OPT – Overview

- F-1 students are eligible to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) as a benefit of their visa.
- You do not need to have a job offer before submitting an application.
- OPT allows you to work in the U.S. for up to 12 months in a position directly related to your field of study.

Eligibility

Must have completed one academic year (2 semesters) in F-1 status and will graduate before the OPT start date.

- Graduate students may have thesis, project, or comprehensive exam pending.

Immigration Requirements While on OPT

During OPT, the participant remains a student on an F-1 visa and must abide by all of the relevant regulations, including address and employment reporting and travel signatures.

Types of OPT

Post-Completion OPT (OPT):
This is the option for graduating students (bachelor's and master's). Students granted OPT work authorization must work at least 20 hours per week in a qualifying position.

STEM OPT Extension (STEM Extension):
After one year of OPT, students with a bachelor's or master's degree in a STEM field (science, technology, engineering or mathematics) are eligible to apply for a 24-month extension of their work authorization. To qualify for STEM Extension, students must have a paid job offer from an E-Verified employer.

Approval from International Student Advisor (Immigration Specialist) Required

Before your OPT I-20 will be issued, you are required to either watch the **online OPT workshop** or attend an in-person workshop. **DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR FORM I-765 WITHOUT GETTING APPROVAL FROM YOUR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADVISOR.** Your application will get denied and you may lose your ability to do OPT.

Application Deadline

- **Priority application deadline – May 1**
  - For applications submitted prior to May 1, ISSS guarantees processing will be complete by the end of the semester.
- **ISSS cannot guarantee the timely processing of applications filed after May 1.**
- **No OPT applications will be accepted after May 30.**

OPT Application Checklist

Application period opens <u>90-days before</u> the end of the spring semester.

✔	Task	Date
	Meet with Graduation Advising (UGRD) or Graduate Coordinator (GRAD) to confirm you will graduate at the end of this semester	**By the end of the 4th week of the semester**
	Watch online OPT workshops (parts 1 & 2) or attend an in-person workshop	**By April 15**
	Create USCIS online account	**By April 15**
	Complete Form I-765	**By April 15**
	Submit Form I-765 to ISA for review. **After form is reviewed, new I-20 will be issued. Submit Form I-765, supporting documents, and $410 payment through your USCIS online account**	**Before May 1**
	Report employment to ISA Specialist when you have: 1. **Employment Authorization Document (EAD)** 2. **Job offer** **ISA will provide you with a link to an MS Form to provide employment details.**	**Before 90 days without employment have accrued**
	Upon receive of your employment details, ISA will issue you a new "OPT Requested" I-20. Upload this I-20 to your I-765.	

USCIS can take up to 90 days to process your application. Please apply with this in mind.

Example:
Expected start date - June 1[s]
Apply by – March 1