



Optional Practical Training (OPT)
Office of International Affairs
University of Michigan-Dearborn

Topics

- 12-Month OPT: Pre-completion vs. Post-completion OPT
- STEM OPT Extension
- Cap Gap

What Do I Have to Know

Maintaining SEVIS Status is Student's Responsibility

- Understand the Rules/Policies
- SEVIS record - RCL, I-20 End Date, Change of Address
- Information [Sheet](#) for OPT/STEM OPT
- [Applying for Practical Training](#)

What Do I Have to Know

Beware of job offer phishing scams!

Legitimate-looking emails impersonating U-M faculty/departments may attempt to lure you with job offers to scam you out of money with fake check overpayments or try to steal your information.

Don't reply. Report to ReportPhish@umich.edu

Visit [Job Offer Scams](#)

Information is provided by [Career Services](#)

Eligibility Criteria for OPT

- Be in legal F-1 student visa status
- Be a full-time student for at least one academic year

*Did not accrue more than 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

*Job offer letter is not required

Definition in the Federal Regulations:
Temporary employment directly related to a student's field of study. During OPT, a student remains an F-1 status.

Health Insurance

- Eligible to extend your coverage by enrolling directly into the BCN International Student Continuation Plan*
- Will have 30 days to enroll in the Continuation Plan after your current coverage expires (same as the program end date on your I-20)
- Please address questions regarding the Continuation Plan directly to BCN at 1.800.662.6667.
- In addition to the BCN Continuation Plan, you may also be eligible to enroll in other, alternative health insurance plans:
 - health insurance provided through your OPT employment
 - your spouse's health insurance plan
 - other, private health insurance plans

Maximum Length (Pre and Post-Completion)

- 12 months
- Another 12 months for a higher educational level
- 24 months OPT STEM Extension

Pre-Completion OPT/Post-completion OPT
How do you know which one you will apply
for?

Pre-completion OPT:

Employment begins and ends before the completion of the academic program

Earliest time to apply

90 days before OPT start date

Pre-completion OPT while school is in session

- Student must be registered full-time
- OPT may be part-time only (maximum of 20 hours per week)

