Intro to OPT
Thursday February 15, 2018

Phillip Thomas
International Student & Scholar Advisor
WHAT IS OPT?

- Optional Practical Training (OPT)

- Up to 12 months of full-time employment authorization after you complete your program to gain professional experience in your field of study

- OPT is granted in the form of an Employment Authorization Document or commonly called EAD card. Dates of validity are printed on the card.
TODAY’S OBJECTIVES

1. Understand how to apply for OPT
2. Know what to choose as your OPT start and end dates
3. Know when to submit your:
   - OPT recommendation request → ISO
   - OPT application → U.S. Government
AM I ELIGIBLE?

- Full-time student maintaining F-1 Student status for at least one academic year
- **Passport** valid at least 6 months into the future
- F-1 students are eligible for an additional 12 months of OPT after each higher degree level (Bachelor’s → Master’s → Ph.D.)
- **Job offer** is not required
- **Part-time CPT** does *not* affect OPT eligibility
MAJOR APPLICATION STEPS

1. Speak with your Academic Advisor or Program Director to obtain a letter verifying your expected program completion date

2. Submit application documents* to the ISO to obtain an OPT recommendation (new Form I-20)

3. Mail required documents* to USCIS

* See ISO’s OPT Guidelines for list of required documents
PROCESSING TIMES

1. Speak with the Academic Advisor or Program Director to obtain a letter verifying your expected program completion date
   • Processing times vary, arrange this early

2. Submit application documents to the ISO to obtain an OPT recommendation (new Form I-20)
   • Up to 10 business days

3. Mail required documents to USCIS
   • Approximately 90 days!
WHEN TO APPLY?

- **Program end date**: May 15, 2018
- **Application window**: February 14 - July 14, 2018
  - USCIS must receive your application within these dates
- **OPT recommendation “expiration”**: 30 days after the issue date of your new I-20
- Keep in mind processing times!
This is the window for applying to the ISO and USCIS for OPT

Note:
- The program end-date is the last day of exams at GW for any given semester.
- Your “graduation date,” or the date when your diploma is conferred, is not considered your program end-date.
OPT START / END DATE

- You select the proposed start and end dates of your OPT authorization period when you request an OPT recommendation from the ISO.

- Dates below are based on the spring 2018 application cycle

- Earliest possible OPT start date: May 16, 2018
- Latest start date you may select: July 14, 2018

- Maximum OPT authorization: 365 days
- Latest possible OPT end date: July 14, 2019
The OPT start-date that you choose and the ISO puts on your I-20 must be a date between your program end-date and 60 days from the end-date. This coincides with what would be your grace-period.

Note: When you complete your OPT, you receive a 60-day grace period.
OPT START / END DATE

Things to Consider:

- May not begin employment prior to OPT start date
- OPT period cannot be extended
- Time granted is considered time used
- Up to 90 accrued days of unemployment
OPT START / END DATE

Scenario 1

I already have a job offer and want to begin working immediately after I finish my program.

- Begin gathering materials now! Submit your request to the ISO as soon as possible.
- Choose an earlier start date.
- Submit your application to USCIS as soon as your application window opens.
Step 1: Apply for OPT early

Step 2: Choose an early start date

Application Window 150 days

OPT Start Date

90 days before program end-date

program end-date

60 days after program end-date
**Scenario 1**

**Step 1:** **completed**
Applied for OPT early

**USCIS processing time** ≈ 90 days

**Step 2:** **completed**
Chosen an early start date

**Application Window 150 days**

**Step 3:** Mail to USCIS
Wait approx. 90 days for USCIS decision

**OPT Start Date**

90 days before program end-date

program end-date

60 days after program end-date

30 days
30 days
30 days
30 days
30 days
30 days
30 days
30 days
30 days
Scenario 1

Step 4: Approval.
If no issues, can work from the start-date on EAD. You have 90 days of eligible unemployment.
Scenario 2

I want to take a break before starting a new job.

