

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

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What Should I Know Before I Apply for OPT?

1. What is Optional Practical Training?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment authorization that allows F-1 students to work in **job directly related to their major**. It gives students the opportunity to apply the knowledge they have gained in the classroom to a practical work setting. Eligible F-1 students can have maximum of 12 **months** OPT for their academic program. Approval for OPT is granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) and takes approximately 2-4 months to obtain.

- **Post-Completion OPT** – AFTER your program completion (Full-time)
- **Pre-Completion OPT** – DURING your program of study (Part-time). If students decide to pursue pre-completion OPT, then that time will be taken out of their total 12 months of OPT.

2. What are the eligibility requirements for OPT?

- Have been in full time F-1 status for at least one full academic year (3 quarters)
- Be in valid F-1 status at the time of your application.
- Intend to work in a position that is directly related to your major field of study.
- **Students** of English Language Programs (ESL) are not eligible for OPT

3. When can I apply for Post-Completion OPT?

You can apply up to 90 days before your program completion date and **no later than 60 days after your program completion date**. Please plan to have enough time to prepare all of the application materials, meet your academic advisor, receive your new OPT I-20 (with the OPT recommendation) from our office, and also submit the application before the deadline.

4. What is my program completion date?

The program completion date is the last day of final exams. **Please meet with your academic advisor if you are not sure what your program completion date is.**

5. What dates will I be given for Post-Completion OPT?

USCIS will give you a specific start date and end date. The start date will be the date you requested or the USCIS approval date, whichever is later. The end date of OPT must be no later than 14 months from your official program completion date. Please keep in mind that the dates granted for OPT may not be your exact preferred dates.

How to Apply for OPT

Follow the steps listed below in order. Do not skip.

1. Read this entire handout (including the Frequently Asked Questions) carefully.
2. [Apply for graduation](#).
3. Submit the [OPT Confirmation Request Form](#). Your advisor will review your request and submit the OPT Major Confirmation Form to F-1 specialist.
4. Prepare the following required documents and save them in your computer with the proper format. (see [Format Requirements](#) section below)
 - 2X2 passport photo - Check your photo: [Photo Tool](#)
 - Passport ID page (or EAD)
 - Print out I-94 Arriva-Departure record <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>
 - Previous I-20s if they have a different SEVIS#
5. Submit the [Optional Practical Training \(OPT\) Worksheet](#).
 - Request your OPT starting date, which is going to be on your OPT recommendation I-20. Keep in mind that the actual OPT starting date will be determined by USCIS; it may be the same date as your request or the date of USCIS approval, whichever comes later.
 - A copy of your OPT Worksheet will be emailed to your email address. **KEEP THE COPY** so you can use this information when you fill-in the USCIS online Form I-765 (OPT application).
6. F-1 specialist will review your OPT eligibility and check the completeness but not the accuracy of the information on your OPT Worksheet. It is your responsibility to enter the correct information.
7. F-1 specialist will issue you an OPT recommendation I-20. After you receive it, sign, scan, and save the document in your computer with a proper format.
8. Create USCIS account at <https://www.uscis.gov>
9. File Online OPT Application (Form I-765). **If you prefer F-1 specialist to observe your application process**, you can make an appointment. **If you prefer to do it by yourself**, use a copy of OPT Worksheet for reference. If you cannot complete it at once, save the form and continue later.

Format Requirements

Filling Out the Form—Format Requirements

- Photos: JPG, JPEG, or PNG
- Documents: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF or TIFF
- Foreign language documents must have English translation
- Maximum size: 6 MB per file

Acceptable file name examples:

H.Potter (photo).jpeg
H.Potter_I-20.pdf
H.Potter-I-94.pdf

NOT ALLOWED
foreign characters
.doc or .bmp files
special characters
NOT ALLOWED

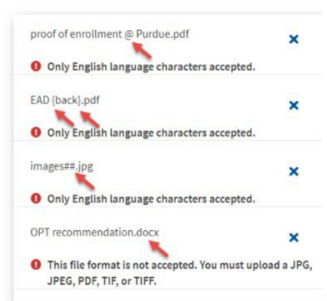


Filling Out the Form—Format Requirements

The **only** allowed characters are:

