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This manual contains instructions on how to apply for the 12-month OPT. If you are applying for the 24-month STEM OPT extension, go to the "STEM OPT Manual."

**Warning:**

The information in this manual is subject to change. Therefore, discard any copies you have googled, downloaded, or bookmarked!

# A

## Read this before you apply

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Apply as early as possible!

# Benefits of filing online

Filing a form online is better than mailing a paper form because you can:

# Extremely important filing deadlines!

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(1) Students may file a Form I-765 for uxZ'Vnk ujZ{١٥٠٠ OPT ١٥٠٠ before being enrolled for one full academic year, provided that the period of employment will not start prior to the completion of the full academic year.

(2) For uny{1Vnk ujZ{١٥٠٠ OPT, the student must properly file his or her Form I-765 ١٥٠٠ prior to his or her program end date and ١٥٠٠ after his or her program end date. The student must also file the Form I-765 with USCIS ١٥٠٠ of the date the DSO enters the recommendation of OPT into his or her SEVIS record.

The date you “**file**” your application is the date you submit your application online and receive the receipt number. Your application will be **denied** if it is not filed within these periods:

1. Up to 90 days before your program end date
2. Within 60 days after your program end date
3. More than 30 days after your date your requesting OPT was issued

Are you planning to obtain another degree at the same education level?

You can receive OPT more than once, as long as you complete another program at a higher education level. Therefore, if you are planning to obtain a second degree at the same education level, you should consider whether you want to use up your OPT now or wait until you complete the second degree. Or, you may split the 12 months of OPT between the two programs.

What if you think you may not finish, or you fail to finish, your program on time?

If you are not sure if you will finish your program on time, and you are taking less than the required number of units in your last term, be sure to submit a *Reduced Course Load for Last Term* to the OISS! If your OPT has been approved, you may work part time until you complete your program. If you wish



# What happens if a student (excluding those students who have completed all program requirements aside from thesis or equivalent) applied for post-completion OPT before his or her program end date and subsequently fails to complete the requirements for his or her program?

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*What happens if a student (excluding those students who have completed all program requirements aside from thesis or equivalent) applied for post-completion OPT before his or her program end date and subsequently fails to complete the requirements for his or her program?*

The student should contact his or her DSO immediately for guidance.

If the employment authorization application has not been adjudicated by USCIS, the student may withdraw the application by notifying the Service Center where the application was filed. The DSO should also withdraw the recommendation for OPT in SEVIS.

If the employment authorization application has already been approved, the DSO should extend the student's program end date to the appropriate date. The student may work uMk ftk Z while enrolled in courses to complete the requirements for his or her program and full time during breaks and vacations. After successful completion of all the program requirements, the student may work full time.

However, even though the student's program end date was extended, because the OPT was granted as post-completion OPT, the student is subject to the 90-day limitation on unemployment.

Source: [http://www.ice.gov/dodib/sevis/pdf/opt\\_policy\\_guidance\\_042010.pdf](http://www.ice.gov/dodib/sevis/pdf/opt_policy_guidance_042010.pdf)

As long as you have not filed your application, you may ask the OISS to cancel your OPT request or change the requested OPT start date.

If you have already filed your application, you should immediately submit a letter to USCIS requesting a withdrawal of your application. Contact the OISS to receive a sample withdrawal request letter. You must act quickly, since there is no guarantee that your request will be received and processed by USCIS on time.

## **B** Steps to apply

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# Submit your

# to the OISS

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*Student responsibilities:* A student must initiate the OPT application process by requesting a recommendation for OPT from his or her DSO. Upon making the recommendation, the DSO will provide the student a signed Form I-20 indicating that recommendation.

*Start of employment:* A student may not begin employment prior to the approved starting date on his or her employment authorization except as noted in paragraph (f)(11)(i)(C) of this section. A student may not request a start date that is more than 60 days after the student's program end date. Employment authorization will begin on the date requested or the date the employment authorization is adjudicated, whichever is later.

Submit the \_\_\_\_\_ e-form to the OISS about four months before your expected program end date (Note: this is the date you will complete studies, NOT the date of the graduation ceremony).

You may request any OPT start date within 60 days after your program end date. For example, if your program end date is May 1, you can select any OPT start date from May 2 through June 30.