- You may submit your application to USCIS when the window opens.
- Choose a later start date.
Step 1: Apply for OPT early

- 90 days before program end-date
- 60 days after program end-date

Application Window 150 days

OPT Start Date

- 30 days before program end-date
- 30 days after program end-date

Step 2: Choose a later start-date

Scenario 2

Step 1:
- Apply for OPT early

Step 2:
- Choose a later start-date

Application Window 150 days

OPT Start Date

90 days before program end-date

program end-date

60 days after program end-date

30 days before program end-date

30 days after program end-date

International Services Office
**Scenario 2**

- **Step 1:** completed
  - Applied for OPT early

- **Step 2:** completed
  - Chosen an early start date

- **Step 3:** Mail to USCIS
  - Wait approx. 90 days for USCIS decision

**Application Window 150 days**

- 60 days after program end-date
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days

**OPT Start Date**

- 90 days before program end-date
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days

USCIS processing time
≈ 90 days
Scenario 2

Because applied early with a later start-date, OPT likely to be approved before start-date, which means you will be given your requested start-date. Employment may begin from that date.

Unemployment begins from the EAD start-date.
I’m worried that I will not be able to obtain a job offer soon.

- Submit your application to USCIS later during your application window.
- USCIS does not back-date authorizations. (It will not grant you an OPT start date that is earlier than the date that your case is processed.)
- Unemployment days begin accruing when your OPT authorization begins.
**Scenario 3**

Step 1: Apply for OPT later

Step 2: Choose a later start-date, though the chosen date is irrelevant when fewer than 90 days separate the receipt of your application and your chosen date.
Step 1: **completed**
Applied for OPT later

Step 2: **completed**
Chosen a later start-date

USCIS processing time ≈ 90 days

Application Window 150 days

OPT Start Date

90 days before program end-date

Program end-date

60 days after program end-date

Scenario 3

Step 3: Mail to USCIS. Wait approx. 90 days for USCIS decision
Scenario 3

- Application Window 150 days
- OPT Start Date
- USCIS processing time ≈ 90 days
- 90 days of unemployment
- Actual OPT start date
- Difference between OPT start-date on EAD and the 60-day period after your program end-date is subtracted from your OPT eligibility.

Date applied

- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days
- 30 days

program end-date

- 60 days after program end-date

For instance, if your OPT is approved by USCIS for a date 2.5 months beyond the “OPT start-date” period in light red, then you should subtract that difference from 12. In this scenario, you would have approximately 8.5 months of work eligibility instead of 12 months (unlike in the other two scenarios where you likely will receive the full 12-month period).
Progression of the Application Cycle

• The following slides show the general timeline and how it changes the later you submit your application to both the ISO and USCIS
90 days before program end-date

USCIS processing time ≈ 90 days

90 days of unemployment

Application Window 150 days

OPT Start Date

60 days after program end-date

30 days

program end-date

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days
90 days before program end-date

USCIS processing time ≈ 90 days

90 days of unemployment

Application Window 150 days

OPT Start Date

Program end-date

60 days after program end-date

Date Applied
Date Applied

USCIS processing time ≈ 90 days

90 days of unemployment

Application Window 150 days

OPT Start Date

90 days before program end-date

program end-date

60 days after program end-date

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

Actual OPT start date

International Services Office
Date Applied

USCIS processing time ≈ 90 days

90 days of unemployment

Subtract time from OPT period equivalent to this red arrow

Application Window 150 days

OPT Start Date

90 days before program end-date

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

program end-date

60 days after program end-date

Actual OPT start date
Date Applied

USCIS processing time ≈ 90 days

90 days of unemployment

Actual OPT start date

Application Window 150 days

OPT Start Date

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

30 days

90 days before program end-date

program end-date

60 days after program end-date

Subtract time from OPT period equivalent to this red arrow
HOW TO APPLY

**STEP 1:** Speak with your academic advisor or program director to obtain a letter verifying your expected program completion date.

Consider your plans after graduation.
- Think about an **OPT start date** and **when to submit your OPT application to USCIS**.
- This will impact when you will need to submit your application to the ISO.
HOW TO APPLY

**STEP 2:** Submit application documents to the **ISO front desk**. The ISO will issue you a new Form I-20 with an OPT recommendation, and you will receive a notification email.

- Processing time: **up to 10 business days**
- See ISO’s OPT Guidelines for list of required documents

**Review** the information on your new Form I-20 for accuracy, and check your documents for any suggested changes.

**Sign** your new Form I-20 and make a **copy**. You will keep the original and include the copy with your application to USCIS.
STEP 3: Mail required documents (including a copy of your new Form I-20) to USCIS.

Review your documents carefully! Use a U.S. mailing address on Form I-765 that will be valid for at least the next 4 months. (It can be your address or a trusted friend’s address.)

Make a copy of your application materials for your own records.

