



Post Completion OPT Information Sheet

Office of Global Engagement

After USCIS has issued an EAD card for post-completion OPT, in order to have the best chance of re-entering the U.S. without problems, you should be sure you have the following documents:

- Passport (valid for six months after you plan to re-enter the U.S.)
- Valid F-1 visa. The visa requirement does not apply to Canadian citizens.
- I-20 (with a valid travel signature no older than six months*)
- EAD card
- Letter of employment or that you have an offer of employment. Please make sure that your EAD beginning and ending dates are included in this letter.

If your visa is expired and you want to apply for a new one, you will have to return to your home country to submit the required documents to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. This includes your EAD card and a letter from your employer that proves you have employment or an offer of employment in the U.S. along with the other required documents for an F1 visa renewal application. This does entail some risk because you have a greater chance of being denied while in OPT. You must remember that your F-1 visa status is one of a temporary non-immigrant and you must prove that you will return to your home country after you complete your OPT period.

Please consult the attached chart that outlines and describes the different OPT travel scenarios and their level of risk. For more information, see [U.S. Department of Homeland Security FAQ for Travel](#).

* Regulations state that during post-completion OPT, the travel signature on your I-20 should be no older than six months.
Source: 8CFR214.2(f)(13)(ii).

When Does OPT Start?

Students have a choice of when they want their OPT to start. The earliest a student can start employment is the day after completing degree requirements. The latest date OPT can start is 60 days after the degree completion date.

Employment Requirements and Maintaining Status

While you are on post-completion OPT, your status is still F-1, and it is still your responsibility to maintain that status.

- You MUST submit a photocopy of your EAD card to the Office of Global Engagement.
- You cannot begin working until the date printed on your EAD card.
- You cannot accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment.
 - The 90 days begins with the start date on the EAD card.
 - If you reach 90 days, you are expected to leave the U.S. immediately, and report this to the Office of Global Engagement.
- Employment MUST be related to the field of study listed on your I-20.
- The employment can be paid or unpaid employment. Therefore, a student who is engaged in “free-lance” employment (including performance majors with regular “gigs”), interning, or volunteering in a position directly related to the field of study would be considered “employed” for the purposes of OPT employment.
- You MUST work a minimum of 20 hours a week.

- Note: In all cases, you must be able to provide some form of proof of your employment including dates, duration, names of employer/contract, companies/agencies that can verify the job you did and that it relates to your field of study. If you are self-employed, you must be able to show proof of proper business licenses (if necessary) and active engagement.
- Ensure that you have the documents you need to travel outside the U.S.
- Students must comply with the employment reporting requirements below.

Reporting Requirements

You must fulfill OPT reporting requirements within 10 days of any of the following so SEVIS can be updated.

- Change in residential address
- Change in name
- Name and address of employer and start date of employment
- Any change of employment (loss of employment, change of employer, etc.)
- Change in immigration Status
- If you leave the U.S. permanently

17-Month STEM Extension

Students who graduate from STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields and whose employer is enrolled in the E-Verify program may qualify for an additional 17-month OPT extension. Students with an approved 17-month OPT extension have additional reporting requirements. Please refer to the OPT extension application for further information.

Grace Period Following OPT

Students who successfully complete OPT will receive a 60-day grace period starting on the day after OPT expires. Before the 60-day grace period is over, you must have either departed the U.S., applied to change your visa status from F-1 to another status, or have received a new I-20 to pursue a new academic program.

NOTE: Only those who complete OPT and do not exceed the 90 day unemployment limit receive the grace period. Those who exceed the 90 day unemployment limit during OPT receive no grace period.

H-1B Visa (Specialty Occupation) Cap-Gap Extension

If an employer files an H-1B petition on behalf of an F-1 student while that student has valid OPT employment authorization or is in the 60-day grace period following OPT, that student is eligible for a “Cap-Gap” extension. If your employer files an H-1B petition on your behalf while you still have valid OPT employment authorization, then your employment authorization will be extended starting on the day after your original OPT expires and ending on September 30th.

If your employer files an H-1B petition on your behalf after your OPT work authorization expires but before the end of your 60-day grace period, your status will be extended but your work authorization will not be extended. In other words, you will be allowed to remain inside the U.S. but you will not be allowed to work.

The Cap-Gap extension ends immediately if the H-1B petition is rejected, denied, or withdrawn.

NOTE: International travel is not allowed during the OPT Cap-Gap extension. While proof of an H-1B petition is all that is needed to prove an OPT Cap-Gap extension, students may request a new I-20 which shows dates of continued F-1 visa status and employment authorization.