# Create an online account

1. Go to <https://www.uscis.gov/file-online>
2. Click on "sign in" (on the top right corner of the page)
3. Click on "create account" (do not use your Pepperdine email address)
4. Select "File a Form Online"
5. Select "Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)"
6. Before filling out the I-765, read carefully the information about:
  - eligibility
  - filing deadlines
  - fee
  - documents you may need
  - biometric services appointment
  - what you should do after su
  - ppointment

# "Getting started"

## Basis of eligibility:

Select **c(3)(A) Student Pre-completion OPT** if you are applying for permission to work before completing your program

Select **c(3)(B) Student Post-completion OPT** if you are applying for permission to work after completing your program

If you are applying for the STEM OPT extension, please go to the

## Reason for applying:

Select "initial permission to accept employment"

If you are applying for a replacement employment authorization document (EAD), contact the OISS

If you are applying for the STEM OPT extension, please refer to the

## Preparer and Interpreter information:

If someone is assisting you with your application, contact the OISS.

Otherwise, answer "no."

# "About you"

Answer all questions that apply to you.

For your "mailing address," enter the name of the person other than yourself in the "in care of" field only if you are using that person's address.

What is your A-Number?

NY 5 Yb FY [ ] gh Uh] cb Bi a VYf fB! Bi a VYfL'

# "Evidence"

**2 x 2 photo of you (follow specifications provided)**

**Form I-94**

--Find your most recent I-94 at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>

**Previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD)**

--If you do not have an EAD, provide a copy of your passport

**Proof of enrollment**

--For pre-completion OPT only--provide an unofficial transcript

**Previously authorized CPT or OPT**

--Provide previous I-20 forms authorizing CPT or requesting OPT

**Form I-20**

# "Additional information"

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# “ Review and submit”

After completing the \_\_\_\_\_, we recommend that you send a copy of your draft I-765 to [oiss.pepperdine.edu](mailto:oiss.pepperdine.edu) for review, in case of any errors.

You will be directed to [pay.gov](https://pay.gov) to submit your fee payment by credit/debit card or withdrawal from a checking/savings account.

Your receipt notice will be generated as soon as you submit your application. You should also expect an official paper receipt notice to be sent to you by mail.

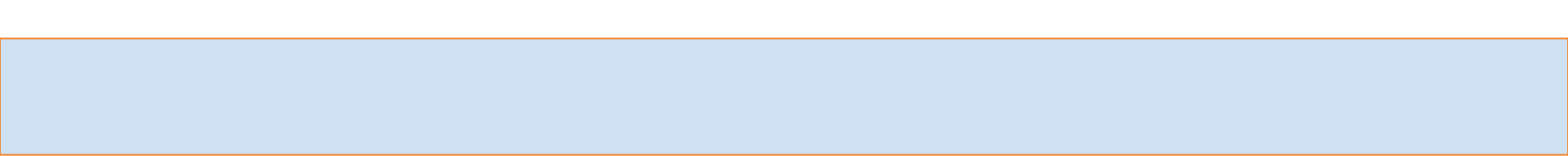
## Respond to a “ ( )” on time

Check the “documents” tab in your online account frequently in case you have been issued a . You should expect the to be mailed to your mailing address.

If you receive a , immediately send a copy of it to the OISS so we can make sure that you respond to it correctly. If you fail to provide the requested evidence to USCIS by the deadline indicated on the , your application will be **denied!**

You may also receive a notice to appear for a biometric services appointment to provide fingerprints, photograph, and/or signature. If you fail to show up at your appointment, your OPT will be **denied!**

If you are traveling or using someone else’s mailing address, it is important to have your mail checked often to make sure mail from USCIS is opened immediately.



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# Submit the

# to the OISS

As soon as you receive your OPT approval, you must report to the OISS by submitting the e-form.

**Step One:** Go to <https://oiss.pepperdine.edu/istart/controllers/start/StartEngine.cfm> and click on "New Student/Scholar Login"

**Step Two:** GYVWí 9a U]`a Y`a m@a ]hYX`5WVgg`D=BÎ`Uh`h`Y`Vc`h`ca`c`Z`h`Y`dU[`Y"

**Step Three:** 9bhYf`UbX`gi Va ]h`m`ci f`l b]j Yfg]m`i`X`Y`b`h]Z]W]h]cb`Bi a VYf`f]7K`=8Ł"

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**Step Five:** : ]`b`m`ci f`7K`=8ž`8U`h`c`Z`6]f`h`ž`UbX`D`=B`]b`h`Y`U`d`d`f`c`d`f]U`h`Z]Y`X`g`UbX`W]W`í`@`c[ ]b`"