Mail your OPT application using certified mail or an express mail service (FedEx, UPS). Get a tracking number.
  ▪ Must be received within the application window.
HOW TO APPLY

**STEP 4: Check your mail.** In 2-3 weeks, USCIS will mail a receipt to the address you provided in your application.
- The I-797 Receipt Notice will have a case number that you can use to check your application status online.

If your OPT application is approved, USCIS will mail you your **Employment Authorization Document (EAD).**
- Processing time: **Approximately 90 days**

Check the dates and information on your EAD for accuracy.
HOW TO APPLY

**STEP 5: Submit a copy** (front and back) of your EAD to the ISO through ISOGateWay ([https://isogateway.gwu.edu](https://isogateway.gwu.edu)).

When you get a job offer, **report your employment information** to the ISO through ISOGateWay.
TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT ALLOWED

- All employment must be **directly related to the program of study** listed on your Form I-20.

- All employment must be **appropriate for the level of study** listed on your Form I-20.

- **Full-time**: at least 20 hours per week

- **Paid or unpaid** employment
  - Unpaid/volunteer employment is allowed for initial 12-month OPT (must comply with U.S. labor laws)
REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

While engaging in OPT, you will still be considered to be in F-1 Student status. To maintain legal presence in the U.S., you must comply with OPT reporting requirements:

- Report any **changes of information** relevant to your F-1 status (change of status, OPT termination, move abroad, name change) → iso@gwu.edu

- Report employer, address, start date, and end date of **all employment, including breaks or gaps** in employment → ISOGateWay

- Keep your **current U.S. address** updated → GWeb
OPT & NEW DEGREE PROGRAMS

- F-1 students are prohibited from pursuing a new degree while engaging in post-completion OPT.

- Before beginning a new degree program, you must forfeit any remaining OPT and be issued a new I-20 by your new institution.
INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL
Approved OPT

Required documents at the U.S. port of entry:

1. **Form I-20 with a valid travel signature** on page 2
2. **Passport**, valid for at least six months
3. **F-1 Visa**, valid on the date of your planned re-entry
4. **Valid Employment Authorization Document**
5. Evidence of employment (recommended if you have a job or job offer)
6. **Official GW transcript** (recommended)
INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL
Pending OPT Application

- **Before program end date:**
  - Since you are still an active student, you may re-enter the U.S. with your Form I-20 (with a valid travel signature), passport, and visa.

- **After program end date:**
  - Travel with your I-797 Receipt Notice from USCIS as evidence of a pending OPT application.
  - If you have a job offer, travel with your job offer letter.
  - If OPT is approved while you are outside the U.S., you will need the EAD to re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status.
NEXT STEPS

1. Speak with your Academic Advisor or Program Director to obtain a letter verifying your expected program completion date
   • Processing times vary

2. Submit application documents* to the ISO to obtain an OPT recommendation (new Form I-20)
   • 10 business days

1. Mail required documents* to USCIS
   • Approximately 90 days!

* See ISO’s OPT Guidelines for list of required documents
MORE INFO

- ISO’s OPT Guidelines document
  1. www.internationalservices.gwu.edu
  2. “Forms and Handouts” tab

- Upcoming OPT Workshop
  - Thursday, February 15, 2018
  - 11 AM – 12:30 PM
  - Marvin Center, 302

- Advising appointments
  1. www.internationalservices.gwu.edu
  2. “About” tab
We have approved your application for employment authorization. We will send your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) (also known as an EAD card or Form I-766) to you separately.

Your EAD card is proof that you are allowed to work in the United States. Show the card to your employer to verify your authorization to work during the dates on the card. You cannot use this approval notice as proof of your employment authorization.

When you receive your EAD card, please check that all the information on the card is correct. If you need to change any information on the card, please mail all of the following to the office listed below:

- A letter explaining what information needs to be corrected.
- Your EAD card.
- A photocopy of this notice, and
- Evidence to show what the correct information should be. For example, if you need to correct your name, submit a copy of your birth certificate or official name change.

If You Have a Pending Form I-485

If you have a pending or approved Form I-140 and a pending Form I-485, you may request to change employers if your Form I-485 has been pending for at least 180 days. In order to do so, you need to submit documentation about your new job offer. For more information on how to request a change of employers and what information you must submit, please visit the USCIS website at www.uscis.gov.

