

POST- COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (Post- Completion OPT)

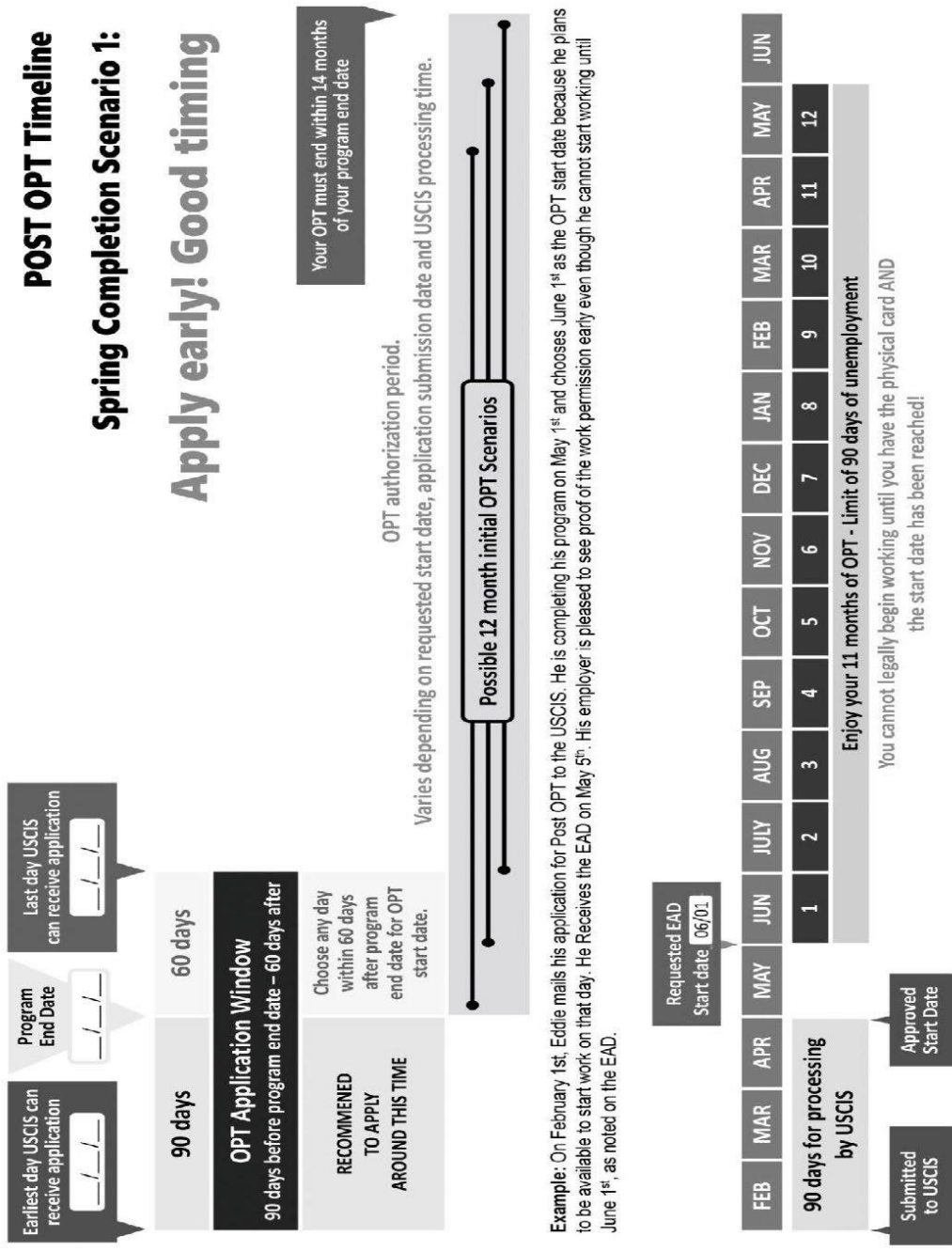
Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (Post-Completion OPT) is designed to provide you with an opportunity to gain temporary employment experience in your program of study for one year after you have completed your coursework. Its purpose is to “round out” or complement your academic work. Permission for this temporary employment is obtained through USCIS. The employment must be directly related to your major field of study and it must be appropriate for someone having your level of education. You may work anywhere in the United States.

Please note that this is not an entitled benefit. USCIS has the right to deny any OPT application at their discretion. It is your responsibility to ensure you are paying the correct fee and the correct application.

Who is eligible to apply?

