

Post-Completion Optional Practical Training Information

Fall 2024



What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)

- ✦ Benefit available to F-1 visa holders
- ✦ Practical Training **is not** a visa
- ✦ **Employment in the field of student's major up to one year (12 months)**
- ✦ Students become eligible for OPT after 2 semesters of studies at an academic institution
- ✦ Cannot extend OPT
- ✦ 2nd OPT possible with higher degree (associate to bachelor's)



Eligibility for OPT

- ✚ Must have been in F1 status at an **academic institution** for a minimum of 2 semesters
- ✚ Your major and the major printed on your I-20 form must match.
- ✚ You must make sure that you will pass all the classes you are currently enrolled in.
- ✚ You must live in the U.S. to apply for OPT (when you leave the U.S., you will lose your eligibility to apply for OPT).



What Visa Status will I have?

- ✚ Your visa status will remain F-1 (student visa)
- ✚ You still need to keep your valid I-20 form
(from Palomar College)
- ✚ You will need to get a travel endorsement on
your I-20 to re-enter the U.S. during your
OPT



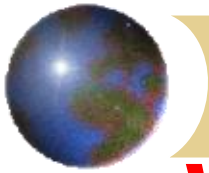
What can I do during the OPT?

- ✚ Work legally work in the U.S. during the authorized period (printed on the employment authorization document)

- ✚ **Must be a Major specific employment**

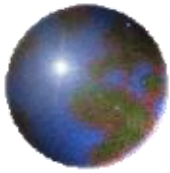
Example: If your major is Computer Science, you cannot work at a restaurants as a waiter/waitress.

You will need to write a detailed statement explaining how your job directly relates to your major.



When should I apply for Post-Completion OPT?

- ✦ You can start applying for OPT **up to 90 days before** the last day of the semester (September 24th for the fall 2024 semester). In addition, your OPT application documents must be received by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services **no later than 60 days after the program end date (February 21st, 2025).**
- ✦ You must mail/upload the OPT application material within 30 days of OPT Recommendation (signature).
- ✦ Earlier you mail the application, sooner you receive the result.
- ✦ How F-1 Students Seeking OPT Can Avoid Form I-765 Delays
Read information posted at the above link for smooth OPT application process.



Applying for OPT Online – Information Videos

- ✚ Create a USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) account
(<https://www.uscis.gov/file-online/how-to-create-a-uscis-online-account>)
- ✚ File the form I-765 for OPT application
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBDBU0Ck6UY>)



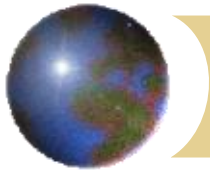
Prior to Filing I-765 online (OPT application)

- ✚ Download the form I-765
(<https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/i-765.pdf>)
- ✚ Save the form to your desktop
- ✚ Complete the form I-765
 - ▣ #27 Eligibility Category is (c)(3)(B)
- ✚ Save the completed I-765 to your desktop



Requesting OPT recommendation

- ✦ You must decide your OPT start date – select a day between the day after the semester ends and the 60th day from the last day of the semester.
- ✦ Average time for USCIS to process I-765 (OPT application form) is about three months or longer.
- ✦ If you apply for OPT early, you may pick a date shortly after the semester ends – such as January 1st.
- ✦ If you apply for OPT later in the semester, pick a date close to the 60th day from the last day of the semester – such as February 20th, 2025.
- ✦ Once you select your proposed start date, email the completed I-765 and the start date to internationalstudents@palomar.edu with the subject line “OPT Application Document.”



After OPT Recommendation

- ✦ When we receive your I-765, we will review the document for its accuracy.
- ✦ After reviewing your I-765, we will recommend your OPT with the start date and issue your new I-20 form and email to you.
- ✦ Sign and date your new I-20 form and save on your desktop.
- ✦ You must apply for OPT within 30 days from the OPT recommendation date (the date your OPT was recommended – see your new I-20 form).