If your EAD card expires before we make a final decision on your Form I-485, you may apply for a new EAD card.

THIS FORM IS NOT A VISA AND MAY NOT BE USED IN PLACE OF A VISA OR EVIDENCE OF EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION.

NOTICE: Although this application or petition has been approved, USCIS and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security reserve the right to verify this information before and/or after making a decision on your case so we can ensure that you have complied with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and other legal authorities. We may review public information and records, contact others by mail, the internet or phone, conduct site inspections of businesses and residences, or use other methods of verification. We will use the information obtained to determine whether you are eligible for the benefit you seek. If we find any derogatory information, we will follow the law in determining whether to provide you (and the legal representative listed on your Form G-28, if you submitted one) an opportunity to address that information before we make a formal decision on your case or start proceedings.

Please see the additional information on the back. You will be notified separately about any other cases you filed.

Potomac Service Center
2200 Potomac Center Dr
STOP 2425
Arlington VA 20598-2425

Customer Service Telephone: 800-375-5283

Barcode
*Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) Guidelines*

The goal of Optional Practical Training (OPT) is to provide international students with practical on-the-job experience that is directly related to the student’s current field of study and commensurate with the degree level.

**Highlights**

- F-1 international students who have been maintaining their status for at least one full academic year are eligible for OPT.
- You do not need a job offer to apply for OPT.
- 12 months of OPT for each higher degree level is available. (i.e., one year after a Bachelor’s degree, another after a Master’s, a third after a Ph.D.)

**Things to Remember**

- You are not eligible for OPT if you were authorized for 12 months or more of full time CPT at the same degree level.
- The OPT process is started by the ISO but must be authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). If approved, an Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) will be issued to you.
- You MUST NOT begin working until you receive the EAD card.
- You may only begin working from the dates the EAD card is valid.
- It may take up to three months to receive the EAD card. (ISO processing time: 10 days; USCIS processing time: 75 - 90 days)
- You may apply for the Post-Completion OPT up to 90 days before your program completion, but not later than 60 days after your program completion date.
- Employment must be related to your degree program.
- More than 90 days of unemployment during OPT is a violation of F-1 status.
- You are not allowed to pursue a degree program while you are on post-completion OPT.
- Time authorized for employment by the USCIS is considered time used, even if you did not work.
- You must report to the ISO any change in name, address, and employer information in order to keep your F-1 status.

**Three-Step Employment Authorization Process**

Step 1. Request OPT recommendation from the ISO. (see pages 2-5 for detailed instructions)
Step 2. Prepare and mail your application materials to the USCIS. (see pages 6-7 for detailed instructions)
Step 3. Receive the EAD card and start working (see page 8)

*If you are interested in getting information about Pre-Completion OPT, please consult with your ISO advisor.*
Step 1. Request OPT recommendation from the ISO

USCIS can take several months to process your request, so please apply early! Your ISO advisor will contact you if there is a problem or question about your application. Please allow up to 10 business days processing time in ISO after your request is complete. You will be notified via email when you can pick up your application from the ISO. Please note that you need to send the application packet to the USCIS within 30 days of I-20 issuance.

Document checklist

☐ A cover letter written by you
  ➢ See sample on page 3

☐ A letter of certification from your academic advisor
  ➢ See sample on page 4

☐ Completed I-765 form
  ➢ See guidelines on page 5

☐ All previously issued I-20s from GW and prior schools, if applicable (copies)

☐ Your I-94 card (copy)
  ➢ Make sure it’s legible
  ➢ Include both front and back of paper I-94 card or retrieve electronic copy here

☐ Passport (copies)
  ➢ Expiration page/Biographic page
  ➢ F-1 visa stamp
Guidelines for your Cover Letter

F-1 students requesting Optional Practical Training are required to submit a letter to ISO as part of the application. The following information should be included in the letter:

- Current date
- Your major field of study and degree objective
- The date you expect to complete your studies (last day of your final exam in your final semester/when all degree requirements are complete, not necessarily your graduation date)
- A description of the practical training (what type of job you will seek)
- How the practical training is related to your field of study
- The beginning and ending dates of your requested practical training
- You may ask for your work authorization to begin on the day after your program completion date, as late as 60 days after, or any date in between.
- Your ending date should be within 12 months from your beginning date.
- If you can’t decide on the dates, please see your ISO advisor.
- Your name (printed), GWID number and signature

Sample Cover Letter

Your Address

Today’s date

International Services Office
800 21st St. NW Suite 505
Washington, DC 20052

To Whom It May Concern:

I am an F-1 student in the M.S. program in __________. I am currently completing my last semester of study and expect to complete my study on __________________. I intend to seek a position in the area of ______________. This training is related to my studies in __________ because it will allow me to (example: directly apply the concepts I have learned in the classroom to practical situations in analyzing data, developing statistical reports, and making recommendations based on my research. If I find a position teaching statistics, I will be passing on to my students the concepts I learned in my graduate program.)

