



Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Before applying for OPT, you must read this form in its entirety and initial or sign at each indicated location on the form. Then make an appointment with the Office of International Affairs.

As an F-1 student, you may apply to USCIS for authorization for 12 months of temporary employment for Optional Practical Training (OPT). STEM majors may apply for a 24-month OPT Extension within 90 days of the end of their initial OPT. Employment needs to be directly related to your major area of study. OPT can be authorized for the following:

- **Pre-Completion OPT:** Any portion of OPT used *before* students' program end date. It may be part-time or full-time, depending on students' remaining course work and thesis requirements and university breaks.
- **Post-Completion OPT:** Any portion of OPT used *after* student's program end date.
 - You may apply up to 90 days before your program end date.
 - OPT application must be received by USCIS **no later than** 60 days after your program completion date.
 - Once OPT is endorsed on your I-20, you must apply to USCIS within 30 days.

<p>Eligibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is in legal F-1 status • Has been a full-time student for one academic year • Is not studying English as a Second Language program • Proposed employment relates to the student's major area of study • Has not used all Optional Practical Training (OPT) available at the current level of study • Prior use of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for 12 months or more at the same academic level, eliminates eligibility for Optional Practical Training (OPT)
<p>Duration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard OPT is available for a maximum of 12 months per educational level. • A one-time extension of 24 months (for a total of 36 months) is available to certain STEM degree recipients who are employed by an employer registered with E-Verify. To check STEM eligibility, visit https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/additional-resources/eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension
<p>Work Hours Per Week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pre-completion OPT:</i> 20 hours/week limit while school is in session, and student has coursework to complete. • <i>Pre-completion OPT:</i> Full-time employment can be requested during official school breaks, and for students who have completed all requirements for their degree except the thesis or dissertation. • <i>Post-completion OPT:</i> Student must be employed at least 20 hours/week to avoid limits on unemployment.
<p>Offer of employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No offer of employment is required to apply for standard OPT, but the student is expected to work at least 20 hours/week during the OPT EAD validity period. • Students on post-completion OPT are limited to 90 aggregate days of unemployment from the start date listed on the EAD card. • To apply for a 24-month STEM extension, students must have an offer of employment from an employer registered with E-Verify: https://www.myvisajobs.com/E-Verify.aspx





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OPT Application and Approval Processes

1. Student completes OPT paperwork from OIA to request OPT endorsement on the I-20. Student selects their desired start date for the EAD card. Start date must be within 60 days of student's program end date.
2. DSO reviews OPT paperwork, confirms eligibility, and recommends OPT on student's I-20 in SEVIS.
3. Students sign new I-20 and file I-765 application with accompanying documents (I-20, I-94, Passport, Visa, Degree Plan, Photograph) to USCIS for Employment Authorization Document (EAD) within 30 days of the new I-20. To read about the I-765, visit: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>.
4. USCIS adjudicates the I-765 OR
5. If USCIS needs more information, students receive a Request for Evidence (RFE). Student must contact the OIA immediately and respond to USCIS by their deadline date.
6. **Work can begin only after receiving the EAD issued by USCIS, and on/after the start date on the EAD.**
7. Throughout OPT, students report any changes of name, address, phone, email, or employer and employment information to OIA at International.Affairs@tamusa.edu and in their SEVP portal within 10 days. Use "OPT" in email subject heading.
8. Special rules govern applications and reporting processes for the 24-month STEM OPT extension.

USCIS Processing

- The average processing time to issue the OPT Employment Authorization Card (EAD) is 90 days. Premium processing is available for an additional fee. For the most up-to-date information, visit <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>.
- Within 2-3 weeks, USCIS will send a receipt notice (Form I-797), this is proof that USCIS has received your application. The receipt notice will have a tracking number for you to check your case status of your OPT application.
- The status online will show "Initial Review" for 1.5 to 2.5 months, this is normal processing time.
- Once the website shows "Approved", your I-797 Approval Notice and EAD card is mailed to the address listed on your Form I-765 application.
- Once you receive your EAD, you are eligible to renew your driver's license. Do not drive with an expired license.
- All employment details must be reported in the SEVP portal.