- You must have been in lawful student status for an academic year (two consecutive full-time semesters) prior to the start of your Post-Completion OPT and you must currently be in lawful F-1 status.
- You must not have accumulated more 12 months of full time CPT during your current degree level.
- You must have an anticipated program end date.
- You must be graduating with a Bachelor’s, Masters or PhD degree. Non-degree students, students attending certificate programs, and those doing post-doctoral research are not qualified for OPT.
- You must not have been previously approved for Post-Completion OPT in the same degree level.
- Students transitioning from the University of Utah Asia Campus (UAC) must have completed two consecutive semesters at the University of Utah main campus and must be attending the main campus in their final semester to be eligible to apply for OPT.
- **PLEASE NOTE:** Students who have decided to depart the country and re-enter with a new I-20 in order to reinstate their status will lose any time they have accrued toward qualification for Post-Completion OPT. Students who travel to reinstate are subject to another full academic year (2 full-time semesters) waiting period for eligibility for OPT or CPT. Keep in mind it is against regulations to delay graduation for employment purposes.

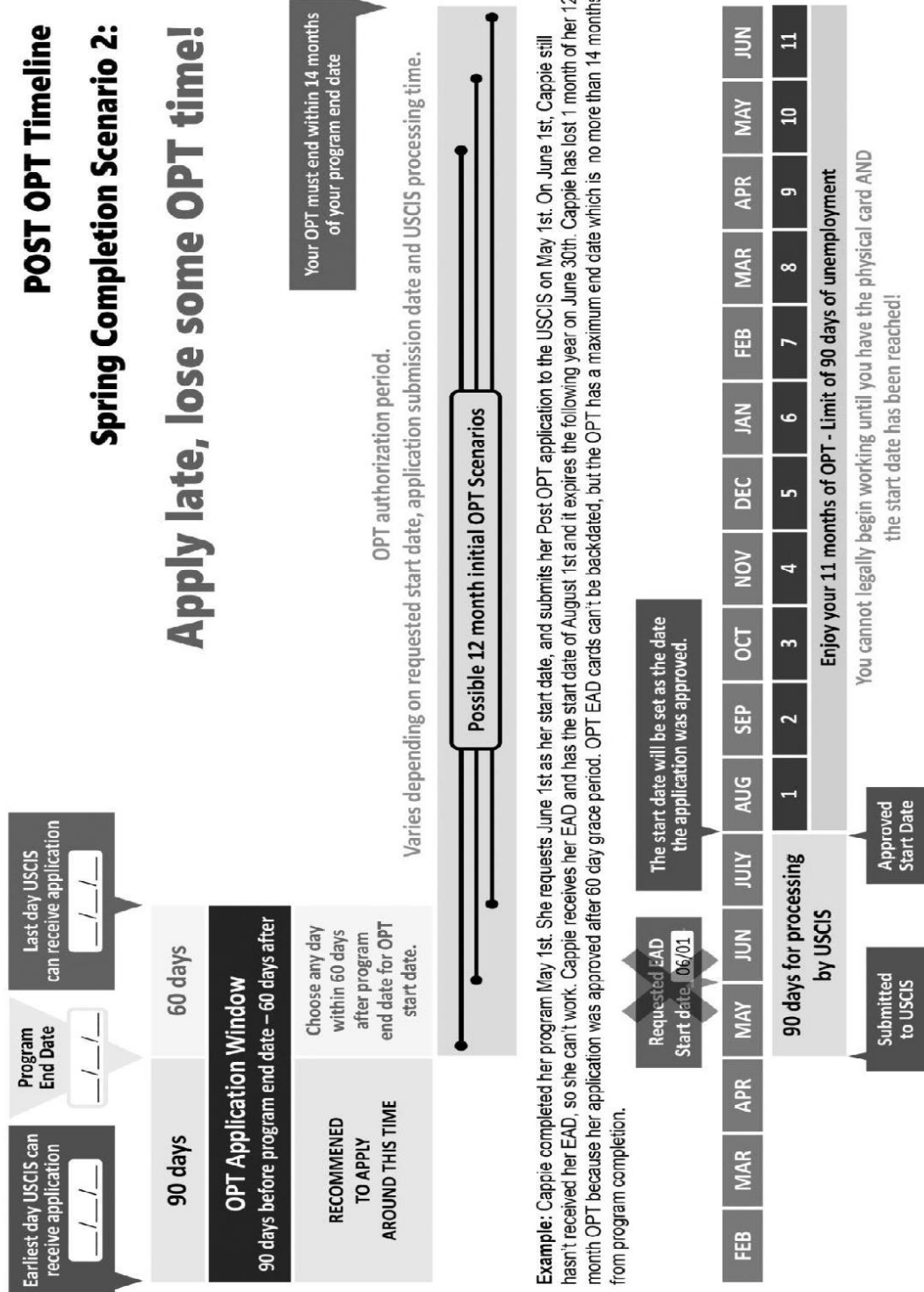
OPT Timeline



POST OPT Timeline

Spring Completion Scenario 2:

Apply late, lose some OPT time!



Example: Cappie completed her program May 1st. She requests June 1st as her start date, and submits her Post OPT application to the USCIS on May 1st. On June 1st, Cappie still hasn't received her EAD, so she can't work. Cappie receives her EAD and has the start date of August 1st and it expires the following year on June 30th. Cappie has lost 1 month of her 12 month OPT because her application was approved after 60 day grace period. OPT EAD cards can't be backdated, but the OPT has a maximum end date which is no more than 14 months from program completion.

