Optional Practical Training (OPT) Tutorial

Presented by:
Center for International Education
Session Topics

- Post-completion OPT eligibility & Application deadlines
- OPT Application Process Overview
- Application Forms & Required Supporting Documents
- Prepare and Mail your Packet to USCIS
- Maintaining F-1 Status during OPT
- Traveling & Health Insurance during OPT
- OPT is ending, now what?
- Helpful Resources
Post-Completion OPT, Eligibility, and Application Deadline
International Student Employment

1. **On-Campus**

2. **Practical Training:**
   - Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
   - *Optional Practical Training (OPT)*
   - 24-Month STEM OPT Extension
   - Cap Gap Extension

3. **Off-Campus:**
   - Severe unforeseen financial hardship,
   - Internship with a qualifying International Organization

⚠️ Violation to employment regulations will lead to the termination of the student’s SEVIS record!
What is Post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

• Employment benefit for F-1 Visa Students
• Authorization to work in the U.S. for up to 12 months
• Training takes place after the academic program end date

OPT Allows for:

❖ Part-Time/Full-Time Work
❖ Training related to your major field of study.
❖ Training anywhere in the US.
❖ Training in a variety of Types of Employment
Eligibility

Must be in lawful F-1 Status

Have been enrolled in a full course of study for at least one academic year

Be in good academic standing

Have completed, or be in the process of completing all degree-required coursework

Have not already been granted OPT at your current degree level, or exceeded 12 months of Full-Time CPT

Must apply during the application period & comply with deadlines
Apply no earlier than 90 days before program completion, and no later than 60 days after program completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IF APPLYING FOR THE FOLLOWING TERM:</th>
<th>PROGRAM END DATE/GRADUATION DATE</th>
<th>SUBMIT APPLICATION TO CIE BETWEEN:</th>
<th>AVAILABLE OPT START DATES:</th>
<th>USCIS MUST RECEIVE YOUR APPLICATION BETWEEN (90/60)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2024</td>
<td>05/24/2024</td>
<td>02/14/2024-07/13/2024</td>
<td>05/25/2024-07/23/2024</td>
<td>02/24/2024-07/23/2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2024</td>
<td>08/16/2024</td>
<td>05/08/2024-10/05/2024</td>
<td>08/17/2024-10/15/2024</td>
<td>05/18/2024-10/15/2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2024</td>
<td>12/24/2024</td>
<td>09/15/2024-02/12/2025</td>
<td>12/25/2024-02/22/2025</td>
<td>09/25/2024-02/22/2025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2025</td>
<td>01/17/2025</td>
<td>10/09/2024-03/08/2025</td>
<td>01/18/2025-03/18/2025</td>
<td>10/19/2024-03/18/2025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students cannot work on-campus or be eligible for CPT after the program end date.
Graduate students can apply for Post-completion OPT:

- The semester they complete all required coursework OR
- The semester they complete all required coursework & their culminating experience (thesis/dissertation or comprehensive exam).

Your I-20 will be shortened to the official end of the semester in which you submit the OPT application.
Application Window

90 days before program end date – 60 days after Graduation Date and/or program end date in SEVIS I-20 Form

1. Apply up to 90 days before Graduation

2. Choose any day within 60 days after graduation for OPT start date

3. If eligible, apply for 24-month STEM OPT EXTENSION 90 days before Post-Completion OPT ends.

4. End date in EAD CARD. Last day to work unless granted extension

5. Depart the US

MANTAINING F1 STATUS IF APPROVED BY USCIS

- Work at least 20 hrs. per week in a job related to your field of study.
- Report Employment/Unemployment and Address updates to CIE or the SEVP portal.
- Cannot accrue more than 90 days aggregate total of unemployment.

12 months of OPT

GRACE PERIOD

- 60 Days grace period to: depart the U.S, transfer to another school, or change to another visa category
- If you are simply remaining the U.S. for the grace period, you cannot leave and re-enter the U.S.
OPT Application

Process Overview
**OPT Process Overview**

1. **Review OPT Website**
2. **Request an OPT I-20**
3. **File the complete application to USCIS by mail OR online**
4. **Track your application Online**
5. **Receive your EAD and begin training**

*The estimated time to receive an EAD is 90-100 days*
Steps to Request an OPT I-20

1. **Review Eligibility**
   - Review OPT eligibility to ensure you qualify for Post-Completion OPT at [Optional Practical Training | California State University Long Beach (csulb.edu)](https://www.csulb.edu)

2. **Follow Application Instructions**
   - Complete steps 1 & 2 to prepare your application materials.