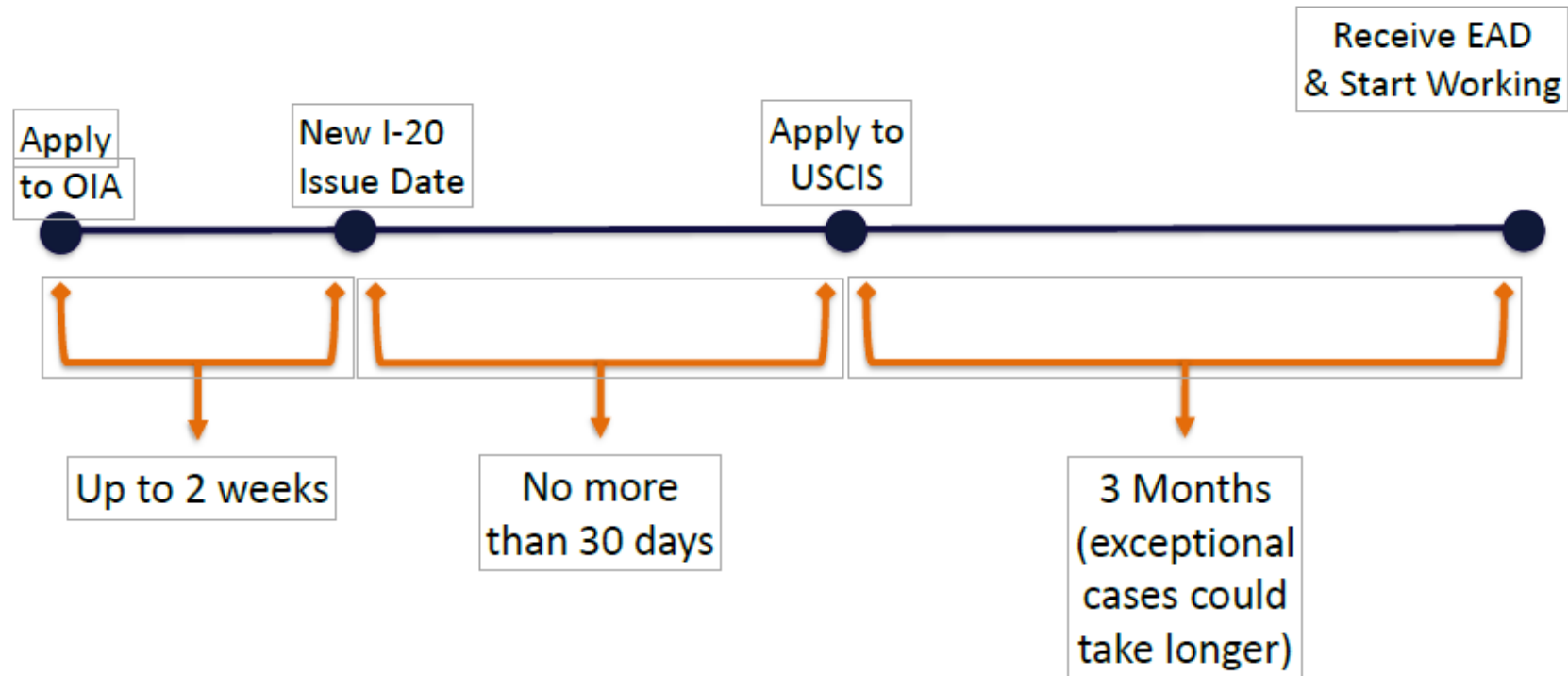
Pre-completion OPT in Summer Semester

- During the annual vacation (summer semester), student must intend to register for the next term
- OPT may be part- or full-time

Post-completion OPT:
Employment begins after completion of
academic program

Earliest time to apply

- Up to/Within 90 days before program end date
- Up to 60 days after program end date
- File petition within 30 days of OPT recommendation
- OPT Start Date determination



On Campus Employment

You will no longer be allowed to work on-campus or CPT after the program end date on your I-20.

Unauthorized employment is one of the most severe violations!

Documents Needed to Request a New I-20
via [M-International](#) with OPT
Recommendation from OIA

- OPT Request Form
- OPT Acknowledged Form
- OPT Online Review Material/Workshop
- OPT Recommendation Letter from Academic advisor

Sending OPT Application to USCIS

- Must be in the U.S. when you apply for OPT
- [Base Fee](#) for I-765, payable to US Department of Homeland Security ([premium process fee \\$1685](#))
- Original USCIS Form [I-765 \(Instructions\)](#) must send I-765 with all required documents
- Institution Accreditation can be omitted
- Photocopy of the
 - **new I-20 with OPT recommendation (don't forget to sign I-20)**
 - all previous I-20s from your current degree level (if filing via mail)
 - Form I-94
 - previous EAD, if applicable
 - most recent F-1 visa page (except Canadians) or approval of change of status to F-1 (I-797A) if applicable
 - the photo page of the passport
 - Passport size photo

File Online

<https://myaccount.uscis.gov/>

<https://tsg.phototool.state.gov/photo>

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos.html>

Online Filing Benefits



Case status alerts and secure messages



See all case correspondence



Check your case status and update personal information



Upload evidence



Mailing to USCIS (do not send mail if already filed online)

<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>

- Using a trackable method
- Submit your Form I-765 within 30 days *after* your designated school official (DSO) enters the recommendation for OPT into your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record.
- Make a copy of the application for your own records