Applying for OPT:

Please note you must mail your documents to USCIS otherwise you have not completed the Post completion OPT application process. It is the student’s responsibility to make sure their OPT packet is complete and mailed to the USCIS lockbox.

Step 1: Apply for Post-Completion OPT I-20

1. Log into UAtlas and submit an online request by completing the “*OPT: Post or Pre-Completion I-20 Request*” e-form and choose “Post-Completion OPT” as the reason.
 - a. You must have already submitted a Last Semester Notification e-form in order to receive your Post-Completion OPT I-20.
 - b. See below to find information on how to choose your Post-Completion OPT start date.
2. An ISSS advisor will review your Post-Completion OPT request within 10 business days and issue you the Post-Completion OPT I-20 which will include our recommendation for Post-Completion OPT on page 2.

➤ **Choosing your Post-Completion OPT Start Date**

You are allowed to pick a start date that falls between the last day of your program and the end of your 60-day grace period. The program end date is considered the last day of the semester (last day of finalexams).

- Important Dates*

Last Semester	Program End Date	Last Day of Grace Period
Spring 2022	May 4, 2022	July 3, 2022
Summer 2022	August 5, 2022	October 4, 2022
Fall 2022	December 16, 2022	February 14, 2023
Spring 2023	May 3, 2023	July 2, 2023

* dates may change. Please refer to your Last Semester I-20 to confirm your program end date.

For graduate thesis students only, the program end date may be the last day of the defense semester OR the date of your thesis defense.

When choosing the start date for your Post-Completion OPT, choose the earliest date you might want to start working (you cannot begin working BEFORE the start date on the EAD card) but be aware that if you do not have a job once the OPT begins, then you will begin accumulating unemployment days. Plan ahead for any possibilities. **REMEMBER: You may NOT change your start date once you have mailed your packet to USCIS and your Post-Completion OPT has been approved.**

Step 2: Prepare your documents

1. Make sure your Post-Completion OPT packet is complete.
2. Meet with an ISSS advisor to review your **completed** packet (recommended)
3. You have the option of:
 - a. Filing your application online on uscis.gov. If filing online, please see [this guide for online filing](#).
 - b. Mailing your application to USCIS.

Documents to mail to USCIS (in the recommended order):

- G-1145**- Downloadable from <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>. By completing this form you are requesting an email or text message to be sent to you when your application arrives at the USCIS office. Place this on the top of your application so they are aware of your request.
- Two U.S. passport type photographs**- photos must be taken within the past 30 days and may not be the same photos used for other government requests, such as passport or visa renewals. Print your name and I-94 number clearly on the back of each photo and make sure to not damage the photos. USCIS recommends you use a pencil and write the information lightly but readable. Put the photos in an envelope and attach it to front of I-765 and indicate on the envelope the photos are inside. Ensure the photos are [U.S. passport requirements](#). Photos from your home country may not be the correct size or may be too old to be used.
- Application Fee**- In the form of check or money order, made to the **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**. You can find the appropriate fee by using the USCIS Fee Calculator (<https://www.uscis.gov/feecalculator>), select “I-765”, “Permission to accept Employment”, “Foreign Students” then “(c)(3)(B)” for post-completion OPT. The fee can also be found <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>.
- Form I-765** (downloadable from <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>). Instructions on how to complete this form are in the [I-765 Instructions guide](#). You can find a [Post-Completion OPT mock I-765 form here](#). ****Please verify the edition you are using.****
- A **copy** of:
 - **Post-Completion OPT I-20** issued from ISSS with your requested dates (Remember: USCIS must receive it within 30 days from the issue date). Make sure you sign and date your Post-Completion OPT I-20.
 - **Valid passport** identification page (and the expiration date page if it’s on a separate page).
 - **F-1 Visa**- the most recent F-1 visa issued to you.
 - **I-94** (obtainable at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>)
 - **ALL previous I-20s** issued to you in your current education level.*
 - **Previous EAD card**, include a copy of the front and back (only if you have been approved for OPT in the past)

It is your responsibility to keep your previous immigration documents. However, if you do not have all of your I-20s, you can request ISSS to provide you the copies of your old I-20s by submitting the “Request for Document Copies” e-form. ISSS cannot guarantee that we will have all or any of your documents on our record. If you are missing one or more of your previous I-20s and ISSS does not have them on record, simply include the I-20s that you do have. Missing I-20s do not automatically result in a denial.

➤ **Payment Options:**

This is only a guideline. If have any question on your personal check or money order please check with the issuer to confirm each entry as each may have different requirements. ISSS is not liable for incorrect payments submitted to USCIS.

Personal Check:

- 1: Date: MM/DD/YYYY
- 2: U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- 3. Write out the fee amount
- 4. Fee amount in dollar form
- 5. SEVIS ID (starts with N, found on your I-20), OPT
- 6. Signature

Money Order:

This is only a guideline. Please double check with the money order issuer to confirm each entry as each money order may have different requirements.

