Will you graduate in Spring 2025?

ISSS is hosting an international student recognition ceremony.

Enjoy an afternoon reception with refreshments, photo opportunities, and spend time with your fellow graduates and families.
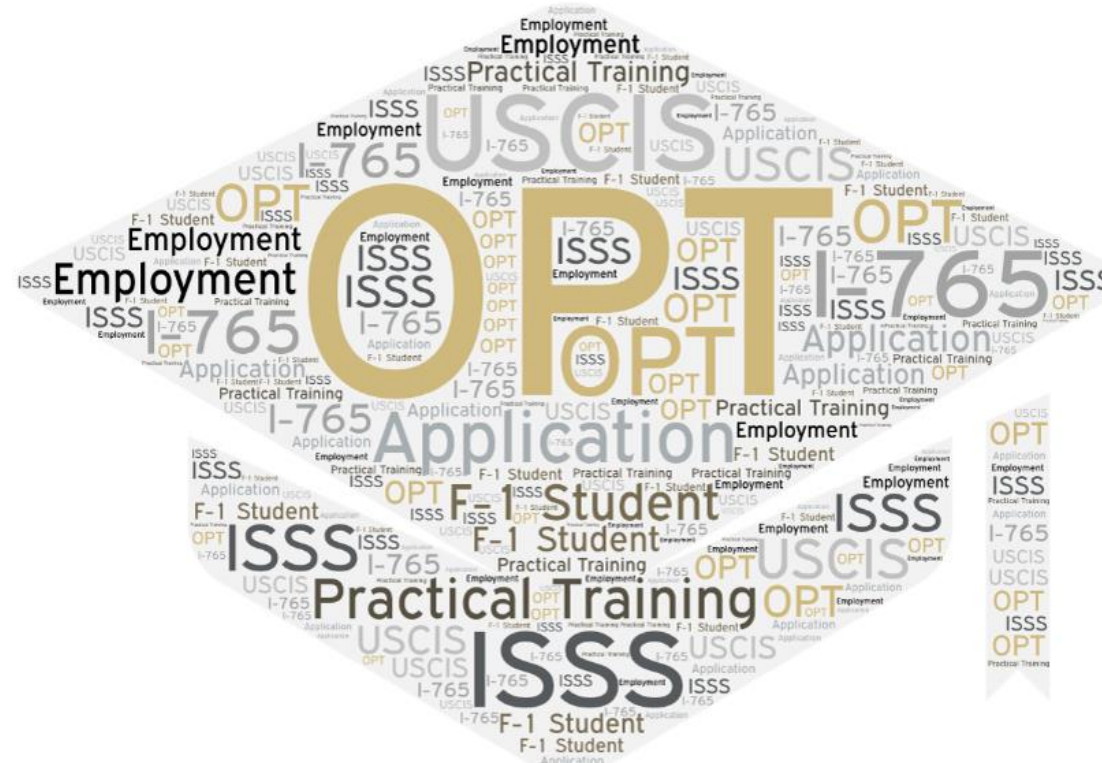
Friday, May 9th
1:30 – 3:30pm

Tent on University Club Lawn

Graduating students can pick up a gold cord during office hours in April from the ISSS front desk from through. A Buff One card is required.

Preparing Your Post-Completion Optional Practical Training Application

Gold underlined text is hyperlinked – click on links for more information

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1/16/2025

What is Post- Completion OPT?

Employment authorization is granted by USCIS *after* completing all degree requirements or coursework (excluding thesis or dissertation credits), allowing you to have a job, internship, or volunteer work that directly relates to your **major field of study.**

- *Temporary*: up to 12 months

- *Optional*: a benefit of F-1 status

- *Authorized by USCIS* (U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services)
  - ISSS **only** *recommends* that your post-completion OPT application be approved; the final decision is made by USCIS.

A job offer is not necessary for employment authorization approval!

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Am I eligible?

✓ Enrolled for at least **1 academic year in valid non-immigrant status in the U.S.** (Fall & Spring semester)

✓ **Enrolled full-time** (or authorized Reduced Course Load) during the semester you apply for OPT

✓ Have not completed more than **364 days of full-time Curricular Practical Training** (CPT) at your current degree level;

✓ Have not used **12 months or more of OPT work authorization** at the same or higher degree level

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When should I apply?

