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Post-Completion Optional Practical Training 101

What is OPT?

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

- You can apply for 12 months of OPT at each level of study:
  - Bachelor's
  - Master's
  - PhD

- You can participate in OPT once per degree level

- Students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) may apply for a 24-month extension during Post-Completion OPT if they qualify

Employment Authorization Document

- EAD: the card you receive from USCIS when OPT is approved

- You may begin work after the start date printed on your EAD

Post-OPT Eligibility

- Any F-1 student who
  - Is in valid F-1 status
  - Has been enrolled full-time for one academic year (two semesters)
  - Completes **all** degree requirements in the academic program listed on their I-20 and are eligible to receive their degree
    or
    PhD or master's students who will complete all coursework and are enrolled in thesis/dissertation **only**.*

*Students who choose to do post-completion OPT while working on thesis or dissertation must graduate before the OPT end date. Students who do not graduate in time may be considered out of status.

24-Month STEM Extension

- F-1 students who majored in certain STEM fields
- USCIS must have application **before** initial OPT expires
- May apply up to 3 months before the initial OPT expires
  - Contact ISSS for details on how to apply
- Employer for STEM must be registered with E-Verify: uscis.gov/e-verify
- Allows a 24-month extension of OPT for a total of 36 months
- Students may only ever apply twice

"Who decides if the job is related to my major?"

- Students must justify how the job is related to their major

- Ask yourself:
  "Is there a clear connection between the job and my major?"

"Can I work before getting my EAD?"

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- Working on-campus is **prohibited** after your completion date if you have **not** received your EAD card and if the job is unrelated to your major

No work before you have your EAD card and the start date has arrived

"How do I maintain status for OPT?"

- You may not work until you have your EAD card and the start date on the card has passed

- You may not go to school to pursue a new degree while on OPT
  - New degrees require a new I-20 and full-time student enrollment
  - Part-time, non-degree study is acceptable while on OPT

- You will be out of status if you accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT

- Use your time wisely!

Maintaining Status

- You must report any changes in:
  - Name
  - Address
  - Employer
  - Employer Address

  Applies to all OPT students!

- **24-month STEM extension students** must report each of these **every 6 months** along with two self-evaluations at the 12 and 24 month mark

All gaps of unemployment must be reported. Gaps cannot accrue greater than 90 days or you will be considered out of status.

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Maintaining Status

- Report any employment changes or changes to your address online
  - international.unt.edu/OPTReport

Note: Submitting employer updates will not generate a new I-20. If you would like a new I-20, submit a request for a reprint after submitting your employer update

Maintaining Status

- Employment must be full time (at least 20 hours per week) and related to degree program
- Types of employment:
  - Paid
  - Unpaid
  - Internships
  - Multiple Employers (total hours must be at least 20 hours per week)
- Jobs on campus may not be student positions

Maintaining Status

- **Keep records of all employment**
  - Employer, dates of employment, title, hours worked, relation to your degree, etc.

- You will need this information when applying for future benefits through USCIS (H1B, permanent residency, etc.)

"When can I do OPT?"

- You can participate in post completion OPT when you have **completed your degree program**
  - Completion: the last day of required enrollment

- Completion is **not** when you graduate or "walk across the stage"

Timing

- You may apply up to 90 days before and no more than 60 days after your completion date
- You will select a start date
  - Example: If your completion date is May 13, you can choose to start anywhere from May 15 to July 12