- Pay to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”. If the money order asks for the recipient address, you should list the address where you are mailing your Post-Completion OPT application.
- In the Memo/Payment For section, put “your SEVIS ID number, OPT”
- In the bottom right corner, sign your name in the “From” section.
- In the money order asks for your purchaser’s address, include your mailing address noted on your I-765 application form.
- Keep the receipt portion of the money order for your records as that is the only way to track your payment.
- Do not sign the back of the money order as it will void the payment.

Step 3: Mail your documents to USCIS

1. Keep copies of everything you mail for your own record.
2. Mail all the required documents (listed on page 5) to USCIS. USCIS must receive your application within 30 days from when your Post-Completion OPT I-20 was issued.
3. If USCIS receives your packet before 90 days from your program end date or later than 60 days after your program end date, as listed on your OPT I-20 page 1, then your packet may be rejected right away or worse, be denied about 3 months later.
4. To find the appropriate mailing address, please refer to USCIS website: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>.
5. If you receive I-797 receipt, keep it in a safe place as it is proof of your pending Post-Completion OPT application and allows you to remain in the United States after your program has ended.

➤ Before you send in your application

- Are you sending your application within 30 days of ISSS issuing your Post-Completion OPT I-20?
- Are all applications complete and accurate?
- Are you including the correct fee? www.uscis.gov/feecalculator
- Did you sign your I-765 and all copies of I-20s you are submitting?
- Did you include all of the documents listed above?
- Did you make copies of your documents for your records?
- Did you or an ISSS advisor review your packet?
- Have you discussed your travel plans with ISSS advisor?

Important Reminders:

- **Processing time:** Your Post-Completion OPT I-20 will be processed by ISSS within 10 business days once a completed application is submitted. USCIS takes an average of 3-5 months to process any OPT requests.
- **OPT Start/End date:** You can only choose a date within the 60 days after the program end date as your OPT start date. Your Post-Completion OPT end date will appear on your EAD card. You must end your employment on this date unless you have timely filed for an OPT STEM extension or you have changed to another visa status that allows you to work.
- **60-day grace period:** You have 60 days of grace period once you complete Post-Completion OPT. If you leave U.S. during your grace period, you may not re-enter on your F-1 visa unless you have a new I-20 with a new program. If you decide to end your Post-Completion OPT before the approved end date on your EAD card or if you accrue more than 90 days of unemployment days, you are not eligible for 60 days of grace period. In this case, you are recommended to depart U.S. as soon as possible.
- **30 days from the issue date:** Your Post-Completion OPT application must be received by USCIS within 30 days from the I-20 issue date by ISSS. Failure to send it in a timely manner will result in denial. Contact ISSS immediately if you have not mailed in your OPT application and your I-20 is older than 30 days, or you are worried your application will not arrive at USCIS in a timely manner.
- **90 days of unemployment:** From the start date printed on your EAD card, you are allowed up to 90 days of unemployment during the Post-Completion OPT period. You must work 21 hours per week or more to be considered employed full-time for Post-Completion OPT purpose. If you work fewer than 20 hours per week, this will count toward your 90 days of unemployment.
- **14-month rule:** Federal regulation state your Post-Completion OPT must be completed within the 14-months following the completion of study (program end date on your I-20). If your EAD is approved more than 60 days after your program end date you will not receive full 12 months of Post-Completion OPT.
- **Part time/ Full time:** If you work 0-20 hours per week, it is considered as part time and this time will count towards your 90 days of unemployment. If you work 21 hours or more per week, it is considered to be full time employment for Post-Completion OPT.
- **Address update:** Immigration regulations require that while you are on Post-Completion OPT, you MUST keep USCIS updated of your address. If you change your address, you must report your new address in the SEVP Portal within 10 days of any change.
- **Employment update:** You are responsible for notifying USCIS of your employment. Please review the [“SEVP Portal: Post-OPT and STEM OPT” policy guide](#) for further information such as:
 - Your employment needs to show clear and strong connection to your major.
 - Do not delete previous employer information. Instead, add a new line for a new employer
 - Your SEVP portal access will permanently be removed 6 months after your OPT end date
- **Travel:** Traveling on Post-Completion OPT can be complicated depending on when you plan to travel and if your application is pending or approved. More information about traveling on Post-Completion OPT can be found in the “OPT and Traveling” FAQ section below.

Post-Completion OPT Related E-Forms

OPT: Post or Pre-Completion I-20 Request: This e-form is used to request a post completion OPT I-20. You need to submit this e-form in order to request Post-Completion OPT I-20 from ISSS.

OPT: Cap Gap Extension I-20 Request: This e-form is used to request an I-20 with cap gap information if you have been selected for H1B and your employer has filed for the H1B.

Post-OPT: Report No Longer on OPT (Departing U.S.): This e-form is used to report permanent departure from the U.S. before the OPT end date on your EAD card.