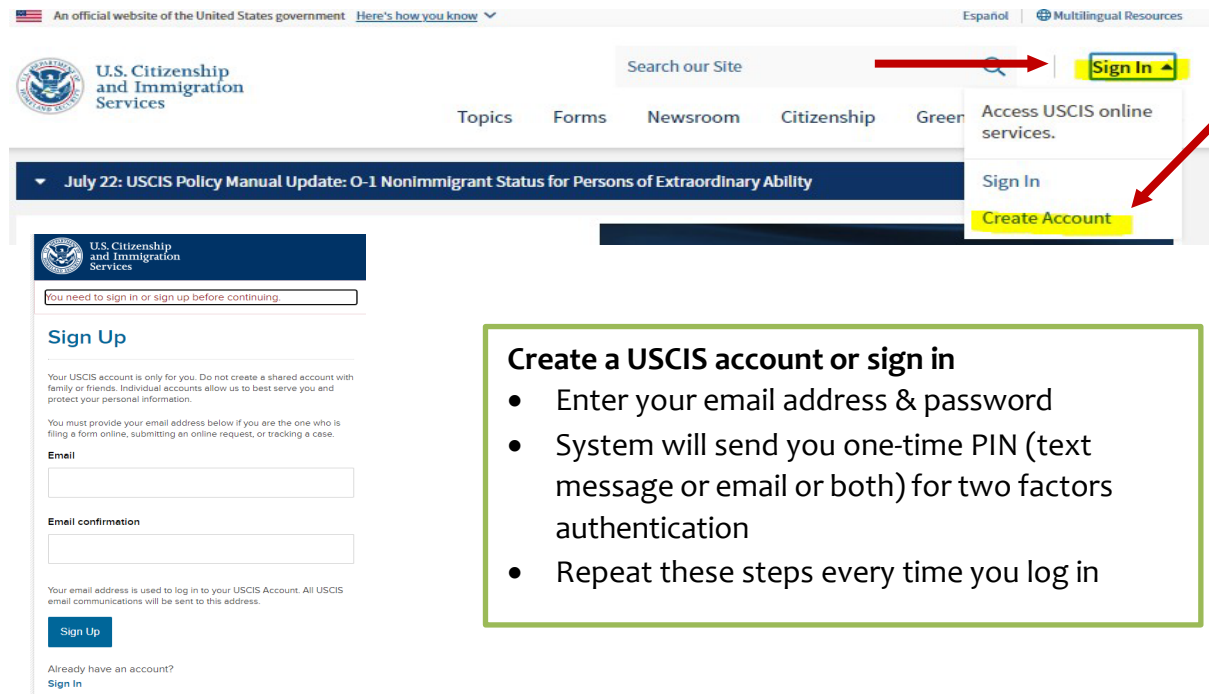
- English letters
- Numbers
- Spaces
- Periods .
- Hyphens -
- Underscores _
- Parentheses ()

***Do NOT use special characters



Create a USCIS Account

Get started at www.uscis.gov, click Sign In, and click Create Account (or Sign In if you already have an account.)



The screenshot shows the USCIS website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and a 'Sign In' button. Below the search bar, there is a navigation menu with options like 'Topics', 'Forms', 'Newsroom', 'Citizenship', and 'Green'. A dropdown menu is open, showing 'Access USCIS online services.', 'Sign In', and 'Create Account'. A red arrow points to the 'Sign In' button, and another red arrow points to the 'Create Account' button. Below the navigation menu, there is a banner for 'July 22: USCIS Policy Manual Update: O-1 Nonimmigrant Status for Persons of Extraordinary Ability'. Below the banner, there is a 'Sign Up' form with fields for 'Email' and 'Email confirmation', and a 'Sign Up' button. A 'Sign In' link is also visible at the bottom of the form.

Create a USCIS account or sign in

- Enter your email address & password
- System will send you one-time PIN (text message or email or both) for two factors authentication
- Repeat these steps every time you log in

How to File Online OPT Application (Form I-765)

Tips before you start to fill in the form:

1. **Have a copy of your OPT Worksheet. Use Information from the worksheet to complete your Online I-765 Form.**
 2. **Save documents in your computer for easy access for upload.**
 - 2x2 passport photo
 - I-94 Arrival-Departure record
 - Passport or EAD
 - **OPT Recommendation I-20**
 - Additional documents if necessary (e.g. I-20s with a different SEVIS #)
- ➔ **Have your credit/debit card ready.**
- Application fee \$470 is required