I am requesting that my practical training authorization begin on ______________ and end on _____________.

Sincerely,

Your Signature (wet ink signature)

James A. Student (GWID: )
Guidelines for the Letter of Certification from your Academic Advisor

F-1 students requesting Post-Completion Optional Practical Training are required to visit their academic advisor to discuss their program completion date. During the advising session, please ask your academic advisor to write a letter on official GW letterhead, addressed to the ISO that includes following information:

- An indication that you are making normal progress toward completion of your degree.
- Expected date of program completion:
  - By this date, you will have met all course requirements.
  - Generally, the official last day of exams for your final term.
    Please refer to GW Academic Calendar: http://www.gwu.edu/ac.cfm
  - If you are working on your thesis or dissertation, the date you plan to defend your work.

Sample Letter

Letterhead

Today’s date

International Services Office
800 21st St. NW Suite 505
Washington, DC 20052

After reviewing Mr. /Ms. ____________________________’s academic progress, I certify that he/she is making normal progress toward completion of his/her degree and will be completing all his/her program requirements by ________________.

Signature

Dr. George Washington

Please note:

- This letter must be signed and dated.
- This letter must be on official GW letterhead.
Completing the I-765

- The form I-765 can be downloaded from the [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov). Click ‘Forms’ in the green bar at the top of the page.
- Check the box indicating that you are requesting “Permission to accept employment.”
- Item #3: Address in the United States
  The address you put here is where the EAD will be mailed so make sure it will be valid in 3+ months.
- Item #9: Social Security Number (SSN)
  If you have never worked in the U.S., you may not yet have a SSN. If this is the case, you can leave this space blank. You will be able to apply for your SSN when you get the EAD.
- Item #10: I-94 Number
  On this item, you will use your current I-94 number. This is an 11-digit number found on the top left corner of your I-94 card. As an F-1, you will not have an Alien Registration Number.
- Item #11: Previous Employment Authorization
  Check “yes” if you have ever received an EAD. A photocopy of that EAD must be included with your application package. (If you have lost it, write “lost EAD” in this space).
- If you have never had an EAD, check the “no” box here. If you have worked on campus or have used CPT, you will still check “no” here.
- Please note that your signature must fit between the lines on the form. If your signature is too big, your application will be returned to you and delay your work permission.
Step 2. Mail your OPT Application to USCIS

Review your new I-20
Once you have received your new Form I-20 with the OPT recommendation on page 3 from ISO, please review the following information:

✓ Note the OPT recommendation dates on page 3. These dates may differ from those that you requested.
✓ Note the program end date in item 5 on page 1. Your program end date might have been shortened to reflect the actual date when you will complete (or completed) all program requirements.
✓ You must cease all on-campus and/or off-campus employment the day after you complete all program requirements.

Document checklist
Your application to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) must include the following documents:

- **Personal check or money order for $410.**
  - *DO NOT send cash.* The check should be made out to “Department of Homeland Security”.
  - **NOTE:** the filing fee for I-765 applications will be $410 for ALL applications received on or after December 23rd, 2016.
- **Two passport style photos**, no more than six months old
- **Original, completed & signed I-765 form**
- **Copy (do not send the original) of your new I-20** with OPT recommendation (pages 1 & 2)
- **Copies of ALL previously issued I-20s** from GW and any prior schools (if applicable)
- **Copy I-94 card** front and back or printed copy from online accessible I-94
  - In May 2013, CBP began issuing digital I-94 documents, if you have a digital I-94 you must include a printed copy
- **Copy of your passport identification/ signature page** and page showing expiration date
- **Copy of your F-1 visa stamp**
- (Optional) **Form G-1145** (if you would like to receive electronic notifications regarding your case)

We recommend that you **make copies of your entire application** for your personal record before you submit it to USCIS.