I-20 Reprint Request: This e-form is used to request a new I-20 after you update your employment information in the SEVP Portal.

SEVP Portal Related E-Forms

SEVP Portal Login/Password Request: This e-form is used to request a reset of an SEVP Portal password if you are locked out from the portal and are not able to reset your password using the link available on the Portal login page. Please make sure you are locked out and have tried to reset it via the Portal login page before you submit the request. ISSS is not able to reset the portal until you are locked out.

SEVP Portal: Change E-mail Address: This e-form is used to change your e-mail on your SEVIS record for the purposes of the SEVIS Login portal.

NOTE: To update information such as address and phone number, you **MUST** use the **SEVP portal** to update this information.

Helpful Policy Guides

*All policy guides are found on our website (issv.utah.edu) under F-1 Student Visa Policies tab.

F-1 Student Travel Guidance: This guide lists the documents you should travel with.

OPT/STEM OPT: Form I-765 Instructions: This guide explains in detail how to complete the I-765 form.

OPT/STEM OPT: H1B Cap Gap Extension: This guide explains what Cap Gap extension is and how you can request an updated I-20.

Volunteering and Unpaid Internships: This guide explains the differences between volunteering and unpaid internship.

OPT/STEM OPT: Guide to SEVP Portal: This guide explains how and when to utilize the SEVP portal.

STEM OPT related policy guides: If you have completed a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math) major, you may be eligible for STEM OPT and may find STEM related policy guides helpful.

Frequently Asked Questions for Post-Completion OPT

This FAQ is broken down to four sections: general information, traveling, employment, and attending school on Post-Completion OPT. Please read them carefully as it provides important information and reach out to ISSS if you have any questions.

GENERAL

1. How long will my Post-Completion OPT application take to process?

Applying for Post-Completion OPT is a two-step process. You must first obtain your Post-Completion OPT I-20 from International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS), which has 10 business day processing time, and then mail your application with all the required documents to USCIS to obtain an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card, which takes average of 3-5 months to process.

2. When should I submit my Post-Completion OPT application?

You must apply for Post-Completion OPT no earlier than 90 days before your program end date and no later than 60 days after your program end date. If you send in your Post-Completion OPT application more than 90 days before your program ends or after your 60-day grace period is over, your request will be denied by USCIS.

3. When is my program end date?

For undergraduate and non-thesis graduate students, the program end date is the last day of your final semester (last day of final exams) meaning the semester that you complete your last classes needed to meet graduation requirements. You cannot continue enrollment or delay graduation once requirements have been met. If you are a double-major, you must seek advising from ISSS to clarify your program end date – you should do this before your last semester. For thesis graduate students, the program completion date can be the last day of your defense semester or your defense date. Graduate thesis students are eligible for Post-Completion OPT after they have defended their thesis. It is not necessary to have graduated or obtained a diploma to apply for Post-Completion OPT.

4. Is there a deadline for applying to USCIS with my new I-20?

You need to have your complete Post-Completion OPT application received by the appropriate USCIS Service Center within 30 days of the Post-Completion OPT I-20 issue date by ISSS. Applications that arrive after the 30 days will be rejected or denied at a later date. You will miss your opportunity to participate in Post-Completion OPT if you cannot refile before your grace period ends.

5. Can I get a confirmation that my application has been received by USCIS?

If you would like an email confirmation that your application has been received by USCIS, you may fill out Form G-1145 (<http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/g-1145.pdf>) and attach it to the top of your application to USCIS. The notice you receive is not a guarantee that USCIS will approve your application, but merely a

confirmation that it arrived at their offices for processing. It may take anywhere from 1 to 3 weeks to receive this confirmation from USCIS.

6. I have a job offer but my EAD card has not arrived yet. Can I begin work?

No. You must have received your EAD card to show that you have legal work status. Any employment done before the EAD card has arrived is illegal and may harm Post-Completion OPT as well as your future chances of obtaining an H-1B visa, permanent residency or other types of benefits from immigration. **You are not allowed to work on or off-campus, paid or unpaid, after your program end date on your I-20 until you receive your EAD card AND your Post-Completion OPT start date on the EAD has begun.**

7. How can my past CPT participation affect my Post-Completion OPT?

You are not eligible for Post-Completion OPT if you have participated in 12 months or more of full-time CPT. Past participation in part-time CPT or full-time CPT for less than 12 months should not affect your Post-Completion OPT eligibility unless USCIS determines CPT was used to facilitate employment rather than to serve as a temporary internship opportunity.

8. Can I do CPT during my last semester? Will it affect my OPT?

Students may participate in full or part time CPT in their last semester but they must maintain a physical presence on campus in Salt Lake City and may not participate in CPT in another state. Students approved for CPT may not work past the CPT end date. Graduate thesis students may not participate in CPT once they have defended.

Be aware that CPT employment in the last semester should be added to your I-20 before you request an OPT I-20. Requesting CPT after filing for OPT with USCIS can complicate your OPT application and may raise a red flag with immigration. Speak with an ISSS advisor for details.