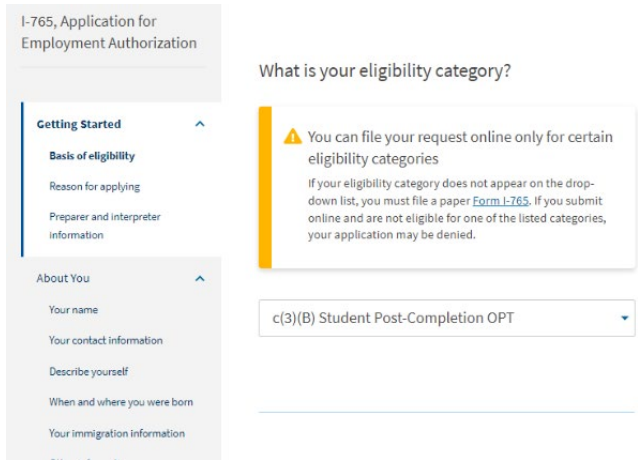
IMPORTANT!!

Do not submit online I-765 form without **OPT Recommendation I-20**. If you do so, your application will be **DENIED**.

Start the online form

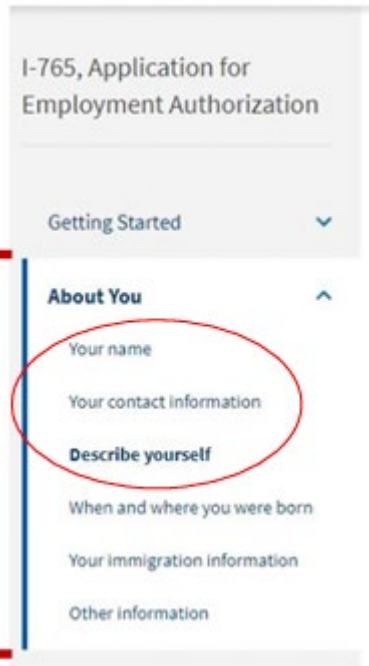


Filling Out the Form - Getting Started



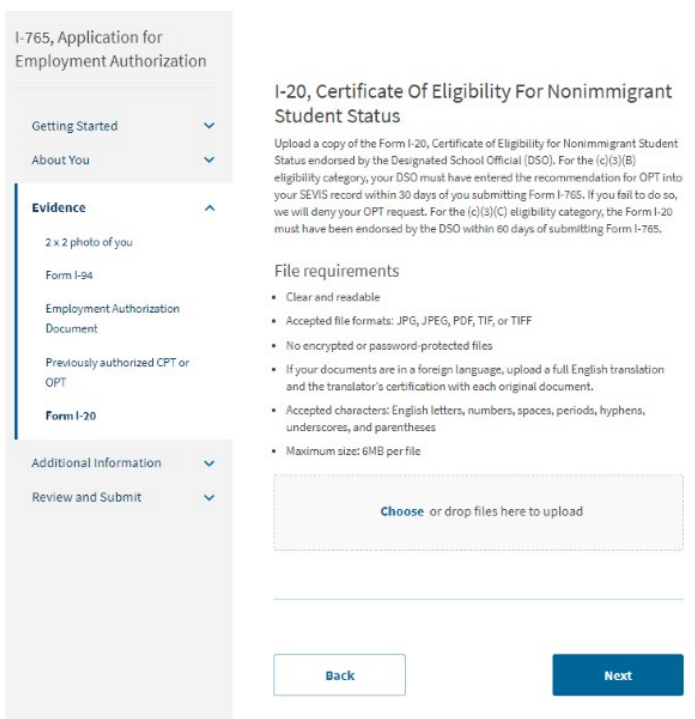
If you graduated, choose **(c) (3) (B) – Post-Completion OPT** (most common as majority of Shoreline F-1 students apply for OPT after they graduated.) For Pre-completion OPT, choose **(C) (3) (A)**.

Filling Out the Form – About You



Enter your information. Make sure to use your current legal name appears on your passport.

Filling Out the Form – Evidence



Upload required documents.

Filling Out the Form—Review & Submit

Your fee

1 Your form filing fee is: \$410

Refund Policy: USCIS does not refund fees, regardless of any action we take on your application, petition or request, or how long USCIS takes to reach a decision. By continuing this transaction, you acknowledge that you must submit fees in the exact amount and that you are paying the fees for a government service.