3. **Obtain your new OPT I-20**
   - Submit the OPT I-20 request, I-765 and most recent I-94 record to ISS as a service request.
   - An Advisor reviews your request, confirms eligibility & issues OPT I-20 within 7 business days.
   - You will receive an OPT I-20 and Coversheet via email.
Program end date Verification

• We will verify that you applied for graduation with Enrollment Services.
  ➢ For more details: http://web.csulb.edu/depts/enrollment/graduation/
• If you have not applied for graduation your OPT request will be denied!
Review your OPT I-20 before taking next steps...

OPT Information can be found in p. 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEVIS ID:</th>
<th>NAME:</th>
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<tr>
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</table>

**Employment Authorizations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Full/Part-Time</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POST-COMPLETION OPT</td>
<td>FULL TIME</td>
<td>REQUESTED</td>
<td>01 JULY 2017</td>
<td>30 JUNE 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Change of Status/CAP-GAP Extension**

**Authorized Reduced Course Load**

**Current Session Dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Session Start Date</th>
<th>Current Session End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A. Student is on post-completion practical training.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Travel Endorsement**

This page, when properly endorsed, may be used for re-entry of the student to attend the same school after a temporary absence from the United States. Each endorsement is valid for one year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designated School Official</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date Issued</th>
<th>Place Issued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

OPT I-20 will change depending on the application Status:

Requested → Pending → Approved
OPT Application
Forms & Required Supporting Documents
You can access all the required OPT application documents and forms from our website:

[Optional Practical Training | California State University Long Beach (csulb.edu)]

Click on APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS
Request Form

Section 1
Student’s section

Section 2
Advisor Approval
Form G-1145

- E-Notification of application receipt
- Optional

Complete Name & Contact Info

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What Is the Purpose of This Form?
Use this form to request an electronic notification (e-Notification) when U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services accepts your immigration application. This service is available for applications filed at a USCIS Lockbox facility.

General Information
Complete the information below and clip this form to the first page of your application package. You will receive one e-mail and/or text message for each form you are filing.

We will send the e-Notification within 24 hours after we accept your application. Domestic customers will receive an e-mail and/or text message; overseas customers will only receive an e-mail. Undeliverable e-Notifications cannot be resent.

The e-mail or text message will display your receipt number and tell you how to get updated case status information. It will not include any personal information. The e-Notification does not grant any type of status or benefit; rather it is provided as a convenience to customers.

USCIS will also mail you a receipt notice (I-797C), which you will receive within 10 days after your application has been accepted; use this notice as proof of your pending application or petition.

USCIS Privacy Act Statement
AUTHORITIES: The information requested on this form is collected pursuant to section 103(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended INA section 101, et seq.

PURPOSE: The primary purpose for providing the information on this form is to request an electronic notification when USCIS accepts immigration form. The information you provide will be used to send you a text and/or email message.

DISCLOSURE: The information you provide is voluntary. However, failure to provide the requested information may prevent USCIS from providing you a text and/or email receipt your immigration form.

ROUTINE USES: The information provided on this form will be used and disclosed to DHS personnel and contractors in accordance with approved routine uses, as described in the associated protected system of records notice (DHS/USCIS-007 - Benefit Information System and D/BUSCIS-001 - Alien File (A-File) and Central Index System (CIS), which can be found at www.dhs.gov/privacy). The information may also be made available, as appropriate for law enforcement purposes or in the interest of national security.

Complete this form and clip it on top of the first page of your immigration form(s).

Applicant/Petitioner Full Last Name | Applicant/Petitioner Full First Name | Applicant/Petitioner Full Middle Name

Email Address | Mobile Phone Number (Text Message)
Form I-765 page 1

- Type or print in black ink
- Complete pages 1-7.
  Only sections that apply to you
- In part 1, select: 1a
- Make sure you are using the latest form edition
Add a physical address if different than you mailing address

Apply for SS# if necessary (questions 13a-17b)

You will be applying for your employment authorization (EAD) and Social security number/card at the same time with the same form

If you already have a SS Card answer “no” in question #14.
Use your latest I-94 record to answer questions about last arrival

Passport must be valid for another 6 months at least at the time of the application

Eligibility Category Q#27: (c)(3)(B) for Post-completion OPT
Applicant's Statement (1a)

Signature can only be handwritten. USCIS will deny e-signatures from students.

Sign inside the box.

You must be in the U.S. to file form I-765.

You will not be eligible for OPT once you have departed the U.S. and your program end date has passed!
These pages only apply to you if you utilized an attorney and/or an interpreter to assist in filling out this application.

You may skip these pages.
Use **Part 6. Additional Information** to provide:

- All *previously* used SEVIS numbers and
- Evidence of any previously authorized CPT or OPT and the academic level at which it was authorized.