- "Can I change my start date after applying for OPT?
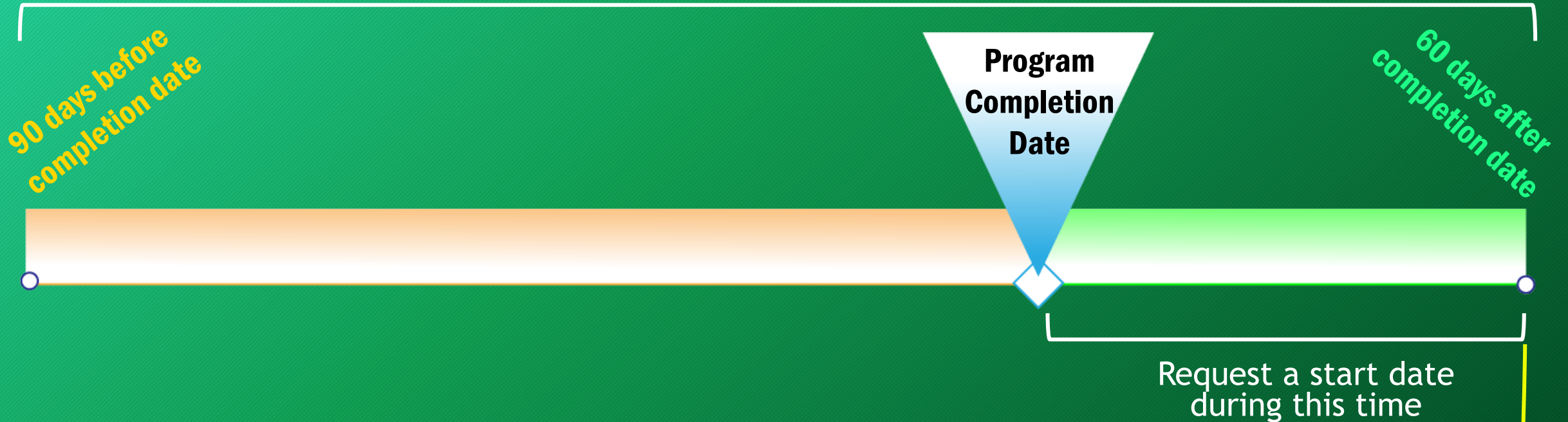 - **No.** After mailing your application you cannot change the date.

Timing

- **Warning:** If USCIS receives your application before the end of the end of your 60-day grace period but your OPT is approved after your grace period ends, you may not receive the full 12 months of OPT

- A student cannot have more than 14 months between the end of their program and the end of OPT

Apply Early!

Timing

SEND APPLICATION DURING THIS TIME

90 days before completion date

Program Completion Date

60 days after completion date

Request a start date during this time

- USCIS must receive your application before this day

- It can take USCIS about 90 days to process applications

Timing

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12 months of OPT

60 day grace period

Apply for 24-month STEM extension if eligible

4 Options

After OPT

After 12 months of Post-OPT you will have 60 days to do one of the following:

- **Change Degree Levels**
    - You must apply, be admitted and get a new I-20 during the 60-day grace period
- **Transfer Schools**
    - You must receive a new I-20 from the new school during the 60-day grace period
    - If you transfer while your OPT is still valid, the remainder of your OPT will be cancelled on the day of the SEVIS release.
- **Change Status**
    - OPT is often a transition to an H1B visa
    - Contact ISSS if your employer files an H1B application for you
- **Return Home**

After OPT

- If you are eligible for the 24-month STEM extension you must apply **before** your initial OPT expires

- You **cannot** apply for the extension during the grace period

Frequently Asked Questions

- "What is my status while on OPT?"
  - F-1 status

- "Do I still need to get my I-20 signed for travel?"
  - Yes, if you plan to travel outside the U.S. and the I-20 has not been signed within the last 6 months
  - You may request a reprint from ISSS at least 3 weeks prior to your departure: international.unt.edu/I20Request

- "Can I travel while on OPT?"
  - After completion, but no EAD: Travel is not recommended
  - After completion, with EAD: Travel with valid I-20 endorsed for travel within the last 6 months, passport, visa, EAD and letter from employer

Frequently Asked Questions

- "What if my visa is expired?"
  - Visas do not impact your status while in the U.S.
  - If traveling outside the U.S., you must renew your visa before returning
  - Do not attempt to renew your visa without a job while on OPT
  - To renew your visa you will need:
    1. Valid I-20 endorsed for travel within the last 6 months
    2. Valid passport
    3. EAD
    4. Letter from employer

Frequently Asked Questions

"What if I can't find a job?"