Earliest: 90 days before your last day of **required** enrollment in your final semester

Latest: 60 days after your last day of **required** enrollment in your final semester
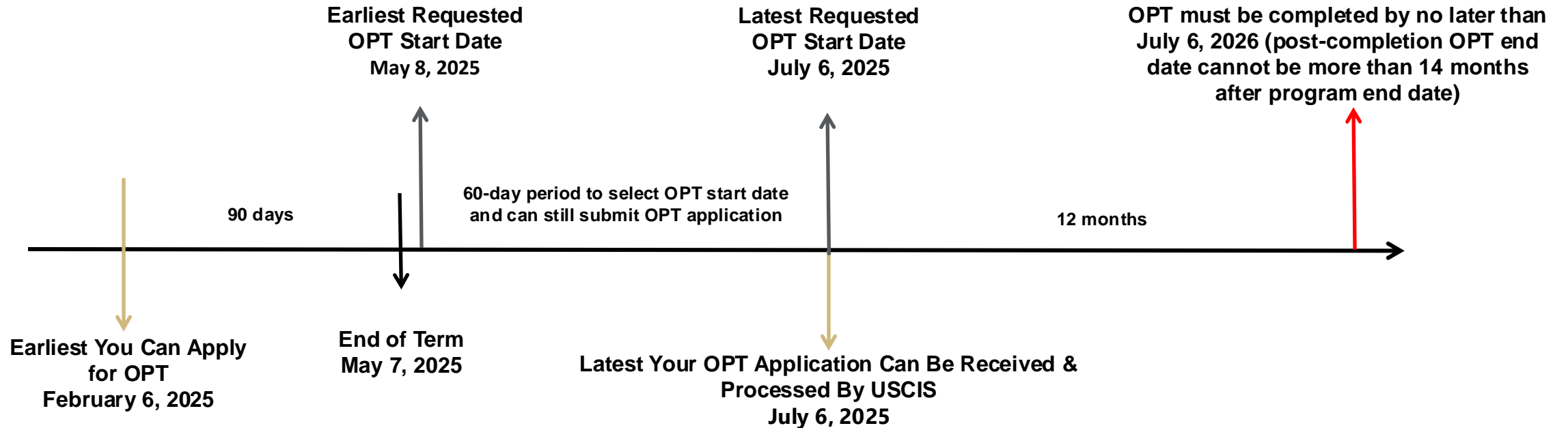
Example for Spring 2025:

- Final Semester: Spring 2025

- Last Day of Enrollment: May 7, 2025

- Apply Between: February 6, 2025 – July 6, 2025
  - July 4 is a holiday, July 5-6 is a weekend, so at the very latest please apply by July 2 so it will be receipted by USCIS on July 3.

APPLY AS EARLY AS YOU CAN! Do not wait for a job offer

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Post-Completion OPT Request Timeline Example (Spring 2025)

Earliest Requested OPT Start Date
May 8, 2025

Latest Requested OPT Start Date
July 6, 2025

OPT must be completed by no later than July 6, 2026 (post-completion OPT end date cannot be more than 14 months after program end date)

90 days

60-day period to select OPT start date and can still submit OPT application

12 months

Earliest You Can Apply for OPT
February 6, 2025

End of Term
May 7, 2025

Latest Your OPT Application Can Be Received & Processed By USCIS
July 6, 2025

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Selecting an OPT Start Date

The start date must be within 60-days from your I-20 program end date

Considerations:
- OPT processing times
  - OPT application can take up 2-5 months (or longer) to process
- Choose a weekday (if possible)
  - Most employers prefer new employees to begin on a Monday
- Do you want a break or time to search for a job?
  - Consider whether you'd like time off to relax or more time to secure a job
- Do you need to start working quickly?
  - If you need to begin working soon to support yourself, consider an earlier start date.
- Unemployment days
  - You are allowed 90 days of unemployment during OPT. If your OPT is approved but you don't have a job yet, you can use these days for job searching.

Note:
- The employment start date is negotiable with your employer
- Speak with Career Services for help on how to communicate your anticipated employment start date to your employer.

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Applying for Post-Completion OPT

How do I apply for post-completion OPT?

1. Complete the Post-Completion OPT I-20 Request e-form (available in MyISSS portal)
    *   The e-form consists of two e-forms, one being a quiz you will need to submit

2. The e-form will be automatically sent to your academic advisor for their completion

3. After your academic advisor signs off, the form will be sent to ISSS for processing. Please allow 2 to 5 business days.

