Optional Practical Training (OPT)
Topics Covered in Tutorial

What is OPT?
Eligibility Requirements
Application Process Overview
Application Steps
Reporting Responsibilities
Unemployment
Travel
End of OPT
Optional Practical Training

“Temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student’s major area of study”

Up to 12 months may be authorized by USCIS

Pre-Completion

Occurs during your studies.
Review CPT information or meet with an ISSS Advisor to discuss further.

Post-Completion

Occurs after degree completion.
This presentation will focus on Post-Completion OPT.
Eligibility

1. Must have been a full-time student for at least one consecutive academic year; *OPT eligibility requirements may reset due to a leave of absence or SEVIS record termination. Please consult with an ISA for more information.

2. Be in valid F-1 status when requesting OPT I-20 from ISSS and when application is submitted to USCIS.

3. Be in good academic standing (minimum 3.0 for graduate students and 2.0 for undergraduate students);
Eligibility Continued

4. Academic Advisor verification (via the OPT I-20 request e-form) confirming you will be completing your degree;

5. Be physically in the U.S. when requesting the OPT I-20 from ISSS and submitting your application to USCIS;

6. Have not previously been approved for post-completion OPT at the same degree level.
When to Apply

Post-Completion OPT

• You may submit the OPT I-20 request to ISSS up to **90 days** BEFORE or within **60 days** AFTER the program completion date, as long as you are in the U.S. and have not left. *We recommend that you apply early.*

• **Please see the ISSS webpage for Post-Completion OPT** to find out the Fall, Spring and Summer Completion Dates to determine when you can submit the request to ISSS and eligible start dates for OPT.

• OPT applications can take up to 3 months(sometimes longer) to get approved by USCIS. Therefore, we recommend that you apply early. *You must get a new I-20 with OPT recommendation BEFORE filing your OPT application with USCIS.*
Requested Start Dates

Post-Completion OPT

- **First possible OPT start date**: day after program end date.
- **Last possible start date**: 60 days after the program end date.
- **Last possible end date**: 14 months after program end date.
- Enter your requested start/end date on OPT I-20 request e-form.
  - Think about the following when selecting your OPT start date:
    - Do you have a job offer?
    - You cannot exceed 90 days of unemployment during your OPT period.
    - You cannot change your requested OPT dates once you have mailed/filed your application with USCIS.

*Please see the ISSS webpage for Post-Completion OPT to find out the Fall, Spring and Summer Completion Dates to determine when you can submit the request to ISSS and eligible start dates for OPT.*
OPT Process Overview

1. Student requests OPT I-20
2. DSO recommends OPT
3. Student files Form I-765
4. USCIS adjudicates I-765
5. Student receives EAD, starts work
6. Student uses SEVP Portal for OPT reporting
OPT Process

1. Pay the one time $150 OPT fee to ISSS.
   a. A payment link is on the ISSS OPT webpage.

2. Student requests an OPT I-20 from ISSS.
   a. Log into iSpartan - [https://globalspartans.sjsu.edu](https://globalspartans.sjsu.edu), using your SJSU credentials.
   b. Click on the ‘F-1/J-1 Practical Training’ link. Select Post Completion Optional Practical Training I-20 Request’.
   c. Complete the e-form.
   d. Select the requested OPT start and end dates. It will be in the form of a year minus a day from the start date.
      i. Example: Start Date: 02/13/2022. End Date: 02/12/2023.
   e. Academic (Department) Advisor information will need to be added into the e-form. Name and email address.
      i. Request will be routed to ISSS once your Academic Advisor reviews request.
         1. Please note that it is your responsibility to notify your academic/major advisor of the OPT approval request. It will be sent via email to the indicated advisor.

3. ISSS Receives OPT I-20 Request
   a. Once submitted to ISSS, processing time is 5-7 business days.
   b. DSO will review your eligibility for OPT.
      i. May shorten your I-20 end date for the current semester, if this has not already been done.
   c. DSO will recommend post-completion OPT in your SEVIS record and issue you a new I-20 with the OPT recommendation on page 2.
      i. DSO will email you the I-20 with OPT recommendation.
         ii. You will need this I-20 to file your OPT application with USCIS.
OPT Process

4. Student files Form I-765 and supporting documents with USCIS.
   a. Do not file your application with USCIS until you have the I-20 with OPT recommendation from USCIS.
   b. USCIS must receive your OPT application within 30 days of the date your OPT was recommended by ISSS.
      i. DSO will tell you when your OPT recommendation was done, when they email you the I-20.
   c. Review checklist for documents needed to apply.