**Step Six:** Cb`h`Y`Y`Z`h`V`i a bž`W]W`cb`": !%DfUW]W`HfU]b]b[ ``UbX`V`a d`Y`h`h`Y`C`D`H`F`Y`d`c`f`ž`  
a U\_]b[ `gi f`Y`h`U`h`U`f`Yei ]f`Y`X`Z]Y`X`g`U`f`Y`V`f`f`Y`W]m]Z]Y`X`]b`"7`]W`í`Gi Va ]f`h`c`gi Va ]h`m`ci f`Z`c`fa`"

# The SEVP Portal

As soon as your OPT becomes effective, you will receive an email message from SEVP with a link to create an account in the SEVP Portal, which is a tool launched by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for students on OPT. Use of the SEVP Portal is optional.

**IMPORTANT!** You must report all changes directly to the OISS, even if you have updated your information in the SEVP Portal!

The SEVP Portal allows you to :

- Update your physical home address, mailing address, and telephone number

- Monitor and update your employer information (**DO NOT DELETE PREVIOUS EMPLOYERS** unless you never worked for them)

LOCKED OUT OF YOUR ACCOUNT?



# What if your OPT is denied?

## Unlawful Presence

An OPT denial will trigger the INA § 222(g) visa cancellation and INA 212(a)(9)(B) unlawful presence provisions. If you are present unlawfully for more than 180 days but less than one (1) year, and you voluntarily depart the US prior to the initiation of removal proceedings, you will be rendered inadmissible for 3 years. If you are present unlawfully for one (1) year or more, you will be rendered inadmissible for ten (10) years.



# Types of OPT employment allowed

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2 | j{bujZ Zk ujntZxy<sup>a</sup> A student may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the student's degree program and, for pre-completion OPT, can not exceed the allowed per week cumulative hours.

@anx{1{Zxk k | j{bujZ Zk ujntZxy; uZx\_nxk b` M{byA A student, such as a musician or other type of performing artists, may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration.

H nxi `nx'abZ<sup>a</sup> 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 DHS, the student must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract period and the name and address of the contracting company.

@zj\_1Zk ujntZX'U| yb Zyy'n, | Zx<sup>a</sup> A student on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. The student must be able to prove that he or she has proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to the student's degree program (**self-employment is not allowed for STEM OPT**).

"k ujntk ZI { {axn| ` a Ml MZI Vt nx'vhl y| j{b ` `bk <sup>a</sup> A student on post-completion OPT must be able to provide evidence showing he or she worked on average of MjZMf YÜ'an| xy'uZx, ZZi while employed by the agency (**for STEM OPT, the I-983 must be signed by the employer that provides and oversees the training**).

<Nk Zk ujntk ZI {<sup>a</sup> A student may work part time (at least 20 hours per week when on post-completion OPT) or full time.

Bl uNk Zk ujntk ZI {<sup>a</sup> A student may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, where this practice does not violate any labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week for a student on post-completion OPT. A student must be able to provide evidence acquired from the student's employer to verify that the student worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment (**for STEM OPT, employment must be paid**)

# Travel during OPT

Temporary absence from the United States of F-1 student granted employment authorization<sup>a</sup>

An F-1 student who has an unexpired EAD issued for post-completion practical training and who is otherwise admissible may return to the United States to resume employment after a period of temporary absence. The EAD must be used in combination with an I-20ID endorsed for reentry by the DSO within the last six months.

Documents required for reentry to the US to engage in OPT:

Temporary absence from the United States of F-1 student granted employment authorization<sup>a</sup>

# H-1B cap-gap OPT Extension

Students who wish to continue working after OPT usually apply for the H-1B visa (students in STEM majors should apply for the STEM OPT extension even if they plan to apply for the H-1B). Go to the USCIS website for more information on the H-1B and other temporary work visas.

Each Fiscal Year (FY) a limited number (or "cap") of H-1B visas may be approved. Each filing

# If you terminate or complete your OPT

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*Duration of status while on post-completion OPT.* For a student with approved post-completion OPT, the duration of status is defined as the period beginning when the student's application for OPT was properly filed and pending approval, including the authorized period of post-completion OPT, and ending 60 days after the OPT employment authorization expires (allowing the student to prepare for departure, change educational levels at the same school, or transfer in accordance with paragraph (f)(8) of this section).

*Termination of practical training<sup>a</sup>* Authorization to engage in optional practical training employment is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level.

المتطلبات

You must promptly submit the  
take any of the actions below.

e-form to the OISS if you intend to

Depart the US before or after your OPT expires and complete your F-1 status