Post-Completion OPT
What is Post-Completion OPT?

Post-Completion OPT is a type of Optional Practical Training which is available to students after completion of their studies. It allows them to be authorized for off-campus employment for up to one year in a field directly related to the degree which they just completed.
YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO HAVE A JOB OFFER TO APPLY FOR POST-COMPLETION OPT
Who is eligible for post-completion OPT?

- Students who have been lawfully enrolled full-time for one academic year (i.e., two consecutive long semesters)
- Students currently in F-1 status
Who is eligible for post-completion OPT?

- Students who will complete their degree in the current semester

- Students who meet the minimum GPA requirements:
  
  2.0 Undergraduates 3.0 Graduates
Who is eligible for post-completion OPT?

- Students who have used 364 Days or less of full-time CPT at the current educational level

- Students who have not been previously granted 12 months of OPT on the current educational level
When may I apply for Post-Completion OPT?

- The earliest date that you may apply for OPT is 90 days prior to the program completion date.

- The latest date on which USCIS must receive your OPT application is 60 days after the program completion date.

Therefore, you have a five month application period.

- For SEVIS purposes, your program completion date is:
  - The last day of final exams for the full-term session, or
  - Your defense date
Program Completion

90 days before program completion

Program Completion

60 days after program completion

Fall 2015 graduates: September 18, 2015- February 15, 2016
Spring 2016 graduates: February 9, 2016- July 8, 2016
Summer 2016 graduates: May 10, 2016-October 9, 2016

These dates apply to the period of time during which the OPT packet can be submitted to the USCIS office. Please factor in 3 business days of processing at ISSO and the time your packet takes to get mailed to USCIS. Applying later may result in not getting the full 12 months of OPT.
When may I apply for OPT?

You may want to wait until you are certain that you do not need another semester before you apply.
How do I select a Post-Completion OPT start date?

- The earliest date you may request your OPT to begin is the day after the program completion date.
- The latest you may request your OPT to begin is 60 calendar days after the program completion date.

Regardless of the dates you request for your OPT to begin, you cannot begin work until you receive the EAD and you reach the start date on the EAD. This date may be different from the date you requested.
How do I select a Post-Completion OPT start date?

Additionally, there are several other factors you may want to consider as you decide on a requested start date for OPT employment.

- Employment
- USCIS processing times (Normal USCIS processing time is up to 3 months)
- ISSO processing times
- The UTD Academic Calendar [http://www.utdallas.edu/academiccalendar/](http://www.utdallas.edu/academiccalendar/)
- Your own personal needs
12 month OPT authorization period. Varies depending on requested start date, application submission date and USCIS processing time.

Earliest date you can submit OPT application to USCIS.

OPT application must arrive latest at USCIS by this date.

OPT expires. 60 day grace period begins.

OPT must be completed by this date.

90 days before program completion

Program Completion

60 days after program completion

14 months after program completion

12 month OPT authorization period. Varies depending on requested start date, application submission date and USCIS processing time.

Depending on when you mail your OPT application, you might or might not receive your requested OPT start date. If you apply late you may not receive the entire 12 months of OPT.

Remember:

Normal USCIS processing time is up to 3 months.

You may only work during the OPT card approval dates.

Limit of 90 days of unemployment while on Post Completion OPT.
What is the OPT I-20 application process?

1. Carefully review the information in the OPT Guide

2. Pay the $100 Practical Training Fee
   https://ezpay.utdallas.edu/C20239_ustomes/web/product_detail.jsp?PRODUCTID=241 *

3. Submit to the International Student Services Office (ISSO):
   - OPT I-20 Request Form
   - Copy of completed USCIS Form I-765
   - If you had a previous OPT, a copy of previous EAD

*Due to the additional Practical Training requirements instituted by Homeland Security on April 8, 2008, UT Dallas students are required to pay a $100 Practical Training Fee. This fee is separate from the USCIS application fee.
Post-Completion OPT

OPT Request Form

- Can be submitted in person to the ISSO welcome desk or
- Emailed to: ISSOCurrent@utdallas.edu
- Please note that once you apply for post-completion OPT, your I-20 & any CPT authorization will be shortened to reflect program completion
Post-Completion OPT

I-765 Form

- Check ‘Permission to accept employment’ box at top
- #12 and #13 can be found on your I-94
- For Post-Completion OPT verify that the code on #16 is (C) (3) (B)
- Complete form in black ink
What is the OPT I-20 application process?

4. Receive your OPT I-20 within three business days.
   - An email will be sent to you stating that the OPT I-20 is ready for pickup. You will be given mailing instructions when you pick up the I-20.

5. Compile the OPT application and make a copy for your personal records.
What is the USCIS Application Process?

6. Mail your OPT application. It **must** be received no later than 30 days after the I-20 was issued. If needed, the OPT I-20 can be re-issued if the I-20 was not mailed within 30 days. USCIS processing time for an OPT application is **90 days**.

