OPT Reporting Requirements

Limits on Periods of Unemployment
8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(E) states—“During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial post-completion OPT authorization.” This limit also applies to students with an automatic extension of an OPT authorization due to the cap gap provisions.

Reporting While Authorized for OPT
You must report changes in name, citizenship, address, and employment within 10 days of the change to ISSS via the OPT Information Update Form.

The following employment information must be reported for each job you have while authorized for OPT:

- Explanation of how the employment is directly related to your major field of study
- Whether the employment is self-employment
- Employer/Company Name
- Employer Identification Number (EIN)—highly recommended
- Job Title
- Employment Start Date
- Whether the employment is full-time or part-time (full-time employment is defined as 20 hours or more per week)
- The employer’s address and, if applicable, any alternative work addresses
- Your supervisor’s name, phone number, and email address
- Previous employment end date (if applicable)

Additionally, if you move while authorized for OPT you must also report your address change to USCIS within 10 days of the change using the Online Change of Address System.

Documenting Employment While on OPT
The list below is a suggestion of records you may be asked to present to prove OPT employment (during or after your OPT authorization); it is not exhaustive. Be sure to also maintain documentation that the work/internship is in your major field of study.

- Copies of offer letters and agreements/contracts with all OPT employers including start and end dates, pay rate, and number of weekly work hours
- Copies of job descriptions including job title, duties, location, and supervisor’s contact information
- If you worked for an agency or consultancy, keep evidence of the projects you worked on
- Keep copies of your pay vouchers or pay stubs for all periods of employment, copies of your bank statements that show direct or corresponding deposits from your employer(s), and associated W-2 tax forms

If you engage in employment that is not paid while on OPT, it is recommended that you keep the following records:

- Copies of employment agreement or contracts with the employer including start and end dates, trainings (on location, online, etc.), responsibilities and training objectives, location of the internship/unpaid training for each employer, and supervisor’s contact information
- Copies of all diplomas, completion certificates and/or certifications that you received related to the training program;
- If you worked/trained as an unpaid employee for a third party, keep evidence of the projects/contracts you worked on
- Copies of company time and attendance records that document your daily tasks in detail for all employers during the unpaid internship or training

OPT & Cap-Gap Extensions
An F-1 student who is the beneficiary of a timely-filed H-1B petition requesting change of status and an employment start date of October 1 of the current year that has not been withdrawn or denied is eligible for a cap-gap extension of OPT in which duration of status (D/S) and any post-completion OPT work authorization is extended to September 30 or until the petition is withdrawn or denied. An automatic cap-gap extension of an F-1 student's duration of status also applies to the duration of status of the student's dependents in F-2 status. To request an I-20 with a comment indicating that your H-1B is either pending or has been approved, complete the Cap-Gap I-20 Request Form.
24-Month Extension of OPT (with Qualifying STEM Degree and E-Verify Employer)

F-1 students in a current period of OPT with qualifying STEM degrees (previous U.S. degree or current U.S. degree) and an employment offer with an E-Verify employer in the STEM field may be eligible to apply for a STEM extension of OPT. Students must meet all of the eligibility requirements including submitting the OPT STEM Extension I-20 Request Form with a complete I-983 Training Plan to ISSS.

Beginning a New Degree Level and SEVIS Record Transfers

During post-completion OPT, employment in your major field of study is the basis for maintenance of F-1 status. Enrollment is not required and may impact your OPT work authorization. Consult ISSS if you are considering beginning a new course of study or will seek to transfer your SEVIS record to another institution.

- OPT work authorization is terminated when your SEVIS record is transferred to a new school and/or you begin a program at a new degree level.

Travel While Authorized for OPT

If you depart the U.S. while authorized for OPT for a temporary absence, you must have proof of employment or a job offer in your major field of study in order to re-enter the U.S.

When you seek to re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status while authorized for OPT, you should carry the following documents:

- I-20 ISSS issued with OPT employment information on page 2 and travel signature dated less than six months from your date of re-entry to the U.S.
- Valid Passport (validity should extend at least 6 months beyond your date of re-entry to the U.S.)
- *Valid F-1 visa (exception: Canadians; automatic visa revalidation)
- Unexpired Employment Authorization Document (EAD/OPT card)
- Evidence that you have a job or a job offer in your major field of study in the United States and have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment since the EAD card start date
- I-901 SEVIS fee receipt (a new payment is not required; a copy can be printed from online.

If you are using automatic visa revalidation to re-enter the U.S.: □ Printed I-94

During post-completion OPT, employment in your major field of study is the basis for maintenance of F-1 status.

- If you do not have a job, travel outside of the U.S. is not recommended.
- If you exceed the 90-day limit on unemployment while outside the United States, you will not be eligible to re-enter the United States in F-1 status.

A temporary absence from the U.S. should be less than 5 months.

- Even with a job offer and valid EAD, an absence greater than 5 months may not be considered temporary and you may be denied re-entry.

Do NOT leave the U.S. if you have a pending change of status application as it will likely be considered abandoned.

- Please consult an immigration attorney if you have questions

Do NOT re-enter the U.S. in another status (e.g., B) if you intend to work on OPT.

- You must be present in the U.S. in F-1 status to work on OPT.

Additional Travel Resources: ICE Travel FAQ; ISSS OPT Travel FAQ; Visa Renewal; Printing a Copy of Your I-94

I-94 Arrival Record

Review your I-94 arrival record every time you re-enter the U.S. to ensure that your entry was recorded properly. Check your biographical information as well as your Class of Admission (F-1) and Admit Until Date (D/S).

Travel to Third-Country Destinations

Depending on the country you are traveling to and/or through, you may require a transit visa (to travel through an intermediary country on your way to your final destination) or a tourist visa to enter your final destination. Please consult the appropriate embassy or foreign consular office to determine if an additional visa is necessary.

End of Program Grace Period

There is a 60-day grace period following the completion of your post-completion OPT (starting from the EAD end date) for students who maintained status and did not accrue more than 90 days of unemployment. You are not eligible for employment or to re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status during the 60 day grace period. F-1 students in the 60 day grace period can request that their SEVIS record be transferred to another institution if they have been admitted and will begin the program within 5 months. F-1 students can also apply for a change of status during the grace period.