Also, be aware that USCIS forbids using CPT in the last semester as a way to start OPT employment “early” or to otherwise facilitate OPT employment. If you have questions, speak with an ISSS advisor.

9. What is the 14- month rule for Post-Completion OPT?

Federal regulations state that post-completion OPT must be completed within 14 months of your program end date. If you decide to apply for Post-Completion OPT AFTER the completion date of your program, USCIS may still take 90 days to process the I-765 application. The time that USCIS takes to adjudicate your request will be taking time away from when you would have been working on OPT. This means that if the processing time for your Post-Completion OPT goes beyond the 60 days past your program end date on the front of your I-20, this time will be deducted from your 12 months of OPT.

10. Does the job I have while on OPT have to be paid employment, or can it be unpaid?

For Post-Completion OPT, the employment does NOT have to be paid employment, although it is recommended. Interning or volunteering in a position directly related to the academic field is considered “employment” for the

purposes of Post-Completion OPT employment. To apply for the 24-month STEM extension, work must be paid employment with an E-Verify employer at least 21 hours per week. For more information on STEM OPT, please refer to the [STEM OPT policy guide](#).

11. If I complete one degree program, take 12 months of Post-Completion OPT then begin a second course of study, am I eligible for an additional 12 months of practical training?

After completing one year of Post-Completion OPT, you must complete a higher academic level (Bachelors, Masters, or PhD) before you are eligible for another OPT. If you complete a second degree at the same level and if you already applied and have been approved for Post-Completion OPT at that level, you are not eligible for a second Post-Completion OPT after completing the second degree. If you complete a PhD degree, you may not apply for a Masters level OPT even if you have never participated in the OPT on that level before, rather you must apply for OPT based on your PHD degree.

12. Do I get a grace period after my Post-Completion OPT?

Yes, your lawful F-1 status expires 60 days after your last day of Post-Completion OPT. During your 60-day grace period, you may not engage in any employment or studies. You are expected to depart the country at the end of the 60 days or else be in pending status for a new degree program or a new visa status or have transferred your SEVIS record out. Note that if you will begin a new program at the University of Utah, your new program I-20 must be issued before your grace period ends or you will be out of status and will need to depart the US. If you exit the country during your 60- day grace period, you may not re-enter on your F-1 Post-Completion OPT I-20. Please note that if you decide to end your Post-Completion OPT early or have accrued more than 90 days of unemployment days, you are not eligible for a 60 day grace period and must depart U.S. as soon as possible.

13. What if I change my mind and I want to cancel my application for Post-Completion OPT? Or what happens if I wasn't able to graduate?

The answer to this question varies on many factors. Please make an appointment as soon as possible with an ISSS advisor to discuss your options.

14. What if I have lost or thrown away my old I-20s?

International Student & Scholar Services *may* have copies of your old I-20s in your file. You can request that ISSS make you copies of your old I-20s by completing the "Request for Document Copies" e-form, but keep in mind that it could take up to a week to process your request. It is always your responsibility to keep your I-20s. Your file may or may not contain copies of the documents you are looking for. It is best if you maintain a well-kept file of your documents in a safe place. Keep in mind you only need to submit I-20s at your current degree level for your OPT application. If you are missing I-20s, please submit what you currently have as including previous I-20s is a recommendation, not a requirement for the OPT application.

15. Since I need to move and don't know my new address, can I put a foreign address on I-765 form?

No, USCIS requires you indicate an address in the United States. The address you use may be a friend's address or a P. O. Box. If you use a friend's address, you must put their name in the "in care of name" field on page 2 of the I-

765. Contact ISSS if you have further questions about your mailing address.

16. Why should I keep a copy of my application?

Always keep copies of all official documents that you send through the mail. We also strongly recommend that you make copies of any checks or money orders that you mail in to USCIS as proof of payment in the case your application is lost in the mail. In case USCIS makes an error on your EAD card, one way to prove the error was theirs (and not yours) is to keep copies of the documents you submitted.

17. How can I check on the status of my application?

When USCIS sends you your I-797 receipt notice in the mail, you will receive a receipt number. You can use this number to access information about your application at the [USCIS Case Status page](#).

18. What happens to my dependents, who are on F-2 visas, during the application and Post-Completion OPT process?

If you are granted the Post-Completion OPT work authorization and you are still in legal F-1 immigration status, then your dependents are still in legal F-2 immigration visa status. You will receive new I-20s for yourself and all dependents if you are eligible for the Post-Completion OPT work authorization. If you do not follow F-1 regulations while on Post-Completion OPT and fall out of status, your F-2 dependents automatically fall out of status with you.