Documents you need to mail to the Service Center

- ✦ Form I-765
- ✦ Photocopies of your I-20 forms (including the one with OPT recommendation), visa and passport
- ✦ Application fee of \$520
- ✦ Two photographs

Mailing Address: USCIS, Attn: I-765 C03, P.X. Box 80573, Chicago, IL 60680-5374

(Mail with Return Receipt Request at the post office)

Filing online at <https://myaccount.uscis.gov/>.

You must first create an account and follow the instructions online. You will upload your OPT application documents online to apply.



Application Methods and Payment

✚ **Online Application:** <https://www.uscis.gov/news/news-releases/f-1-students-seeking-optional-practical-training-can-now-file-form-i-765-online>

✚ Application fee: \$470

✚ **Mail-in Application:**

USCIS Chicago Lockbox

Attn: I-765 C03

P.O. Box 805373

Chicago, IL 60680-5374

*Application fee: \$520



While the Application is Pending

- ✦ **Avoid moving** to a new place, if possible.
- ✦ If you have to move, please email your new address to us at internationalstudents@palomar.edu
- ✦ When you receive the **form I-797 (Notice of Action)** from the Service Center, make sure to bring (or email) a copy of the form to Office of Int'l Education.



When Will I Receive the Approval?

- ✚ It depends on the workload at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service Center.
- ✚ Usually, it takes 90 days or more.



When Can I Start Working?

- ✚ After the EAD arrives (OPT application approval)
- ✚ Employment **cannot start before the OPT start date printed on your EAD** (Employment Authorization Document)
- ✚ You **can start “looking for” jobs** while the OPT application is pending



SEVIS Student Portal

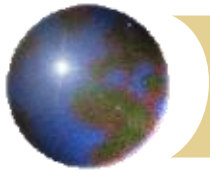
SEVIS Portal Video

- ✦ When your OPT application is approved, you will receive an email from **SEVP** about how to activate the Student Portal account:

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis-help-hub/student-records/fm-student-employment/sevis-and-the-sevp-portal>

- ✦ Following the instruction, enter your SEVIS number to start the registration process.
- ✦ Create and submit a password for your SEVP Portal account.

Once you activate your account, you can change a few personal information items such as change of your phone number, mailing address, and add your employment information.



Traveling after you receive the EAD

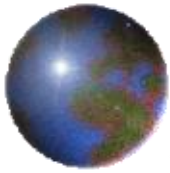
- ✦ Your Visa status remains “**F-1**”
- ✦ Your F-1 visa needs to be valid for re-entry
- ✦ You must possess **current re-entry signature** on your SEVIS I-20
- ✦ You must **have EAD or I-797** while your OPT application is pending
- ✦ You **must have a job** if entering the U.S. over 90 days after the OPT start date – letter from the employer should help



Employment Information

Once you find an employment, you must inform us:

- Name, Address, and telephone number of your employer
- Name, telephone number and email address of your supervisor
- Your position title
- Full time or part time?
- The start date of your employment
- **How the job you started is related to your major.**
 - It is very important that your position is related to your major.



While on OPT – IMPORTANT!

- ✦ OPT students become **out of status if unemployed for a total of 90 days (you have to start working within the 90 days from the OPT start dated typed on your Employment Authorization Card.**
 - ❑ If volunteering for 20 hours a week or more, students are considered “employed” and “in-status.”
- ✦ When you move, you must update the change of address in SEVP Portal **within 10 days**
- ✦ **Enter your employment information in SEVP Portal:** Employer’s name, address, supervisor’s name, email address and telephone number, your title and start date for each employment (if you change your job). If you don’t do this within 90 days of your OPT start date, you will become out of F status and will no longer be able to participate in your OPT, and you must depart the U.S. immediately without any grace period.
- ✦ If you **decide not to continue your OPT**, you must notify the Office of International Education **immediately**.