Alerts and warnings

You have one or more alerts and warnings based on the information you provided in your application.

A red alert means you have incomplete responses or inconsistent data. You cannot submit your application with any alerts.

Alerts and warnings

✓ We found no alerts or warnings in your application

- Review your entries before you pay
- Once you submit payment, you cannot make corrections

Alerts and warnings

- RED:** You cannot submit the form until you make corrections.
- YELLOW:** There may be errors. Correct or leave (if no error). You can submit the form.
- GREEN:** You entered all necessary information. (completion of entry is not equal to accuracy. Make sure they are all accurate.)

Filling Out the Form—Review & Submit

Application For Employment Authorization

USCIS Form I-765
Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Fee Group: Action Block

For USCIS Use Only

Authentication Extension: Valid From: Valid Through: Alien Registration Number: A- Example: Remarks:

In to be completed by an attorney or Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA)-accredited representative (if any) Select this box if Form G-2811 attached Attorney or Accredited Representative USCIS Online Account Number (if any)

START HERE - Type or Print in Black Ink Answer all questions fully and accurately. If a question does not apply to you (for example, if you have never been married and the question asks, "Provide the name of your current spouse"), type or print "N/A" unless otherwise directed. If you answer to a question which requires a number, type or print a zero (0) unless otherwise directed. "How many children do you have" or "How many times have you departed the United States," type or print "None" unless otherwise directed.

Part 1: Reason for Applying **Other Names Used**

I am applying for (check appropriate box):

1.a. Initial permanent immigration **Provide all other names you have ever used, including aliases, maiden names, and nicknames. Show and enter dates in parentheses (mm/yyyy) using the year provided in Part 6.**

1.b. Replacement of lost, stolen, or compromised authentication document due to USCIS error **2. Given Name (First Name)**

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) **3. Middle Name**

NOTE: Replacement (issuance) of an employment authorization document due to USCIS error does not require a new Form I-765 and filing fee. **4. Surname (Last Name)**

Replacement for Card Error: What date did you file for action of the Form I-765? (Month/Day/Year) **5. Other Names**

1.c. Renewal of my permission to accept employment (Attach a copy of your previous employment authorization document) **6. Other Names**

1.e. **7. Middle Name**

Part 2: Information About You **8.a. Family Name (Last Name)**

Enter Full Legal Name **8.b. Given Name (First Name)**

1.a. Family Name: Jane **8.c. Middle Name**

1.b. Given Name: Jane **8.d. Maiden Name**

1.c. Maiden Name: Jane

Form I-765 Edition 08/23/20 Electronic Form Only Page 1 of 7

Review the I-765 form information Print

Here is a summary of all the information you provided in your application.

Make sure you have provided responses for everything that applies to you before you submit your application. You can edit your responses by going to each application section using the site navigation.

We also prepared a draft case snapshot with your responses, which you can download below.

[View draft snapshot](#)

Getting Started

Basis of eligibility

What is your eligibility category?

c(3)(A) Student Pre-Completion OPT

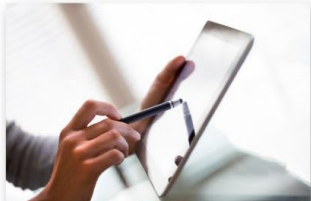
Make sure to print/download your form and review information before you submit.

Filing Out the Form – Applicant’s Declaration & Certification

Applicant's statement

You must read and agree to the statement below.

I can read and understand English, and have read and understand every question and instruction on this application, as well as my answer to every question.



I have read and agree to the applicant's statement

Applicant's signature

You must provide your digital signature below by typing your full legal name. We may deny your application if you do not completely fill out this application or fail to submit required documents. We will record the date of your signature with your application.

Enter your full legal name here

Sign the form by entering your full LEGAL name. (needs to match with your passport)

Pay the application fee **\$470**.

Filling Out the Form—Paying the Fee

- After you agree to Applicant's statement, you will be taken to pay.gov.
- [Pay.gov](https://pay.gov) is a secure government portal.
- Pay by ACH withdrawal, or debit or credit card.