Mailing to USCIS

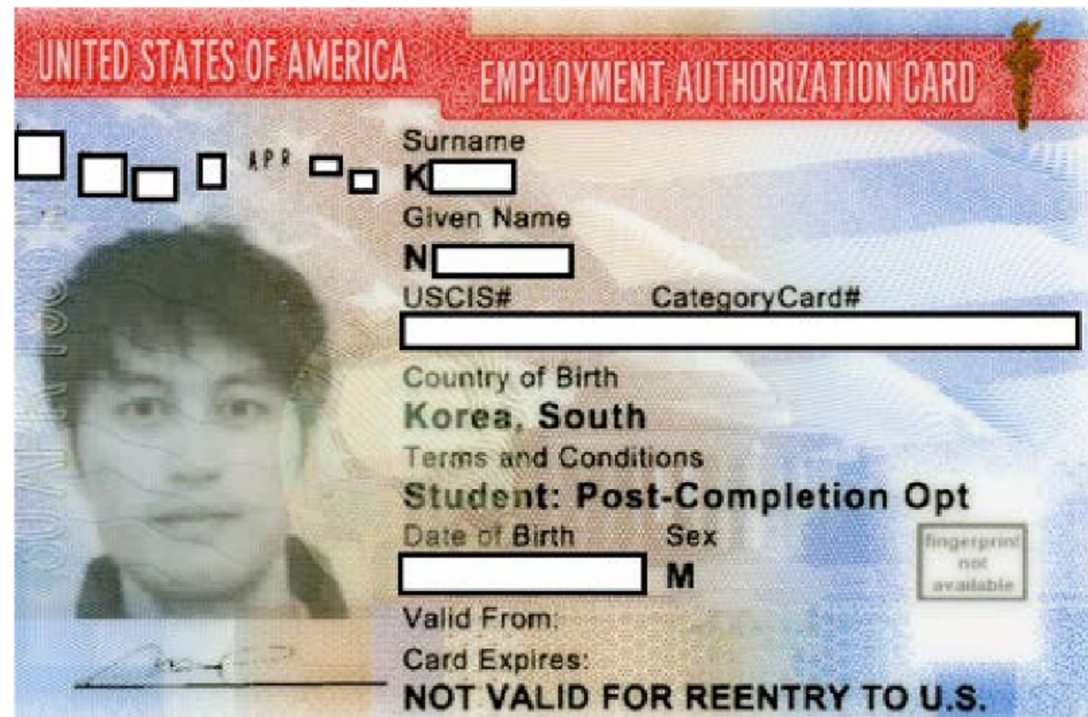
Make a copy of receipt from the post office showing the tracking number

When Case Status Online Reflects “Approved”

- Ensure delivery of your mail
- Mail will not be forwarded

When you Receive the I-797 Approval Notice and EAD

- Make a copy of the Approval Notice and EAD (front and Back) for your records
- Submit a scanned copy of your EAD to OIA and Follow the [OPT Reporting Instructions](#)
- Not authorized to begin employment until the start date on the EAD arrives



Exceptions and Problems

- If you change your mind about applying for OPT
- If you do not receive receipt notice within 4 weeks
- If you receive notice from USCIS that something is wrong (RFE)
- If your application is denied (rejected)
- If your EAD does not arrive
- If there is a mistake on your EAD

[USCIS Case Inquiry](#)

lockboxsupport@dhs.gov

800.375.5283

IF your I-20 has NOT yet expired:

You must apply for an extension **BEFORE** your I-20 end date

If your OPT application is not yet processed by USCIS, you may withdraw it.

No refund of application fee!

If your OPT application has been approved by USCIS, you may work part-time only on approved EAD while finishing academic work.

You will be subject to the 90-day unemployment rule!

Thesis/Dissertation

- If you have received EAD, you may work full time while completing the thesis/dissertation.
- If you do not complete the thesis/dissertation, you will not be eligible for OPT STEM Extension.

USCIS Contacts

<https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/contact-us#USCIS%20Service%20Centers>

<https://www.uscis.gov/contactcenter>

<https://www.uscis.gov/addresschange>

While You are On Post-Completion OPT

- Must setup SEVP Portal Account - [OPT Reporting](#)
- May change employers at will
- Employment must be directly related to the field of studies
- Minimum of 20 work hours per week

SEVP portal reporting

[SEVP Portal Student User Guide](#)

Period of Unemployment

90 days

Change of Status During OPT

- Report to OIA
- OPT ends on the effective date of the USCIS action notice and any unused OPT time is lost

After ending OPT - 60-Day Grace Period

- Prepare departure from the U.S.
- Apply for a Change of Status to another visa type
- Receive a new I-20 by a new academic program admission

*Before ending OPT – STEM Extension (if you are eligible)

OPT STEM Extension

Definition of STEM OPT

Practical work experience in your field of study, typically after completion of a degree for a maximum of 36 months (12 months of “regular” OPT with a 24-month extension possible).