**Example:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEVIS #</th>
<th>N00769854</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPT:</td>
<td>01/21/2020 - 05/22/2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPT:</td>
<td>06/25/2020 - 06/24/2021 [BA]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ALERT:
I-765 Filing Fee is scheduled to increase to $520 dollars on April 1, 2024!
Always use the most up to date I-765 edition https://www.uscis.gov/i-765
Form I-765 Supporting Documents

- Copy of Passport (must be valid for 6 months in the future)
- Copy F-1 Visa (it is ok if expired)
- Copy of I-94 Card or I-94 record - go to [www.cbp.gov/I94](http://www.cbp.gov/I94) to print your most recent record
- Copy of all I-20s & any EADs you received.
Form I-765 Fees

https://www.uscis.gov/i-765

- The current fee for form I-765 is $410 dollars.
- Fee is scheduled to increase to $520 dollars on April 1, 2024!
- Make your payment to:
  - U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security
- Payment can be done through:
  - Personal check or
  - Money order or
  - Cashier’s check
  - Pay by credit card using Form G-1450, Authorization for Credit Card Transactions
  - Pay online if you chose to file your application through the USCIS portal.
Picture Requirements

https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/how-apply/photos.html

• Provide 2 identical photos, passport style taken within the last 30 days.
• Photos should be 2”x2” in size.
• Find photo examples online in the link provided above.
Prepare your full application and file it to USCIS
Reminder: You can file Form I-765 90 days before your program end date, but no later than 60 days after.

- You must file your OPT packet within 30 days from the original OPT request date indicated in SEVIS. Date might be different from the issue date indicated in your new OPT I-20.
- USCIS accepts your OPT application by mail or online. Both methods are equally acceptable.
You will receive your OPT I-20, and your Coversheet from the ISS Advisor within 7 business days from the request.

Follow the instruction on your Coversheet to file your OPT application by mail or to file online:
• Filing by mail

☐ Follow the instruction on your Coversheet to mail your OPT packet to the correct USCIS Lockbox.
Follow the instruction on your Coversheet to complete the online OPT application with USCIS.

You must have an OPT I-20 **BEFORE** starting the online USCIS application for OPT.

**Online Filing Benefits**

- Case status alerts and secure messages
- See all case correspondence
- Check your case status and update personal information
- Upload evidence
You will receive a Receipt Notice of Action (Form I-797) in the mail with your receipt number. If you filed by mail.

In contrast, you will have the receipt notice immediately after completing the online filing.

Notify USCIS immediately if you notice mistakes in form I-797.

Use the case number to check the status of your application online at https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do

Use the online tools to submit inquiries to USCIS about your application.
• Begin Training

- If Approved, you will receive the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) within 90-100 days from the receipt date.
- Verify the Information in your EAD is correct
- You can start your employment and/or apply for a SS# on the Valid Date printed on the EAD.

- You will receive your Social Security Card in the mail shortly after your OPT approval, for questions go to www.ssa.gov
Common mistakes to Avoid

1. Application is not submitted within the timeframe.
2. Application is incomplete.
3. **Payment issues**: i.e. check is dated too far away in the future, money not available, wrong fee amount, etc.
4. Pictures do not follow **requirements**. Review the picture requirement here or on our [website](#).
5. Failure to respond to the an RFE by the given deadline.
   - *What is a Request for further Evidence (RFE)?*
     - An RFE is a formal notice sent by the immigration adjudicator reviewing your OPT application for: missing documents, better pictures, clarification of information
     - Must respond within 60 days
Maintain F-1 Status while Completing Post-Completion OPT
Maintaining F-1 status

• **Train within your field of study**

  - All training opportunities must be related to your major. For assistance with this requirement, use these resources:
    - https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/majors-careers
    - https://www.onetonline.org

  - You begin your employment only on the EAD start date & end employment on the EAD expiration date.
  - You must train a minimum of 20 hours per week.
  - You must not be unemployed more than 90 days for the duration of your OPT approved period.
  - Your SEVIS record will automatically **terminate** when you accumulate 90 cumulative unemployment days.
Valid Employment Categories

- Regular paid employment
- Single full-time, or multiple part-time jobs
- Multiple, short-term employers
- Work for hire / independent contractor
- Self-employed business owner
- Employment through an agency
- Volunteer / Unpaid internship
  (where Labor Regulations are not in violation)
Maintaining F-1 status

• Report within 10 days from the change

- Your SEVP Portal will help you update your record accordingly.
- The SEVP Portal will be accessible to you only after OPT is approved.
- You will receive an email to set up your individual SEVP Portal from do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov.
- Use the SEVP Portal to report the following information except email:
  * Physical home address.
  * Mailing address.
  * Telephone numbers.
  * Employment information, including unemployment periods.
- After you set up your SEVP Portal you can access it at https://sevp.ice.gov/opt
- For help with the SEVP Portal visit SEVP PORTAL HELP or contact an International Student Advisor/DSO.
- You are encouraged to use Request Documents or Signatures | California State University Long Beach (csulb.edu) to summit changes to your preferred email address or a request to reset your SEVP portal.
Is your job related to your major?