The screenshot shows the 'USCIS I-765' payment page. It asks the user to 'Please select a payment method:'. There are two radio button options: 'I want to pay with a withdrawal from a checking or savings account (ACH)' and 'I want to pay with a debit or credit card'. The second option is selected. Below the options are logos for VISA, MASTERCARD, AMERICAN EXPRESS, DISCOVER, and DEBIT. At the bottom, there are 'Cancel' and 'Continue' buttons.

Filling Out the Form—Paying the Fee

After you submit the payment, you cannot make corrections. Review your application one more time!!

- Enter payment information.
- Note the form type and agency tracking ID at the top.
- When you click "Continue" to pay the fee, your form will be submitted.

The screenshot shows the 'USCIS I-765 Review and submit payment' screen. It lists the following information: Agency Tracking ID: LNUJ31CK7SQ1KH, Payment Amount: \$410.00, Payment Method: Plastic Card, Account Holder Name: Lee Smith, Card Type: VISA, Card Number: *****1111, Billing Address: 20 Ninian Street, Billing Address 2: Springfield, City: Springfield, Country: United States, State/Province: LA, ZIP/Postal Code: 39248. There is a checkbox for 'I authorize a charge to my card account for the above amount in accordance with my card issuer agreement.' At the bottom, there are 'Previous', 'Cancel', and 'Continue' buttons.

Filling Out the Form—Submitting the Form

- You will receive confirmation your form was submitted.
- Click on "Go to my cases" to see your case card and receipt notice.

After you submit payment, click "Go to my cases" You can obtain your receipt number.

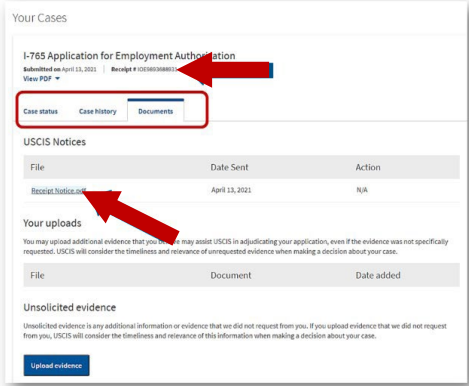
The screenshot shows the USCIS online account page. The header includes the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services logo and the text 'U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services'. Below the header, it says 'You successfully submitted your I-765' and 'We will contact you if we have any questions or need additional information. You can track the status of your application through your USCIS online account.' At the bottom, there is a blue button labeled 'Go to my cases' with a red arrow pointing to it.

Next Steps

After you submitted the online application

- 1) Regularly track your case.
- 2) If you receive a Request for Evidence (RFE), take your action as soon as possible.

Tracking Your Case



Your Cases

I-765 Application for Employment Authorization
Submitted on April 13, 2022 | Receipt # 0038038882

Case status Case history Documents

USCIS Notices

File	Date Sent	Action
Receipt Notice.pdf	April 13, 2022	N/A

Your uploads

You may upload additional evidence that you think we may assist USCIS in adjudicating your application, even if the evidence was not specifically requested. USCIS will consider the timeliness and relevance of unrequested evidence when making a decision about your case.

File	Document	Date added

Unsolicited evidence

Unsolicited evidence is any additional information or evidence that we did not request from you. If you upload evidence that we did not request from you, USCIS will consider the timeliness and relevance of this information when making a decision about your case.

[Upload evidence](#)

All notices are posted to your account

- Receipt notice
- Biometrics appointment notice
- Request for Evidence (RFE)
- PDF of your completed form
- Decision letter

* Notices are also mailed to the address on file

Tips:

- Sign up for a [USCIS Case Status Online Account](#) to get automatic case updates, including your U.S. Postal (USPS) tracking number to track your Employment Authorization Document (EAD).
- Register for [Informed Delivery](#) through USPS to get daily image for mail being sent to you. With Informed Delivery, you can automatically track packages you are expecting, set up email and text alerts, and enter USPS Delivery Instructions for your mail carrier

When your OPT is approved

When USCIS approves your application, you will receive an email and/or text message. You will also receive two separate mails for Approval Notice (Form I-797B) and your Employment Authorization Document (EAD), also known as the “USCIS I-766 card” or “work permit”. If you requested on your OPT application, you will receive your Social Security Number (SSN) card separately from the Social Security Administration.