- G-1145 (Optional)
- Two passport photos
- Check for $380
- Original I-765 form
- Copy of OPT I-20, Page 1 and 2
- Copy of passport ID page
- Copy of I-94
- Copy of F-1 visa
- CPT page (provided by ISSO)
- Copies of previous EAD cards and OPT I-20 for any previous periods of OPT
G-1145

- E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance (Optional) Form provided by ISSO
- Authorizes USCIS to send application processing updates via email/text.
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Two passport photos

- 2 inches by 2 inches, color photo
- Full frontal face against white background on thin, glossy paper
- Attach photos at the left hand, top corner of the I-765
- Must have been taken within the past 6 months
Check for $380

- Made payable to Department of Homeland Security
- Print I-94 number at top
- For checks, please verify that your name and address are at the top left corner
- Staple your check in the middle of the I-765
Copy of Passport ID Page

- Showing picture and expiration date
Post-Completion OPT

I-94

- If you have a paper I-94 in your passport, make a copy of the front and back of your I-94
- If you have an electronic I-94, print a copy of your electronic I-94
Post-Completion OPT

Copy of Visa
- Showing picture and status
CPT Printout

- All USCIS Service Centers require post-completion OPT applications to include proof of CPT’s done at this educational level.
- The ISSO will print the CPT employment page of your SEVIS record for you.
Where do I obtain mailing information?

- The address on the I-765 determines which regional USCIS Service Center will process the application.

- The mailing addresses will be on the I-20 Mailing Instructions.
Which address should I use?

• Your local address:
  - The OPT receipt notice and EAD card will be mailed directly to you.
  - You must provide the ISSO with a copy of the EAD card after you receive it.
  - The post office will not forward federal mail. We do not recommend this option if you will move before you receive the EAD card.

• ISSO address:
  - Use the address format on the I-765 instructions on the previous slide.
  - The OPT receipt notice and EAD card will be mailed to ISSO.
  - We will open the envelope, make a copy, then send you an email notification that a document has arrived for you to pick up.
Mailing Options

Although you will receive an official receipt notice from USCIS about 2-3 weeks after you mail the application, we recommend you send your application by a method in which you will receive confirmation that it has been delivered. These are some options you may want to consider:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G-1145</td>
<td>If this form is submitted with your application you will receive an email or text message that confirms your application was received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Postal Service Certified Mail</td>
<td>Provides a mailing receipt and delivery information. You can also receive online access to the delivery status for an additional fee. The average cost of certified mail is $3 - $5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express Mail with the U.S. Postal Service or a private courier</td>
<td>Provides a mailing receipt and online access.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please note:

- Once you mail the application, you cannot make changes to your request.
- Attempts to withdraw OPT applications are not always successful.
- If you successfully withdraw the OPT you lose the USCIS processing fee.
What is the USCIS Application Process?

7. A Receipt Notice will be sent to the address listed on the I-765.
I-797C (Receipt)

- When you receive your receipt, please verify that your name and date of birth are correct.
- There will be a Receipt Number that you can use to track the progress of your OPT application on www.uscis.gov.
- If you don’t get a receipt within 4 weeks after mailing your application and you have verified with your bank that your check has been processed, send an email to the USCIS Lockbox facility at lockboxsupport@dhs.gov.
You may inquire about the status of your case or submit a service request by visiting the USCIS webpage egov.uscis.gov/e-request.
What is the USCIS Application Process?

8. If approved, an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will be sent to the same address.
Are there limits on the time I can remain on OPT without a job?

Students on post-completion OPT may accrue up to 90 days of unemployment.

*How to Calculate Days of Unemployment*

- Each day (including weekends) during the period when OPT authorization begins and ends that the student does not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment.
- Only count days between your OPT start date and OPT end date as indicated on your EAD.
What are the consequences of exceeding 90 days of unemployment?

- To avoid violating your status, prior to reaching the limit on authorized unemployment please prepare to transfer to another school, change education level, depart the US, or take action to otherwise maintain status in the US.

- Please note that ISSO is not responsible for calculating unemployment time or taking action in SEVIS. DHS has responsibility for determining whether you have violated your status by exceeding the limit on authorized employment. So long as your SEVIS record remains active we will consider you in status.

- USCIS has said that you may be denied future immigration benefits that rely on your valid F-1 status if DHS determines that you exceeded the limits on unemployment.

- SEVP has stated starting Spring 2016, students on OPT who exceed 90 days of unemployment will have their SEVIS record automatically terminated.
What are my reporting requirements?

Students on post-completion OPT must report to the ISSO the following information within 10 days of a change:

- Your current U.S. address
- Start or end of employment
- Change of your employer’s name
- Change of your employer’s address
- Change of your official name
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OPT Reporting Form

- Can be submitted in person to the ISSO welcome desk or emailed to: ISSOCurrent@utdallas.edu
- The processing time for OPT reporting is 5 business days
What types of employment are allowed?

- The Department of Homeland Security has ruled that acceptable employment during OPT can include
  - Standard Employment
  - Contract Employment
  - Self Employment
  - Volunteer Positions

- All employment must average at least 20 hours per week.

