How do I apply for OPT?

**STEP 1:** Gather ALL documents listed below:

- Completed *Department Recommendation Form*
- Completed Form I-765* (provided at end of quiz)
- OPT Quiz Results
- Two 2" x 2" *passport photographs* (Photos cannot be more than 60 days old)
- Photocopy of your most recent *I-94 card* (Front & Back OR Electronic Printout)
- Photocopy of the *Biographical Page* of your Passport
- Photocopy of your *F-1 Student Visa* (Or I-797 Approval Notice if you filed change of status in the U.S.)
- Obtain a *Cashier’s check* or money order for $380.00. NO personal checks (Made payable to: *U.S. Department of Homeland Security*)

**IF Applicable, ALSO bring:**

- Photocopy of previous *EAD(s)* (Front and back)
- Photocopy of I-20’s with CPT notations (If you have engaged in Curricular Practical Training)

*Choosing Post-Completion OPT Dates:*

- You must choose a start date that falls within 60 days after the date of graduation.
- Consider things such as:
  - amount of time you will need for your job search
  - whether you have an employer waiting to hire you
  - whether or not you might want a break after your studies

**STEP 2:** Make an appointment to meet with an *International Services Advisor* for “*OPT Ready to File*”**

You must bring all completed documents from STEP 1 to your appointment. Please remember that you can apply for OPT up to 60 days after your completion date.

**Note: If you are almost ready to file but still have a few questions please make an appointment for “OPT Questions Only” or come in during our Walk-In hours

**STEP 3:** Meeting with the advisor

During your appointment, an advisor will review your documents, make a new I-20 for OPT application, and hand you your final application packet for mailing. It will be your responsibility to mail the the packet so that USCIS receives it within 30 days.

**STEP 4:** Picking up your EAD

After your OPT petition has been approved by USCIS, your *Employment Authorization Document* (EAD) will be sent to International Services. Please be advised that it may take up to 90 days for EAD processing. You will be contacted by International Services when your document has arrived and is ready for pick-up. If necessary, arrangements can be made for you to authorize a third party to pick up your EAD or to have it expressed mailed at your expense.
An Overview of the OPT Process

OPT: The Basics

- **Optional Practical Training**
  - Experiential learning granted to F-1 students to work in their major field of study
  - Can apply for up to 12 months of OPT for each level of study (Bachelor's, Master's, PhD)

- **EAD (Employment Authorization Document)**
  - The card a student receives from USCIS when OPT is approved

- **Eligibility to apply for OPT**
  - Must be in valid F-1 visa status and have been enrolled on a full-time basis for one academic year (two semesters)
  - Have a valid passport and a valid I-20 indicating the correct major and level of study

- **All students on OPT must report to the international student office:**
  - Any change in name or address
  - The name and address of their employer
  - Any change to the name and address of their employer
  - Any interruption of such employment

- **Can I work before I get my EAD?**
  - No work before the EAD card is in hand
  - Work on-campus after graduation is prohibited if you haven't received your EAD. **Note:** You may work on-campus after graduation using the EAD if the on-campus job is directly related to your major field of study.

Types of OPT Granted

- **OPT: While Pursing a Degree (Pre-completion OPT)**
  - Available for undergraduate and graduate students
  - Limited to 20 hours per week. (Total hours employed including on-campus work may not exceed 20 hrs/wk.)
  - Must be registered full-time

- **OPT: During Annual Vacation (Pre-completion OPT)**
  - Available for undergraduate and graduate students
  - May apply full or part-time

- **OPT: After Completion of Program**
  - For students who will complete ALL degree requirements in the academic program and are eligible to receive their degree.
  - The 12 months of OPT granted must be completed within 14 months following completion of studies.
  - Can only be requested full-time.

- **OPT: After Completion of All Coursework**
  - Available for graduate students
  - Must have completed all coursework for the degree, yet still need to complete the research and/or writing of thesis or dissertation.
  - May not apply for this type, if you’ve already defended.
  - May apply full or part-time
  - Must be registered for thesis or dissertation hours
OPT: 17 Month STEM Extension
- Option available for F-1 Students who majored in selected STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics) fields.
- Must be currently in initial 12 months of OPT working for an employer registered in E-verify.
- 17 month extension of OPT
- Student may only apply once in a lifetime.

Reminder
- Each time you apply for OPT, you must pay the fee and submit all application materials.
- OPT requested prior to graduation is subtracted from the 12 month total available.
- Part-time pre-completion OPT is deducted as half. For example, 3 months of part-time OPT would be deducted as 1 ½ months.

When can I apply for OPT?

Students applying for OPT
- Prior to Completion, may apply:
  - 120 days prior to the desired start date
  - If you have not yet met the one year full-time enrollment requirement, 90 days prior to the start date

- After Completion, may apply:
  - 90 days prior to degree completion (graduation).
  - Or up to 60 days after the degree completion date.

- STEM Extension, may apply
  - 90 days prior to the end of the initial 12 months of OPT.

Processing times vary. See the USCIS website for current processing times.

Facts to Know While on OPT

Can I travel while I'm on OPT?
- Before graduation and before EAD: Travel with valid passport, visa and I-20 signed within the last three months.
- After graduation but no EAD: Travel is not recommended.
- After graduation and EAD arrival: Travel with valid passport, visa, I-20 signed within the last six months, and a letter from your employer.

No more than 90 days of unemployment during the 12 months of OPT.