Optional Practical Training

OVERVIEW OF POST-COMPLETION OPT

Office of International Services

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Roadmap

1. Overview of Post-Completion OPT

2. Eligibility Requirements

3. Application Process

4. Finding and Reporting Employment

5. STEM OPT Extension (basics)

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What is Optional Practical Training?

POST-GRADUATION TYPES

- Post-Completion OPT – everyone applies for this first

1. Up to 12-months of OPT

2. Form I-765 category (c) (3) (B)

- STEM OPT Extension – eligible students can apply later

1. 24-month extension of already approved OPT

2. Form I-765 Category (c) (3) (C)

What is Post-Completion OPT?

12-MONTH POST-COMPLETION OPT

- Temporary 12-month off-campus employment authorization for eligible students in F-1 status.

- Post-graduation *benefit* of F-1 student status.
  - (OPT does <u>not</u> change your visa status)

- Allows you to gain real-world experience in your major field of study.

- **Recommended** by the school's Designated School Official (DSO) in SEVIS and **filed** to and **approved** by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

- Employment Authorization Document (**EAD card**) issued by USCIS when application is approved – official proof of authorized employment

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What is Post-Completion OPT?

12-MONTH POST-COMPLETION OPT

- Employment can begin after completion of program OR after completion of coursework (thesis grad students)

- Students recommended for full-time employment ONLY (more than 20 hours per week)

- An offer of employment and Social Security Number are not required before applying for OPT.

Eligibility Requirements

12-MONTH POST-COMPLETION OPT

- Must be in valid F-1 status and be <u>physically</u> <u>present</u> in the U.S.

- Must have full-time enrollment in U.S. for at least 2 consecutive semesters (fall/spring) prior to the requested OPT start date.

- Cannot exceed 364 days of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) at current degree level.

- Cannot be previously approved for OPT at current degree level.
  - OPT is authorized once per degree level

When to Apply:

APPLICATION TIMELINE

- USCIS will accept your application:
    - Up to 90 days before your program end date (graduation)
    - Up to 60 days after your program end date (graduation)

        Note: Graduation (completion of program requirements) is different from Commencement (ceremony at which graduates are recognized)

- **Must** submit completed application to USCIS **within 30 days** of the date a DSO recommends OPT in your SEVIS Record and issues OPT I-20.

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How to Apply for OPT

Step 1	Complete OPT I-20 Request with advisor and submit to International Services for processing.
Step 2	Create USCIS account (use **MSU email**) and start Form I-765 application.
Step 3	Upload required evidence and complete application.
Step 4	Submit application and pay filing fee(s).

How to Apply for OPT

STEP 1: REQUEST OPT I-20

- Complete **OPT I-20 Request** form with advisor and submit to International Services for processing.

  - Advisor/departmental representative completes page 2, which confirms your graduation eligibility.
  - Select a requested start date in 60-day grace period.
  - Apply for graduation (Resource: Office of the Registrar)

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How to Apply for OPT

STEP 2: CREATE ACCOUNT & START I-765

- Create <u>online USCIS account</u> and start filing Form I-765 application. Use MSU email.

  - Select category: Post-Completion OPT (**C 3 B**)
  - Indicate reason: "Initial permission to accept employment"
  - Continue answering questions in application

How to Apply for OPT

STEP 3: REQUIRED EVIDENCE

- Upload required evidence, which can differ by individual:

  - U.S. Style **Passport Photos**: <u>U.S. passport photo requirements</u>

  - Most recent **I-94 Arrival Record**
    - Class of Admission should be F-1
  - Employment Authorization Document OR **Government ID**
    - upload your passport ID page with name, expiration, and photo; OR previous EAD card
  - Previously Authorized **CPT** (from current degree level) or **OPT**
    - **U**se CPT I-20s and/or previous OPT I-20s + previous EAD cards
  - **Form I-20 with OPT Recommendation**
    - sign in blue ink and upload all 3 pages!

How to Apply for OPT

STEP 3: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- "Additional Information" Section

  - Use this optional section to provide context regarding evidence/information in your application; for example:

    - Previous CPT (indicate dates, degree level, full/part-time, etc.)