- All employment must be directly related to your major and educational level that is on your current I-20
  - You and the employer make this determination
  - You can change employers as long as each job is directly related to your current major and educational level
Documenting OPT Employment

Document your search for employment and keep employment records. You may be asked for detailed proof of OPT employment or job search activities for future immigration applications or interviews including:

- Copies of job-specific cover letters and resumes
- Any letter or email that contains info about Interviews, Testing, Information Sessions
- Job offer letter
- Timesheets, paystubs, logs of volunteer hours
Is there any way to expedite my OPT application with USCIS?

USCIS does have a process in which a student may request an expedite, however, the student must meet and be able to prove one of the required criteria USCIS has listed:

- Severe financial loss to company or individual
  - The employer must be able to prove that there will be a severe financial loss to the company
- Extreme emergent situation
- Humanitarian situation
- Nonprofit status of requesting organization in furtherance of the cultural and social interests of the United States
- Department of Defense of National Interest Situation
  - Request must come from official United States Government entity and state that delay will be detrimental to our government
- USCIS error
- Compelling interest of USCIS
How do I know whether my program end date is my dissertation defense date or exams? How do I decide?

Graduate students who will defend a thesis or dissertation have the option of using that date as their program end date, or using the standard final day of final exams for the graduating semester. Only you can determine if it is right for you.

Some of the factors you may want to consider are:

- Employment start date
- TA/RA Employment
Frequently Asked Questions

What about if I am graduating in absentia?

In absentia registration for graduation allows students who have completed all degree requirements but need more time to complete administrative requirements, such as submission of dissertation copies, to file for graduation in a future term **without enrollment** in that term.

Unfortunately, immigration regulations **do not allow for this situation**. F-1 and J-1 students must continue to be full-time enrolled or make program completion preparations, such as applying for OPT, even if their academic department has granted an in absentia filing.
I filled out the G-1145, but I am not receiving any notifications. Is there a problem with my application?

While the G-1145 form is for electronic notification regarding your OPT application, there may be a delay.

The G-1145 form is put into a machine that reads the information on the form. If the machine is unable to read the handwriting, the form will go into a queue where the forms are reviewed in the order that they were received.

The G-1145 may not send out immediate notifications. This does not play a factor into your OPT application being reviewed by a USCIS official.
Can I take classes while on Post-Completion OPT?

The immigration regulations specifically state the following:

“Authorization to engage in practical training employment is automatically terminated when the student begins study at another educational level.” 8 C.F.R. 214.2 (f) (10) (ii) (B)

This means your OPT will automatically terminate once a new I-20 has been issued for a new program of study or for a transfer to another university.

If you do study while on OPT, the Department of Homeland Security has stated that the classes are only to be incidental to your employment.

This means that while on OPT your main purpose is to work. Incidental means that any class you take must be secondary to your main purpose. However, please keep in mind the statement above regarding automatic termination of OPT when starting a new program of study.
I tracked my OPT application on the USCIS webpage and it says my EAD card has been delivered. I put the ISSO address on my I-765, but I haven’t received an email from the ISSO about my EAD card. Is it there?

Mail, including EAD cards, take several days to get to the ISSO. The documents are received by a central receiving location where all mail for the campus are sorted.

Once sorted, the mail will be delivered to the ISSO. Once we receive your receipt or EAD card you will be sent an email stating it is ready for you to pickup.
What if I fail to graduate?

If the OPT application has not yet been adjudicated, you may contact an advisor at the ISSO to request a withdrawal of the application. You will also need to contact the USCIS National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283 to request a withdrawal of your application.

If the OPT has already been approved then you are limited to part-time employment until you have completed your program requirements. You will need to work with an ISSO advisor to extend your I-20.

If you OPT application is not in process, you may be out of status.
May I re-enter the US after travel abroad while on OPT?

- **Before** the program completion date and still taking classes:
  - Valid passport
  - Valid F-1 visa
  - OPT I-20 endorsed for travel within the past 6 months

- **After** the program completion date you must present all of the following documents upon re-entry:
  - Valid passport
  - Valid F-1 visa
  - OPT I-20 endorsed for travel within the past 6 months
  - OPT EAD
  - Proof of employment
    - pay stubs
    - letter of employment
What happens after my OPT?

After the OPT end date, there is a 60 day grace period in which you can:

- Start another academic program at UT Dallas
- Transfer to another school
- Change to another visa category
- Leave the U.S.

  - Notify the ISSO of your departure by submitting an OPT Reporting form so that a note can be placed in your immigration record.
Where can you obtain more information?

- **UTD ISSO Walk-In Advising**
  - Monday – Thursday: 10:00AM – 5:00PM
  - Friday: 1:00PM – 4:00PM

- **Send an Email**
  - [ISSOCurrent@utdallas.edu](mailto:ISSOCurrent@utdallas.edu)

- **Call 972-883-4189 to speak with an advisor**
  - Monday – Thursday: 10:00AM – 5:00PM
  - Friday: 1:00PM – 4:00PM