



OPT FAQs

1. What is the completion date for my program?

Your completion date in reference to OPT is: (refer to your I-20)

- For **Undergraduates**: the last day of final exams of the semester in which you graduate
- For **Graduates**: the last day that all of your requirements are fulfilled (including thesis)

2. When do I apply for OPT?

You should begin the application process as early as you can. It can take anywhere **from 30 to 90 days** to receive your EAD card from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). There is not a way to expedite applications.

- USCIS will **not** accept an application **earlier** than **90 days** prior to your program end date. This is the date listed on your I-20.
- USCIS **will** accept the application **no later** than the **60th day** following your program end date. It must have been received and receipted by USCIS by this date

3. How can I maintain my F-1 status during OPT?

Active Employment

- Your employment is meant to enhance your academic career. Therefore, it must be related to your major of study. A job outside of your major is considered a violation to your F-1 status. You may be **unemployed no more than 90 calendar days** during your OPT period.

Notify ISO of address, employer and life changes

- You are **required** to provide current contact information during the entire length of your F-1 student visa. Changes in job, address, marriage, and visa changes are all updates that must be reported to The Global Engagement Office within **10 days**.

4. How many times may I apply for OPT?

You may apply for OPT only **ONE** time for each degree level (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degree). If you are planning to pursue two different degrees at the same academic level at different times, please keep in mind which degree you would like to apply for your OPT benefit.

5. How long may I be unemployed during OPT and maintain satisfactory status?

You may be **without employment for up to 90 days**. If you still cannot find employment after 90 days, you are technically out of status and should return to your native country. You may also enter another degree program. Once you enter to the next degree program, your OPT is then invalid. You are no longer eligible to apply for OPT at that same level again.

6. Do I need to have employment information when I apply for OPT?

No, you do not. However, you do need to notify The Global Engagement Office within **10 days of receiving employment** and submit an **OPT Employment and Contact Information** form.

7. Does OPT have to be paid employment?

No, you may take a volunteer job. However, the position must be related to your field of study.

8. Can I work while waiting for my EAD card?

No, you cannot. However, you can remain in the US. It is not recommended that you travel during this time. You can begin work when you have received your EAD card, and the start date has begun.

9. Can I stop and start OPT time?

No, once you start working, your OPT employment ends on the date listed on your EAD card. You may not recapture time spent out of the country or unemployed.

10. Can I travel outside of the US after I apply for OPT?

It is not recommended that you travel until you have received **both your EAD card and have found employment**. At that time, you should take the following documents with you when traveling:

- I-20 with a valid travel signature on page 3
- Valid passport
- Valid F-1 visa for returning to the U.S.
- EAD card
- It is recommended to take a letter from your employer verifying employment (company name, position, etc.)

11. How long can I stay in the U.S. if I do not apply for OPT?

You have a **60-day grace period** following the program end date listed on your I-20. During these 60 days you may remain in the United States, apply for OPT, or change to another academic program. You may not return to the United States on your F-1 student visa should you decide to depart the country during these 90 days. If your commencement is more than 60 days following your program end date on your I-20, you may leave the country and return for commencement on a visitor vis