not apply if you:

- Applied for a new visa sticker
- Have been outside of the U.S. for more than 30 days
- Have traveled to a country other than Canada, Mexico, or an adjacent island
Travel (cont.)

If you travel outside the US, but have an H-1B Application pending with USCIS, you must:

- **REFER TO** your H employer and their attorneys with all travel questions.
  - Once you have a pending/approved H-1B, you must discuss **ALL** international travel with your H employer and their attorneys. OIE is not able to advise regarding travel for students in these circumstances.

If you travel outside the US and will remain in F-1 Status on OPT, then you can:

- **REFER TO slide 66**
- Refer to the OIE [website](#) for additional information

**NOTE:** All EAD Cards state “not valid for re-entry” – This is OK. It only means that your EAD Card is not valid for re-entry **alone**. You will need all the materials listed on slide 60 to re-enter the US.
To be eligible for the 24-Month STEM OPT Extension, you MUST:

• Have a recent degree in a STEM designated field. You can check the Major Code(s)/(CIP code) on your I-20 to confirm ("Program of Study" section) you are STEM eligible.
• Be in a period of Post-Completion OPT.
• Have a job or job offer with a qualified e-verify employer that is paid employment.

*NOTE: CMU is not a qualified e-verified employer for the purpose of STEM OPT!*

To apply for the 24-Month STEM OPT Extension, you MUST:

• Submit a 24-month STEM I-20 e-Form Request to OIE. Directions on our website
• Next you must mail your STEM OPT Application to USCIS:
  • Earliest: 90 days before your OPT EAD Card expiry date.
  • Latest: MUST BE BEFORE your current EAD Card expires!

H-1B Temporary Work Visa

• New Process! Online Registration for H-1Bs now takes place between March 1st to March 20th. Find Information On The USCIS website
• Private Sector: H-1B effective start date is Oct 1st. The H-1B “CAP” or quota is 65,000 annually, available to employers April 1st, plus 20,000 additional H-1B spaces for advanced degree holders.
• Universities and some Non-Profits: Not subject to Cap and can apply at any time for any start date.
OPT/STEM OPT vs. H-1B

OPT/STEM OPT
- OPT/STEM OPT is based on your degree completion (not on a specific job).
- You can change jobs/employers using your OPT/STEM. SEVIS must be updated for new job!
- You also have 90 days of unemployment time while on OPT, and an additional 60 days on STEM OPT.

H-1B Temporary Work Visa
- H-1B is directly linked to your employer/job.
- Not as easy to change jobs/employers, since US immigration status is based on the job.
- Once H-1B is approved, your F-1 Status and your OPT/STEM OPT benefits end.
Options After Post-Completion OPT

Cap-Gap Extension
- Cap-Gap Extension extends an eligible F-1 student's status to bridge the gap between the end of their F-1 status and the start of H-1B status, allowing the student to remain in the U.S. during the “gap” and continue working (if on active OPT/STEM OPT). The cap-gap extension is available to students who were either on approved OPT or in their F-1 60-day grace period when their H-1B was filed and have a pending or approved Change-of-Status H-1B Petition with USCIS.

To be apply for a Cap-Gap Extension I-20, you MUST:
- Submit a Cap-Gap Extension e-Form Request to OIE. Directions on our website.
- You can also review the OIE Cap-Gap FAQ handout for additional information.

GAP IN EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION

H-1B filing opens on April 1st of every calendar year

ON OPT/STEM
Current EAD Card Expires after April 1st

CAP-GAP I-20!
Current EAD Card Expires after April 1st

If your H-1B Petition was is selected in the lottery and filed as a “change of status” (ONLY), you are eligible for

H-1B Start Date October 1

H-1B ACTIVE
IF YOU RECEIVE H-1B APPROVAL – YOU MUST EMAIL A COPY OF THAT TO OIE, AS SOON AS IT IS APPROVED!
Questions?

Office of International Education
Cyert Hall, 1st Floor
(Atrium Level)
412-268-5231

www.cmu.edu/oie