    - Previous OPT (indicate dates, degree level, full/part-time, etc.)

    - Changes to your name, SEVIS ID, passport, etc.

      - indicate previous SEVIS IDs you have had (if applicable)

      - indicate if you have renewed your passport and provide old number

How to Apply for OPT

- **Review** application for accuracy, pay filing fee(s), and submit I-765 application.

  - Required $410 nonrefundable fee to USCIS
  - Optional $1,500 <u>Premium Processing</u> fee for expedited processing/decision

After Submission of I-765

- Online applicants automatically receive an electronic Receipt Notice – keep this to check application status.

- Later, you will receive a Form I-797C paper Receipt Notice at your mailing address.

- Processing times vary; USCIS lists estimated times on their website.

- Do not leave the U.S. and do not start working.

After OPT Approval

- Email notification on day of approval (if you file online)
  - Create SEVP portal account and submit updates
- I-797 Approval Notice sent to mailing address
  - EAD card will arrive approximately 1-2 business weeks later
- "Valid From" date on EAD is the date employment can begin
  - We recommend that you do not work until you have the physical EAD card in hand
- 90-day unemployment clock begins with the "Valid From" date printed on the EAD.
- International Travel would now be advisable.

Special Situations

TALK TO A DESIGNATED SCHOOL OFFICIAL (DSO) IF…

- OPT is Approved but you do not graduate

- OPT is Denied
  - Review Denial Notice for reasoning
  - Can re-apply with new I-20 if in 60-day grace period

- EAD Card is lost, incorrect, or not delivered
  - Apply for replacement EAD

- Withdrawing OPT application

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Types of Employment

ELIGIBLE EMPLOYMENT

- Paid full-time employment
  - Multiple employers (e.g., 2 part-time jobs)
  - Short-term multiple employers (performing artists)
  - Work for hire: contract employment
  - Self-employed business owner
  - Employment through an agency

- Unpaid employment: volunteers or unpaid interns; cannot violate any labor laws

- Unemployment: 90-day limit for Post-Completion OPT

Reporting Requirements

WAYS TO REPORT EMPLOYMENT

- <u>SEVP Portal</u> – tool for reporting employer information directly to SEVIS Record

- Report to MSU International Services – request updated Form I-20

Reporting Requirements

WHAT TO REPORT

Any changes to address and phone number

How the employment relates to field of study

Employer's name, address, and taxpayer ID (EIN)

Job title, start and end dates of employment

Full-time (must work at least 20 hours/week)

Supervisor's name, phone #, and email address

All changes must be reported within 10 calendar days.

After OPT Ends

AFTER COMPLETION OF APPROVED PERIOD FOR OPT

- 60-day grace period begins after the "Valid Until" date on EAD.
  - Must depart the U.S., or
  - Begin new program to continue F-1 status at MSU, or
  - Transfer SEVIS Record to another school, or
  - Begin STEM OPT (must apply **BEFORE** OPT ends)

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What is STEM OPT?

STEM OPT EXTENSION BASICS

- Extension of authorized Post-Completion OPT for additional 24-month period
  - Must apply <u>before</u> Post-Completion OPT ends – can apply up to 90 days before
- Degree must be in an <u>approved STEM field</u>.
- "Employer Specific" – one at a time; must be E-Verify.
- Employer must provide student with formal training plan (Form I-983) and learning objectives.
  - Form I-983 must be submitted to DSO before applying and after any changes are made during STEM period.

Ending OPT Early

HOW OPT CAN END EARLY

01

Change of immigration status (e.g., H-1B)

02

Abandon OPT and F-1 status and depart the United States

03

Begin a new program/transfer out prior to end of OPT period

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International Services

QUESTIONS?

International Services

- Walk in hours daily, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

- Phone: 417-836-6618

- Email: internationalservices@missouristate.edu

- Website: international.MissouriState.edu/services

Helpful Links

- U.S. Passport Photos

- MyUSCIS

- How to create a USCIS account

- Tips for filing online forms with USCIS