Sample Descriptions

• Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering: I work full time as an Electrical Engineer at ABC Corp., a government contractor. In my job, I analyze client requirements for electrical systems and provide them with cost estimates of such systems. My work requires understanding of electrical circuit theory, which I studied in-depth at the University of ABC.

• Bachelor's degree in Business: I work full time as a Loan Officer at a mortgage company, Happy Homes, where I meet with clients and evaluate, authorize and recommend approval of loan applications. On a daily basis, I use the knowledge I gained in my credit analysis, sales and marketing classes that I took as part of my major program of study.

• Master's degree in Music: I am working at a hospital playing the harp in patient rooms. I also conduct hands-on harp beginner workshops for long-term patients. On average, I work at the hospital 35 hours a week. My duties directly utilize the skills and knowledge I acquired from my coursework and degree in music therapy.
Travel & Insurance Requirements
Traveling Outside the U.S.

**TRAVEL**

- Travel is NEVER recommended when your application is pending AND your academic program already ended.
- Travel may be ok before program end date under certain circumstances but always ask an International Student Advisor first!

**How to Re-Enter Safely**

- Valid Passport
- Valid F-1 Visa Stamp
- Freshly Signed OPT I-20
  - Request a travel signature online [Request Documents or Signatures | California State University Long Beach (csulb.edu)]
- EAD Card
- Letter from your Employer
- Contact information for the designated school official (DSO) at your school

More info at:
[studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2014/06/know-before-you-go-international-students-and-summer-travel](studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2014/06/know-before-you-go-international-students-and-summer-travel)
• Purchase JCB Insurance
• Purchase an international insurance program you prefer
• Health Insurance is not required but ABSOLUTELY recommended!

OPT Students may enroll in the JCB Plan on a voluntary basis.
OPT students may purchase a maximum of 12 consecutive months of coverage from the OPT effective date.
OPT extension coverage beyond 12 months is not allowed.
Enrollment must be completed within 30 days of the expiration of prior coverage on the schools’ student health insurance plan. A gap in coverage is not allowed.
A copy of a valid EAD or OPT application or receipt (I-765 or I-797c) is required to enroll.
Inquired with ISS Advisor about alternative insurance providers for OPT students.
Ending

Post-Completion OPT
Application Window
90 days before program end date – 60 days after Graduation Date

Graduation Date

Application Window
90 days before program end date – 60 days after Graduation Date

Application Window
90 days before program end date – 60 days after Graduation Date

Choose any day within 60 days after graduation for OPT start date

***

Note: you cannot have a start date beyond 60 days after graduation

12 months of OPT

MANTAINING F1 STATUS IF APPROVED BY USCIS
• Work at least 20 hrs. per week in a job related to your field of study.
• Report Employment/Unemployment and Address updates to CIE.
• Cannot accrue more than 90 days aggregate total of unemployment.

GRACE PERIOD
• 60 Days grace period to: depart the U.S, transfer to another school, or change to another visa category
• If you are simply remaining the U.S. for the grace period, you cannot leave and re-enter the U.S.

End date in EAD CARD. Last day to work unless granted extension

Depart the US

60 Days

90 Days

60 Days

60 Days

60 Days

60 Days

60 Days

60 Days

60 Days

60 Days
You have a **60 Day Grace** Period to:

- Depart the U.S.
- Complete a transfer to another college/university to study full-time again
- Complete a change of program level here at CSULB (i.e. B.A., M.A.)
- Seek a Change of Status to a different visa type
Students who are eligible for a Cap-Gap extension of post-completion OPT employment and F1-status may request an updated I-20 from a DSO.

Students who are eligible MUST apply 90 days before OPT expires.

For more information visit us at www.cpie.csulb.edu/employment
Helpful Resources
The Career Development Center (CDC)

- Online: http://careers.csulb.edu/
- Learn about:
  - Resume Writing
  - Internships
  - Job Search Strategies
  - Interview Skills
Beach Connect- Advising & Tutoring

- Online:  
  sso.csulb.edu
- Meet with your immigration advisors
- Access university resources
Connect online: studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students
Contact ISS

Monday–Thursday, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Closed every day 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Fridays: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Location: FND 185B
Email: cie-student@csulb.edu
www.csulb.edu/international

Facebook: CSULB International Student Services
Instagram: CSULB_ISS