POST-COMPLETION OPT AND TRAVELING

19. Can I travel home (or anywhere outside of the U.S.) after I graduate?

The answer to this question depends on if you have applied for Post-Completion OPT and where you are in that process:

Have not applied for Post-Completion OPT: If you have not applied yet, you may leave the U.S. during your grace period but you will not be allowed to return on your F-1 student visa and you also will lose the opportunity to apply for Post-Completion OPT. If you wish to return to the U.S. on your student visa and participate in Post-Completion OPT, you must send in your application and wait for Post-Completion OPT approval before traveling outside of U.S.

Your Post-Completion OPT is pending: If you have a pending Post-Completion OPT application and it is after your program end date, it is very strongly recommended that you do NOT travel until your request has been approved by USCIS. If you do depart U.S., please understand that entry into the U.S. is granted at the discretion of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer, and you travel at your own risk. If you still wish to travel while your Post-Completion OPT is pending, please speak with an ISSS advisor about the risks involved.

Your Post Completion OPT has been approved: After you have received your EAD card, your travel documents should include your signed Post-Completion OPT I-20, valid F-1 visa, a passport valid for at least six months, EAD card, and a letter from your employer (if applicable). The letter should state that they have employed you or plan on employing you, and you are coming back to the U.S. to work for them. Please refer to [Travel Guidance](#) for more

information. Note: When you receive your EAD card it will say, “Not valid for travel”. This means besides your EAD card, you will need your I-20, valid passport, and visa in order to travel.

These same rules apply for both the Post-Completion OPT and the 24 month STEM extension. Please understand that entry into the U.S. is granted at the discretion of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer, and you travel at your own risk.

Dependent travel: Since Post-Completion OPT is not noted on dependent I-20s, an F2 dependent must carry copies of the F-1 student’s I-20 with Post-Completion OPT recommendation, EAD card, and proof of employment, in addition to their own F-2 I-20 when traveling.

20. What documents should I travel with?

You should always travel with valid passport, valid F-1 visa, most recent I-20 with a travel signature, EAD card, and if applicable, your job offer letter. Please refer to [Travel Guidance](#) for more information.

21. I want to leave the U.S. for a short time while my Post-Completion OPT application is in process, but I need to return before the card will arrive. I have a tourist visa (B2) that is valid for 10 years. Can’t I just enter the U.S. on my tourist visa while I’m waiting to get the EAD card, and then start work with the card once I get it?

NO!! If you intend to continue working on your Post-Completion OPT authorization, **NEVER** enter in any other immigration status except F-1. If you leave the U.S. and re-enter with any other status than F-1, you will immediately forfeit your F-1 status. This means your Post-Completion OPT will be invalid.

22. Can I renew my F-1 visa while on Post-Completion OPT?

It is possible and many students on Post-Completion OPT get their F-1 visa stamps renewed. You do have to be careful to demonstrate non-immigrant intent. The risk of denial of an application for a renewed visa stamp for Post-Completion OPT is somewhat higher than while you are in your active student program. The F-1 student visa requires that the applicant must intend to return to the home country at the end of the program, and if the embassy official is not convinced of your intention to return home, the visa application could be denied.

23. What documents do I need to show at the embassy for a new visa stamp under Post-Completion OPT?

You need to take a valid passport, your EAD card, your Post-Completion OPT I-20 issued by ISSS, and your job offer letter or proof of employment (if applicable). You should also be prepared to discuss how this job experience will apply to the job market in your home country, and how you intend to apply it there. You should find additional information about required documents at your embassy’s website before your visa renewal appointment.

24. Do I still need a travel signature to travel if I am on Post-Completion OPT?

Yes. During Post-Completion OPT, if you travel outside the U.S., your I-20 must be signed for travel. **The current travel signature on page 2 of your I-20 is valid for 6 months.** If you return after this date, you may be denied re-entry. If you are not located in the Salt Lake area, mail the original I-20 to ISSS for endorsement, leaving plenty of time for possible mailing delays both ways. Alternatively, you may request an “I-20 Reprint” via e-form logging into UAtlas and choosing the option to have your I-20 mailed to you. You will be responsible for shipping costs.

POST-COMPLETION OPT AND EMPLOYMENT

25. How do I report my employment?

You are required to report your employment to SEVP within 10 days of beginning a new job. You will report your employment directly through the SEVP Portal. To learn more, read our [SEVP Portal policy guide](#).

26. How do I get access to the SEVP Portal?

SEVP will send you an email to your UMail account on the date that your Post-Completion OPT employment begins. This email will instruct you on how to register your portal account. You must register your account within 14 days of receiving the email. If you do not receive an email, check your junk or spam folders. For more information about how to access your account if you are locked out, read the [SEVP Portal policy guide](#).

27. What type of employment can I accept? Does it have to be paid?

Your job must be related to your major. Your employment may or may not be paid while on Post-Completion OPT.

28. Do I need to have job offer to apply for Post-Completion OPT?

You don't need a job offer to apply for Post-Completion OPT.