*Photo Requirements*

Make sure you meet the specifications of U.S. style passport photos. Most places that take passport photos are already familiar with the specifications, but please visit the following website to make sure your photos are well composed:

http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/get_874.html

(cont. on next page)
When should I send my OPT application?

We recommend that you send your application as soon as possible and within 30 days of the date the OPT recommendation I-20 was issued. Keep in mind that your application must be received by USCIS:

- No earlier than 90 days before your program end date;
- No later than 60 days after your program end date; and
- Within 30 days of the OPT recommendation I-20 issuance.

Where should I mail* my OPT application?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If the address on your I-765 is in:</th>
<th>Mail your application to:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan,</td>
<td><strong>USCIS Phoenix Lockbox</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah,</td>
<td>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Guam, or the Northern Mariana Islands.</td>
<td>USCIS</td>
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<td>For Express mail and courier deliveries:</td>
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<td>Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky,</td>
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<td>Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico,</td>
<td>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries:</td>
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<td>New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma,</td>
<td>USCIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, or West Virginia</td>
<td>PO Box 660867</td>
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<td>Dallas, TX 75266</td>
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<td>For Express mail and courier deliveries:</td>
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<td>Lewisville, TX 75067</td>
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*The ISO strongly recommends that you send the OPT application by traceable mail so you can track its delivery and confirm its arrival to the USCIS Service Center.
Step 3: Receiving EAD card

Your Address on I-765
USCIS will correspond with you at the address you listed on the I-765 form. Use an address that will be valid for at least the next four months (yours or a trusted friend). Please note that mail from USCIS is NOT forwarded by the Post Office.

The Notice of Action I-797
You should get a formal receipt, called an I-797 Notice of Action, within 2-3 weeks. This will have your individual receipt number in the upper left-hand corner. If you have not received this within three weeks, please contact your ISO advisor.

The “Receipt Number”
This is your case number at the USCIS. You should check the status of your case online through the USCIS website at https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard.do.

Request of Further Evidence (RFE)
If USCIS has a question about your application, they will mail you a form letter with an explanation of what they require from you. Generally, you will have several weeks to reply, but you should respond as soon as possible. Please contact your ISO advisor if you receive this letter.

Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
Once USCIS approves your application they will mail an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) directly to you. The time this will take varies and can take as long as 60-90 days. The application is not considered late until 90 days have passed.

Employment Reporting Duty
Once your OPT application has been approved and you have received your EAD card, remember to submit a front/back copy of your EAD card to the ISO.

While you are on OPT, you must meet certain reporting requirements in order to maintain your F-1 status. You may find detailed information and instructions on how to meet these requirements on the ISO website.

Please follow the instructions and use the Post-Completion OPT Reporting Portal to report your employment status and employer information to the ISO to keep your SEVIS immigration record up to date.

STEM Extension
If you find your current degree, or a degree that you previously received in the US on the following list: https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf you may be eligible for the 24-month STEM extension. Please see the ISO website for details.
Traveling Abroad during Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Please see the table below to learn more about the different OPT travel scenarios and the risks involved. For more information, please see: [http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq_f2.htm](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq_f2.htm)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Risk Level</th>
<th>Documents you should carry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program of study not yet completed</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>• Valid visa (or exempt for visa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Valid Passport</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I-20 with valid travel signature</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Financial Documents</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Enrollment letter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program of study completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>✔ Submitted the OPT Application to the USCIS</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>• Valid visa (or exempt for visa)</td>
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<tr>
<td>✔ EAD (Employment Authorization Document)</td>
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<td>• Valid Passport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Job Offer</td>
<td></td>
<td>• I-20 with valid travel signature</td>
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<tr>
<td>✔ Job Offer</td>
<td></td>
<td>• EAD card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Job Offer</td>
<td></td>
<td>• A letter from your employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ EAD (Employment Authorization Document)</td>
<td>Somewhat High</td>
<td>• Valid visa (or exempt for visa)</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Job Offer</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Valid Passport</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Job Offer</td>
<td></td>
<td>• I-20 with valid travel signature</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Job Offer</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Proof of OPT application (I-797 Notice of Action)</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Job Offer</td>
<td></td>
<td>• A letter from your employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Job Offer</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>• Valid visa (or exempt for visa)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Job Offer</td>
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<td>• Financial Documents</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Job Offer</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>• Valid visa (or exempt for visa)</td>
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<td>• Valid Passport</td>
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<tr>
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