Employment Records

- Keep documentation of your employment details: positions held, duration of position, number of hours worked per week, start/end dates, detailed job responsibilities, statements on how your work relates to your field of study (will be needed for STEM OPT extension), supervisor contact info, employer details (address, EIN, E-Verify number)
- **Send a copy of your job offer letter and your EAD card to OIA at International.Affairs@tamusa.edu and put "OPT" as part of your subject heading.**

I confirm that I have read the OPT paperwork, and I understand my obligations, benefits, and restrictions while on OPT. I understand that the OPT application is a personal application, and I am responsible for all aspects of its preparation, mailing, and communication with USCIS and that it is not the OIA's responsibility to submit my paperwork or notify USCIS on my case.

Student Signature _____

Date: _____

DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR I-765 APPLICATION UNTIL YOU HAVE MET WITH A MEMBER OF THE OIA STAFF AND HAVE BEEN ISSUED AN OPT I-20





OPT Student Statement of Responsibility

Read each section carefully and then initial each box. Contact the OIA with any questions.

VERY IMPORTANT: While on OPT, I understand that I am required to report within 10 days to the OIA and update my SEVP portal any changes on my official name, address, phone, email, and status of employment (start/ end dates, # of hours/week, position) including any changes of the employer’s name or address. I also must report to the OIA any changes to my immigration status/petitions.

I understand that I cannot begin employment until I have received my Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) **and** the start date on the EAD card has been reached.

I understand that if I do not complete all coursework by my expected completion date, I must notify the OIA, and I may not work more than 20 hours a week, until all coursework has been completed.

I understand that **during post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment.** During any initial 12-month period of post-completion OPT, **I may only be unemployed for an aggregate of 90 days from the start date listed on my EAD card.**

I understand that if I **transfer to another school or begin study at another educational level**, my authorization to engage in OPT employment is automatically terminated upon the transfer date.

I understand that I am allowed **one year of OPT per degree level during my time as an F-1 student.** I become eligible for another 12 months of OPT if I change to a higher educational level.

I understand students with a **STEM degree are eligible for a 24-month STEM OPT extension:** To apply for the STEM extension, I must be employed by an employer who is registered for E-Verify and apply **before** my current OPT expires (up to 90 days prior). I also must notify the OIA to request a STEM OPT endorsement on my I-20.

I understand if I travel outside the United States during my OPT, upon reentry I must present:

- Passport (valid at least six months after my planned return to the USA)
- Valid F-1 visa
- EAD card
- I-94
- **I-20 with OPT dates and signed for travel (endorsed within last six months by the OIA)**
- Signed letter from my employer or prospective employer on letterhead indicating that I am returning to resume or begin employment (start date, position, hours, location, supervisor contact, etc.)

I understand that travel following the completion of studies and before the EAD is received is **not** recommended.

I understand that I must inform the OIA if I decide to depart the U.S. permanently while on OPT.

Student Signature _____ Date: _____





To Be Completed By Academic Advisor or Faculty Program Coordinator

F-1 international students may qualify for Optional Practical Training (OPT), which allows them to engage in temporary employment for up to one year to gain practical experience in their field of study. The above-named student is applying for OPT. For the OIA to be able to recommend this student for OPT training, we need to know their expected date of completion.

If you have any questions, please call (210) 784-1309 or email: international.affairs@tamusa.edu and ask to speak with an international student advisor.

Student Last/Family Name

Student First/Given Name

Has the student completed all the course work? Yes No

What is the expected term, month, day, and year of completion of studies or graduation?

Name of Advisor/Coordinator (Print)

Signature

Date (MM/DD/YYYY)

Title

Department

Phone #

Email