USCIS Form I-765
- Application for Employment Authorization
- Application fee required
- Fillable pdf, available at [https://www.uscis.gov/i-765](https://www.uscis.gov/i-765)

7 pages
- Submit all 7 pages
- Type or print in black ink
- Don’t forget to sign and date form
- Review ISSS I-765 Completion Guide

Eligibility Code
- Post-Completion OPT: (c)(3)(B)
Required Documentation

See ISSS Webpage for a complete Checklist of Items

- Form I-765 application, refer to uscis.gov/i-765 for current edition;
- $410 Filing fee, *fees are subject to change, so please refer to uscis.gov/i-765 for the filing fee amount*;
- Two recent passport-style color photographs;
- Copy of I-20 with OPT recommendation;
- Copy of valid passport;
- Copy of current F-1 visa, I-94 record of arrival;
- Copies of previous I-20s with work authorization (CPT, OPT, STEM OPT);
- Copies of previous EAD cards (if any);
- Other supporting documentation-COS approval notice, official academic transcripts (unofficial transcripts are not recommended).
Filing I-765 (OPT) with USCIS

As of April 2021, USCIS offers 2 different ways to file an I-765 (OPT) application with USCIS.

*You must choose one option. You cannot choose both options.

1. Mail application to USCIS lockbox.
2. Online filing of I-765.

Please keep in mind the following:

You will need an I-20 with OPT recommendation from ISSS before you submit your I-765 (OPT) application to USCIS.
OPT Process

5. USCIS processes OPT application.
   a. Within 2-3 weeks of USCIS receiving your OPT application, a paper receipt (Form I-797) will be mailed to the mailing address that you provided on the Form I-765.
      i. Review the receipt for any errors in your name or date of birth.
   b. Processing of your OPT application can take up to 3 months, sometimes longer.
      i. There is no option to expedite your application.
      ii. You cannot change your requested OPT dates, once you have mailed/filed your OPT application with USCIS.
      iii. If your application is returned back to you or if you receive a RFE ‘Request for Evidence’ from USCIS, please contact ISSS.
While Form I-765 is Pending

**USCIS Online Tools**
Check Processing Time
Case Status Online

**What Should I Do?**
Look for position directly related to your major field of study

**Practice Being Patient**

Update address w/USCIS;
Use USPS Informed Delivery
6. Student receives EAD card.

   a. Once your OPT application has been approved, USCIS will mail you 2 documents, separately:
      i. Form I-797 approval notice;
      ii. EAD (Employment Authorization Document)
   b. You cannot start working until:
      i. Your OPT has been approved;
      ii. Have EAD card;
      iii. Work within the dates authorized on your EAD.

**EAD work permit**

- Report EAD typographic error(s) to ISSS.
- Only work based on given dates printed on card.
- Paid or unpaid employment over 20 hours per week, must be directly related to major field of study.
Reporting Responsibilities
During Post-Completion OPT

7. Student uses SEVP portal for employment reporting. Employment must meet ALL of the following requirements.

I. Employment must be directly related to your major field of study from SJSU. ISSS is not in a position to determine employment relevance to your major. You are responsible for this.;
II. Employment may be paid or unpaid;
III. Employment will need to be more than 20 hours a week in a qualifying position.
   A. This will prevent unemployment from accruing.

SEVP Portal
- Closer to your OPT start date, SEVP will send you a link to create a SEVP Student Portal Account.
- We recommend creating the account using a non-SJSU email.

SEVP Portal
- Report any employment, change in employment or personal information (living address) within 10 days.
- Visit Study in the States SEVP Portal Help for more information.
Important tool to let F-1 students on post-completion optional practical training to update their physical home addresses, mailing addresses, telephone numbers, employer information and monitor their employment authorization.

Additional SEVP Portal Resources

- Create SEVP Portal Account
- SEVP Portal User Guide
- SEVP Portal Videos
# Unemployment on OPT

## Important
- If you accrue more than 90 days of unemployment or you forget to report your employment information into the SEVP portal, then you are considered not to be maintaining status. A SEVP official may terminate your SEVIS record.

## Post-Completion OPT
- Based on start date listed on EAD.
- May accrue up to 90 days of unemployment.
- Unemployment is cumulative.
- **It is your responsibility to keep track of number of unemployment days, so you do not exceed 90.**

## SEVIS employment counter
- Based off employment data submitted by you.
- Report information to SEVP portal within 10 days.
- Report paid or unpaid work, multiple jobs, etc.
Travel While on OPT

To return to the U.S.....

Post-Completion OPT

- Valid passport
- Valid F-1 visa
- I-20 with travel signature dated w/in 6 months
- Unexpired EAD card
- Employment verification or offer letter

- Risky to travel with a PENDING OPT application
- Risky to travel if you need to renew your F-1 visa

Inform ISSS if you are leaving the U.S. prior to your OPT end date with no plans to return and resume OPT.
End of OPT

At the end of your OPT, you have a 60 day grace period to do one of the following:

1. Get a new I-20 from SJSU to pursue a new degree program;
2. Transfer I-20 to another school to pursue a new degree program;
3. Leave the U.S.

*If you are eligible for the 24 month STEM OPT extension, you must get an I-20 with STEM recommendation from ISSS and file your application to USCIS prior to your OPT ending. Review ISSS webpage on [STEM OPT](#) for more information.
THANK YOU!

International-office@sjsu.edu

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00am to 4:00pm

Check ISSS homepage for more information as well as Calendar of Events for F-1 Employment Workshops.