Eligibility Criteria for the 24-month OPT extension

- Students who have already been approved for **12 months** of post-completion OPT; **and**
- Who have earned a bachelor's or higher degree in a field included on the U.S. Government's list of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics ([STEM](#)) fields within the last 10 years; **and**
- Who are employed in a paid job directly related to his/her **field of study**; **and**
- Who have a job or job offer with an employer enrolled in the U.S. Government's [E-Verify](#) program.

Application time frame

- Request within 90 days before the “regular” OPT expiration date
- The application is not acceptable during the 60 day grace period
- File petition within 60 days when the STEM is recommended by DSO

Requesting OPT STEM I-20

Submit/Upload OPT Complete Request Packet to [M-International](#)* Portal**

- OPT STEM [Extension Request Form](#)
- [Form I-983](#)

* [Introductory Video](#)

** [VPN](#)

[File Online](#)

<https://myaccount.uscis.gov/>

Premium Process (\$1685)

<https://www.uscis.gov/i-907>

Question about Form I-765, i.e. Institution Accreditation

While STEM extension is pending

If you file your STEM OPT extension application on time and your OPT period expires while your extension application is pending, we will automatically extend your employment authorization for 180 days. This automatic 180-day extension ceases once USCIS adjudicates your STEM OPT extension application.

Mailing application to USCIS (Do not mail application to USCIS if you have filed online)

- Form I-765 *Be sure to sign the form
- [Base Fee](#) for I-765, payable to US Department of Homeland Security ([premium process fee \\$1685](#))
- Photocopy of all pages of your new I-20 endorsed for the 24 month OPT Extension *Be sure to sign I-20
- Photocopy of the front and back of your current EAD
- Photocopy of UM-Dearborn diploma or official transcript
- Form I-94
- Photocopy of passport photo page Photocopy of visa
- Submit your Form I-765 60 days (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) OPT) *after* your designated school official (DSO) enters the recommendation for OPT into your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record.

[Form I-983](#) – STEM OPT Reporting

- Training Plan (Updates, including change of employer names, addresses, and site locations/addresses)
- Evaluation

Additional Reporting requirements – Maintaining F-1 status

Must report to the OIA within 10 days if there is any change of:

- Legal name
- Residential or mailing address: [Change of Address UM-Dearborn Student Portal](#); [Change of Address with USCIS](#); [Change of Address Online with USCIS](#)
- Employer information (STEM I-983)
- Loss of employment

Unemployment time
150 days (90 + 60)

Travel Outside the U.S. and Reentry Valid Visa, I-20 Travel Endorsement, Receipt/EAD

- If 12 month OPT Application is pending
- If STEM Extension Application is pending
- If OPT or STEM Extension is approved
- Getting and F-1 Visa Stamp on OPT

<https://umdearborn.edu/offices/international-affairs/optional-practical-training-opt/opt-information-and-forms/travel-and-re-entry-us-while-opt>

“Cap Gap”

If a person's H-1B is subject to the cap, and if that person's OPT expires (between April 1 and September 30), the time in between the EAD expiration and October 1 is called the “cap gap.”

Eligibility

- You have properly maintained F-1 status
- Your employment is subject to the H-1B cap
- Your employer filed an H-1B petition for “Change of Status” (not “Consular Notification”) on or after April 1
- Your EAD expires between April 1 and September 30
- The H-1B petition was filed before your EAD expired

If the H-1B Petition is Not Approved

- the “cap gap” extension of employment eligibility will immediately terminate
- Typically, you will have 60 days (from notification of the denied) to depart the U.S.
- If, however, the denial is because of a status violation, there is no grace period.

Travel Internationally during the “Cap Gap”

- After an H-1B petition with Change of Status is filed, consult your employer's immigration attorney about all international travel, whether or not your EAD is expired.
- If your EAD is expired, you will not be able to re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status.

OIA OPT Information:

<https://umdearborn.edu/office-international-affairs/optional-practical-training-opt>

I-765 Update Information:

<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>

Social Security Number:

[Employer Responsibilities](#)

<https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10181.pdf>

Q & A