- You are allowed 90 days of unemployment. Your SEVIS record will automatically terminate on day 91.
- Unemployment days begin on the first day of your OPT and is not part of the 60-day grace period

"What if I decide to go home permanently?"

- Notify ISSS by filling out the Ending Studies form: international.unt.edu/EndingStudies

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How to Apply for OPT

- At the end of this presentation take a quiz (must score 100%) and fill out application documents.

- Bring quiz score to ISSS Office (Marquis 110) and apply for an OPT I-20
  - You are required to send your application to USCIS within 30 days of your I-20 being issued

- Pay OPT Case Management Fee online
  - This is separate from the USCIS application fee
  - Must be paid before picking up new I-20

- Send all required documents to address listed on application

Apply for a New I-20

- You must include:
  - Completion Date
  - The dates requested for OPT
  - Employer Name & Address (if known)

- Check the "After completion of degree" box

- Keep other pages for your reference

Choosing Dates for Post-OPT

Consider the following

- The amount of time you need to find a job

- Whether or not you have an employer waiting to hire you

- Whether or not you may want a break after your studies

I-765

Choose "Permission to accept employment"

Note ISSS address

I-94 number goes here. If you need to reprint your card, visit cbp.gov/I94

Have you had an EAD card before?

You may find this date online: cbp.gov/I94

Note:
(c)(3)(B)-Post Com

Application For Employment Authorization

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USCIS
Form I-765
OMB No. 1615-0040
Expires 02/28/2018

For USCIS Use Only

Fee Stamp

Action Block

Initial Receipt | Resubmitted
Relocated
Received | Sent
Completed

☐ Application Approved
☐ Authorization/Extension Valid From_____
☐ Authorization/Extension Valid To_____

☐ Application Denied - Failed to establish:
☐ Eligibility under 8 CFR 274a.12 (a) or (c)
☐ Economic necessity under 8 CFR 274a.12(c)(14), (18) and 8 CFR 214.2(f)

Approved | Denied
A#

Subject to the following conditions:_____
☐ Applicant is filing under section 274a.12_____

▶ START HERE - Type or print in black ink.

I am applying for:

☒ Permission to accept employment.
☐ Replacement (of lost employment authorization document).
☐ Renewal of my permission to accept employment (attach a copy of your previous employment authorization document).

1. **Full Name**
Family Name | First Name | Middle Name
KITTY | Hello

2. **Other Names Used** (include Maiden Name)
Family Name | First Name | Middle Name

3. **U.S. Mailing Address**
Street Number and Name | Apt. Number
1155 Union Cir. #311067 ISSS
Town or City | State | ZIP Code
Denton | TX | 76203

4. **Country of Citizenship or Nationality**
Japan

5. **Place of Birth**
Town or City | State/Province | Country
Osaka

6. **Date of Birth** (mm/dd/yyyy) 11/01/1974

7. **Gender** ☐ Male ☒ Female

8. **Marital Status**
☒ Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed

9. **Social Security Number** (Include all numbers you have ever used, if any)
123-45-6789

10. **Alien Registration Number (A-Number) or Form I-94 Number** (if any)
59975468812

11. **Have you ever before applied for employment authorization from USCIS?**
☐ Yes (Complete the following questions.)
Which USCIS Office? | Dates
Results (Granted or Denied - attach all documentation)
☒ No (Proceed to Question 12.)

