

# OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT): General Information



**Optional Practical Training (OPT)** is an opportunity for you as an F-1 student to work in the United States for one year in an area related to your course of study. OPT is usually done after the educational program is complete (post-completion OPT), but may also be done while the educational program is still in progress (pre-completion OPT). To participate in OPT, you must apply for and receive an **Employment Authorization Document (EAD card)**.

## OPT GUIDELINES

- To be eligible for OPT, you must have been enrolled full-time and maintaining F-1 status for one full academic year.
- OPT must be directly related to your major area of study.
- OPT lasts up to 12 months, and must be completed no later than 14 months after completing your educational program.
- No offer of employment is required to apply for OPT, but you are expected to work during OPT. For post-completion OPT, **you are limited to a maximum of 90 days of unemployment**.
- If you cannot find a job while on OPT, you may volunteer at least 20 hours per week to avoid exceeding 90 days of unemployment.
- Please note: students at the associate's level are not eligible for the 17-month STEM extension.

## OPT APPLICATION

- You may apply for post-completion OPT **up to 90 days before** completing your educational program, and **no more than 60 days after** completing your educational program.
- First, your advisor will recommend you for OPT and print a new Form I-20 endorsing you for OPT.
- Then, you must submit the Form I-765 and supporting documentation to USCIS. See [OPT: How to Apply](#) for details.
- USCIS must receive your application **no later than 30 days after your advisor recommends you for OPT in SEVIS**.
- Be sure to keep a copy of your application for your records, and ask the post office for delivery confirmation.
- Speak to your advisor before planning any travel outside the U.S. while you are applying for OPT.

## AFTER RECEIVING YOUR EAD CARD

- You may not begin work until after you receive your EAD card.
- It is important that your advisor has accurate contact information for you and your employer while on OPT. Notify your advisor of any changes in address, phone number, or employment. Your advisor will then update SEVIS with your most current information.
- Keep detailed records of your employment and employment dates.
- Speak to your advisor before traveling outside the U.S.

**If you have additional questions, please contact your advisor.**