1. What do I need to when I receive my EAD card?

Review information on your card. (If information is incorrect or the length of OPT is more than 12 months, please contact an F-1 specialist immediately.) Scan and email your EAD to F-1 specialist. They will issue OPT Approved status I-20



EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATIONS

TYPE	FULL/PART-TIME	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
POST-COMPLETION OPT	FULL TIME	APPROVED	07 JULY 2022	30 MAY 2023

2. Create an SEVP Portal Account

When your OPT is approved and OPT start date has begun, you will receive an account creation email.

Email from: do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov

Subject line: **Optional Practical Training Approval - the next step. Create an SEVP Portal account.**

Step 1: Create your Portal account

1. Click the link in the email to open the registration page.
2. Enter your correct, most recent SEVIS ID on which practical training was approved and then click **Submit**.
3. A new page will open and welcome you by your name and display your email address.
4. Create a password for your account. Follow the instructions on the screen and refer to the [Make and Maintain User Password](#) page to create a password.
5. Type your password twice and click **“Create Account.”**

Important notes:

You can only use the link once. If you are unable to start the registration process using the link provided in the email, you should ask an F-1 Specialist to have the email notice sent again. The system only allows you three chances to submit your SEVIS ID correctly. After three failed attempts, the portal will lock you out. If your portal account is locked, contact an F-1 Specialist to request a reset of your SEVP Portal account.

Step 2: Successfully created your Portal account

After you click “Create Account”, the portal will open the login page and display a success message. This signifies that you have successfully created an SEVP Portal account and may now:

- Log in and out of the portal
- Access portal pages
- Manage your account

You can do the following at the SEVP Portal:

- Review your biographic information
- Edit physical address
- Edit mailing address
- Edit email address
- Edit telephone number
- Edit employment information
- View history of changes to your portal
- Manage your account (Change your password)

For more information, SEVP Portal Help: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevp-portal-help>

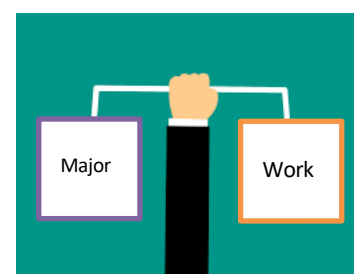
Frequently Asked Questions

Delivery issues

- 1. My USPS tracking information shows my package was delivered but I have not received it. What should I do?**
Contact your local post office **immediately**. USCIS mails your card to the address you provided on your application. If your mailing address changes after you file your application, you must update your address with USCIS and USPS as soon as possible. If you don't update your address promptly, your case could be delayed, your document(s) could get lost, and you may need to reapply and pay the fee again.
- 2. If I do not receive my Social Security Number (SSN) card that I requested on my I-765?**
Please call or visit a Social Security Administration office if you do not receive your SSN card within 7 business days after receiving your EAD.

Employment

- 1. Can I begin working before my OPT is approved?**
NO. You may not begin employment until your OPT approved start date. (The date is on your EAD and Form I-797). Working before OPT has been authorized would be considered illegal employment.
- 2. Do I need to be employed while I am on Post-completion OPT?**
Yes. Your total unemployed time cannot be more than 90 days.
- 3. How many hours do I need to work?**
For post-completion OPT, the work must be for more than 20 hours a week.
- 4. Does it affect my immigration status if I am not employed?**
Yes. Regulations only allow for 90 days of TOTAL unemployment and your F-1 SEVIS record may be terminated when you exceed 90 days of unemployment. You could go home or transfer to another U.S. school prior to accruing 90 days of unemployment if you decide not to use the remainder of the OPT benefit.
- 5. Does it affect my immigration status if my employment is not related to my major area of study?**
Yes. Work done for OPT must be "directly related to the student's major area of study." Engaging in employment which is not related to your study is not authorized and your SEVIS record may be terminated.
- 6. If I have one job that is related to my major area of study, can I have another job that is not related to my major area of study? For example, my major area of study was Biotechnology and I work as a Biotechnology Lab Specialist. I am thinking of getting a second job as a server at a local restaurant. Can I do that?**



No. All work done for OPT must be "directly related to the student's major area of study". If you engage employment which is not related to your study, it is a violation of your F-1 status and will result in termination of your SEVIS record and OPT authorization.

7. What types of employment satisfy the employment requirement?

- **Regular paid employment**

In a position directly related to the student's program of study. For post-completion OPT, the work must be for at least 20 hours per week. Students may work for multiple employers, as long as it is directly related to the student's program of study.