12. **Date of Last Entry into the U.S., on or about** (mm/dd/yyyy)
01/12/2008

13. **Place of Last Entry into the U.S.**
Los Angeles

14. **Status at Last Entry** (B-2 Visitor, F-1 Student, No Lawful Status, etc.)
F-1 Student

15. **Current Immigration Status** (Visitor, Student, etc.)
F-1 Student

16. **Eligibility Category.** Go to the "Who May File Form I-765?" section of the Instructions. In the space below, place the letter and number of the eligibility category you selected from the instructions. For example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii), etc.
(c)(3)(B)

Form I-765 01/17/17 N

Page 1 of 2

I-765

17. **(c)(3)(C) Eligibility Category.** If you entered the eligibility category (c)(3)(C) in **Question 16** above, list your degree, your employer's name as listed in E-Verify, and your employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number in the space below.

Degree

Employer's Name as listed in E-Verify

Employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a Valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number

18. **(c)(26) Eligibility Category.** If you entered the eligibility category (c)(26) in **Question 16** above, please provide the receipt number of your H-1B principal spouse's most recent Form I-797 Notice of Approval for Form I-129.

19. **(c)(35) and (c)(36) Eligibility Category**

   a. If you entered the eligibility category (c)(35) or (c)(36) in **Question 16** above, please provide the receipt number of the Form I-140 beneficiary's Form I-797 Notice of Approval for Form I-140.

   b. Have you **EVER** been arrested for and/or convicted of any crime? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   NOTE: If you answered "Yes" to Item Numbers 19.b., refer to Item Number 5., Item H. or Item I. in the Who May File Form I-765 section of these Instructions for information about providing court dispositions.

Certification

I certify, under penalty of perjury, that the foregoing is true and correct. Furthermore, I authorize the release of any information that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services needs to determine eligibility for the benefit I am seeking. I have read the "**Who May File Form I-765?**" section of the instructions and have identified the appropriate eligibility category in **Question 16**.

Applicant's Signature

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy)

Telephone Number

Signature of Person Preparing Form, If Other Than Applicant

I declare that this document was prepared by me at the request of the applicant and is based on all information of which I have any knowledge.

Preparer's Signature

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy)

Printed Name

Address

Remember to sign, date and list your phone number!

Required Documents

- $410 check or money order payable to *Department of Homeland Security*
- 2 color passport-style photos
  - *Lightly* write your name on the back
- Completed I-765 Form
- *Signed* photocopy of pages 1 & 2 of the I-20 showing OPT recommendation
- Photocopy of both sides of your I-94 or the electronic record
- Photocopy of your passport identity, expiry and visa pages
- *Previous EAD Cards* (if applicable)
- *CPT Screen Shot* (From ISSS- required only if you had CPT at this degree level)

Assembling your Packet

- You will be emailed with your OPT I-20 is ready to be picked up
  - The *OPT Case Management Fee* must be paid before you can receive your I-20

- Bring all required packet documentation when you pick up your OPT I-20
  - An advisor will review the packet to ensure accuracy before you mail it

Mailing the Packet

- Photocopy the entire packet for your records, and mail using one of the following methods:

USPS Deliveries (Post Office)
- USCIS
  P.O. Box 660867
  Dallas, TX 75266
- Mail "Certified mail,
  return receipt requested"

Courier Service (FedEx, DHL, UPS, etc.)
- USCIS Attn: AOS
  2501 S. State Highway 121,
  Business Suite 400
  Lewisville, TX 75067

Next Steps

- Immigration will cash your check and send a receipt which helps in 2 ways:
  - Check your case status online at uscis.gov (use the YSC number)
  - Confirms they received the application and are working on it
    - Normal processing time is 60-90 days

- Once processed, USCIS will send the EAD

The receipt and card will be mailed to the ISSS office. ISSS will contact you when they are ready to be picked up.

OPT Quiz

- Take this quiz **only** if you are in the **last** semester of your program

- If you take it before your last semester an I-20 will not be processed and you will be required to take the quiz again in the future

Thank You and Good Luck!

- You can find the quiz an all application documents here
  - Remember, you must score a 100% on the quiz for it to be accepted!