29. Do I need to have a job while I am on Post-Completion OPT?

Yes, you do need to be employed while on Post-Completion OPT. You are only allowed to have a total of 90 days of unemployment during approved Post-Completion OPT time. This total number of unemployment days applies through the entire period of Post-Completion OPT. If you have already used 30 days of unemployment on Post-Completion OPT and you lost your job 6 months into Post-Completion OPT, you then have 60 days of unemployment days left to find a job. Remember to report all employment changes to the SEVP portal.

30. What if I can't find a full-time job?

USCIS considers full-time work to be 21 hours or more per week. If you are working less than this, it is considered as unemployment time. ISSS strongly recommends students that are nearing the 90 days of unemployment apply for an internship (paid or unpaid) or volunteer work of at least 21 hours per week. Interning or volunteering in a position directly related to your academic field can be considered "employment" for the purpose of Post-Completion OPT employment. Keep in mind, however, that you must be working in a paid position for an E-Verified employer in order to apply for STEM OPT (if you are otherwise eligible). Please see the [Volunteering policy guide](#) for further information on volunteering while on OPT.

POST-COMPLETION OPT AND ATTENDING SCHOOL

31. I'm finished with my Post-Completion OPT and I want to return to school. What do I need to know?

If you wish to return to school after you finish Post-Completion OPT, you must obtain a new I-20 from the International Admissions Office within 60 days of your OPT end date. You must begin classes within the next available semester or within 5 months, whichever is sooner. If you are changing schools, you must request that we transfer your SEVIS record within 60 days of your Post-Completion OPT end date.

Students are allowed to take classes while on Post-Completion OPT, but these classes must be avocational in nature (for example, a cooking or exercise class) and may not be part of a new degree and will not count towards maintaining your F-1 status. If you are admitted into a new degree program, you will get a new I-20 and your Post-Completion OPT will be cancelled.

32. Can I take classes while remaining on Post-Completion OPT?

Students are allowed to take classes while on Post-Completion OPT, but these classes must be avocational in nature (for example, a cooking or exercise class) and may not be part of a new degree program. If you are admitted into a new degree program, you will need a new I-20 and your Post-Completion OPT will be cancelled once the new program begins. Even if you don't get a new I-20 because you are not transferring your SEVIS record or studying at the University of Utah, USCIS can still see this as a violation of status if you remain on OPT.

33. Can I take extra classes while on Post-Completion OPT?

Students are allowed to take classes while on Post-Completion OPT, but these classes must be avocational in nature (for example, a cooking or exercise class) and may not be part of a new degree and will not count towards maintaining your F-1 status. If you are admitted into a new degree program, you will get a new I-20 and your Post-Completion OPT will be cancelled.

34. Can I transfer to a new school while on Post-Completion OPT?

Students can transfer their SEVIS record to a new school while on Post-Completion OPT. Once you transfer your record to the new school, your Post-Completion OPT will automatically terminate and you will not be able to engage in employment until authorized to do so from the new school. Please speak with ISSS advisor if you have any concerns or questions. Please refer to [Transfer Out Request policy guide](#) for more information.

POST-COMPLETION OPT AND THESIS STUDENTS

35. What if my OPT has been approved, but my thesis defense is postponed?

Please contact ISSS as soon as possible. If you have not yet defended, you *may* be eligible to start working under Pre-Completion conditions. Please note that this option may allow you to work part-time (up to 20 hours per week), but would still count as unemployment days since you have been approved for Post-Completion OPT. Please speak with an

ISSS advisor to see if this option is available to you.

36. What if my department requires 2 thesis defenses (1 internal and 1 public), and I am able to defend only of one of the two?

Both defenses (internal and public) are required to meet Graduate School program requirements. If you do not successfully defend both the internal and the public defense, you would not be considered having met your program requirements and would not be eligible to start working full time on Post-Completion OPT. Because requirements and timelines can vary from department to department, please speak with your department and the Graduate School for further details about contingency plans.

37. When is my last semester?

Your last semester would be the semester you pass your final defense to meet the graduation requirement. If you have already declared your last semester with ISSS but your plans changed, please reach out to ISSS immediately.

38. I defended, but my thesis has not yet been approved by the Thesis Office. Can I apply for Post-Completion OPT?

Yes, since you have successfully defended, you are considered to have met the graduation requirement and you should apply for post-completion OPT. Please keep in mind that if you are STEM eligible, you are required to show a copy of your diploma when applying for STEM OPT. Therefore, it is recommended that you work with the Thesis Office closely to ensure it is approved before you apply for STEM OPT.

***Disclaimer:** International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) provides support and information related to U.S. immigration laws and regulations related to F and J status at the University of Utah. ISSS staff are not attorneys and any information provided by ISSS should not be construed as legal advice. Individuals are welcome to consult a qualified immigration attorney for specific legal advice, particularly in complicated cases. For a list of local Utah attorneys please visit our website [here](#).*

***Employment:** ISSS reviews work related requests based upon the information provided to us by the student. If USCIS later determines that the student misused the work authorization or otherwise did not follow the required rules and regulations, additional immigration benefits could be denied by USCIS.*