- **Payment by multiple short-term multiple employers**

SEVP says that "Students, such as musicians and other performing artists may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration. The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration."

- **Work for hire**

SEVP says, "This is also commonly referred to as 1099 employment where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. If requested by the Department of Homeland Security, students should be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company."

- **Self-employed business owner**

SEVP says, "Students on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. The student should be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to his or her degree program."

- **Employment through an agency**

SEVP says, "Students on post-completion OPT must be able to provide evidence showing they worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency."

- **Volunteers or unpaid interns**

SEVP says, "Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns, where this practice does not violate any labor laws. The work should be at least 20 hours per week for students on post-completion OPT. A student should be able to provide evidence, acquired from the student's employer, to verify that he or she worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment." Note that a volunteer position or unpaid internship would be a valid option for someone who otherwise might not meet the minimum employment requirement.



Travel outside of U.S.

We recommend you avoid travel outside of the U.S. while your application is in pending.

1. What documents do I need if I travel outside the U.S. after applying for OPT?

- **Travel and re-enter BEFORE degree completion:**

You must have

- 1) Valid passport
- 2) Valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport
- 3) Valid I-20 with travel signature on page 2



We recommend carrying proof of registration and proof that you have funds available to complete your studies (e.g., a bank statement).

- **Travel and re-enter AFTER degree completion but your OPT is *pending*** (Traveling outside the U.S. before OPT approval and without a job offer may present some risks):

- 1) Valid passport
- 2) Valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport
- 3) Valid I-20 with travel signature on page 2 (no older than 6 months)
- 4) USCIS receipt notice (Form I-797C, Notice of Action)
- 5) If you have a job offer, carry a job offer letter.

- **Travel and re-enter after degree completion and your OPT has been approved:**

- 1) Valid passport
- 2) Valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport
- 3) Valid I-20 with travel signature on page 2 (no older than 6 months)
- 4) Employment Authorization Document
- 5) Verification of employment such as job offer letter or pay stub (Students without a job could be denied entry).

Reporting Requirements

1. What do I need to report during OPT?

- Your employment status
- Your employer's information
- When you stop working
- Update your address, phone, and email

2. How to report?

You must report your practical training/employment using the **SEVP Portal**. If you do not report your practical training/employment, your F-1 SEVIS record may be terminated 90 days after the OPT start date printed on your EAD card. A terminated SEVIS record cancels the OPT authorization and requires you to leave the U.S.

Other situations related to OPT status

1. What do I do if my F-1 visa stamp expires while I am on OPT?

You do not need a valid F-1 visa stamp to stay inside the U.S. if you are maintaining status. However, if you go outside of the U.S., you will need to get a new F-1 visa stamp to re- enter the U.S. In order to apply for an F-1 visa stamp while you are on OPT, please take your I-20 with a travel signature within the last 6 months, your EAD card, proof that you have a job, and your passport.

2. What if I want to transfer to university while I am on OPT or after I have finished it?

If you want to transfer to a university, please submit the online [Transfer-out Request form](#) along with your admission letter. If you are eligible, F-1 specialist will transfer your SEVIS record. Keep in mind if you engage in employment that is not related to your field of study or are unemployed for an aggregate of more than 90 days, you are considered out of Status. Your SEVIS record cannot be transferred in Active status.

While you are on OPT:

Your OPT will be cancelled when your SEVIS record is transferred. You cannot work after the release date.

After completing OPT:

You must request a SEVIS transfer within 60 days of completing OPT. (Your SEVIS record will complete on Day 61. You will be ineligible to transfer your SEVIS record in Active Status.

3. What should I do after OPT authorization ends?

You have a 60-day grace period after your OPT end date. You can:

- Stay in the U.S. and make preparation to leave the U.S.
- Start a new academic program at Shoreline (see academic advisor)
- Transfer to another US school
- Change your status

4. What if I change my mind and want to cancel my OPT application?

It is difficult and sometimes impossible to cancel an OPT application. We strongly recommend that you consider your situation carefully before applying for OPT. If you are not sure about your program completion date and other factors that might affect your OPT application, please make an appointment to see an advisor. Please contact F-1 specialist if you consider or decide to:

- cancel your OPT after you submit your application
- go home without using OPT

5. Am I eligible to continue my international student health insurance while I am on OPT?

Please check at the front desk for more information.