4. ISSS will issue your new I-20 with the OPT recommendation and send it via email.

5. Print and sign your new I-20 under "Student Attestation" in pen (not electronically)!

6. Submit your application to USCIS by **electronically filing** Form I-765 with USCIS online and paying the filing fee.

What happens if I apply to USCIS without an OPT recommendation I-20?

- USCIS will **deny** your application.

- Regulations require the OPT recommendation to be entered into SEVIS prior to the post-completion OPT filing and the applicant must include the recommendation I-20 with their application.

- If your application was denied, you will **not** be refunded the filing fee.

Submitting Your Post-Completion OPT Application to USCIS

How do I electronically file my complete Post-Completion OPT application materials?

Create a USCIS online account at myaccount.uscis.gov.

Submitting the Form I-765

- Wait until you have your new I-20 before filing Form I-765 with USCIS.
  - Please review the I-765 instructions on the USCIS website and the ISSS Post-Completion OPT website

- USCIS must receive your application within 30 days of ISSS entering the OPT recommendation in SEVIS.

- You must be physically present in the United States to apply.

ISSS offers advising sessions to review your draft I-765 before submission to USCIS

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Timely Filing Consideration!

- ISSS has observed that I-765 applications submitted online are often receipted the day after submission.

- To be safe, ISSS recommends submitting your I-765 no later than 27 days after receiving your recommending I-20 from ISSS.

Pay.gov Payment Confirmation: USCIS I-765

1 me age

ELISdonotreply@uscis.dhs.gov <ELISdonotreply@uscis.dhs.gov>   Tue, Apr 11, 2023 at 9:17 PM
To: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Your payment ha been ubmitted to Pay gov and the detail are below If you have que tion about thi notification or need technical support, please contact us online at https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/contactus and reference the receipt number(s) shown below.

Application Name USCIS I 765
Pay.Gov Tracking ID: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
Agency Tracking ID: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
Transaction Type: Credit Card
Tran action Amount $410 00
Payment Date: Apr 12, 2023

Transaction Date: Apr 12, 2023 03:17:50 AM

Your payment was applied to the following case(s):
▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Premium Processing Option for e-filed I-765s!

- Online filing of [Form I-907, Request for Premium Processing Service](#)
- Guarantees adjudicative action within 30 business days of receipt
  - Does not include time for printing and mailing the EAD
- Premium Processing fee is in addition to the I-765 filing fee
  - Fees are subject to change
- Guarantees some sort of adjudicative action within 30 business days of receipt

Case Was Changed To A Premium Processing Case

We changed your case, Receipt Number IOE9605064368, from a standard case to a premium-processing case. The premium-processing clock started on April 14, 2023. Your premium-processing receipt notice contains contact information for direct inquiries on your case. Please follow the instructions in the notice. If you move, contact the premium-processing unit directly to update your address.

While Your Post-Completion OPT Application is Pending

How long will it take USCIS to process my OPT application?

- **Check this processing times website**
  - Select *I-765 Application for Employment Authorization*
  - Select *Potomac Service Center*
  - Scroll down until you see *Based on a request by a qualified F-1 academic student [(c)(3)]*

  Example (subject to change):

  Processing time for Application for Employment Authorization (I-765) at Potomac Service Center

  80% of cases are completed within

  2.5
  Months

What should I do while I wait?

Pay attention to receipt notices, mail, and notifications from USCIS

- Contact ISSS if your OPT application is rejected, denied, or if you receive a Request for Evidence (RFE).

- Use USCIS online tools or call the National Customer Service Number (800-375-5283) to submit an online case inquiry or service request.

- Check your case status online.

Case Inquiry

⚠	⚠	⚠	⚠
Case outside normal processing time	Did not receive notice by mail	Did not receive card by mail	Did not receive document by mail
Think a case is taking longer than expected?	*Think a notice is lost or missing?*	*Think a card is lost or missing?*	*Think a document is lost or missing?*

Service Request

♿	✔	
Appointment Accommodations	Typographic Error	
Request accommodations for an interview appointment	*Make typographic corrections for a case*	

Updating Your Mailing Address

If you move or stop receiving mail at the mailing address you entered on the I-765:

- **Immediately** update your address information in your personal **USCIS Account.**

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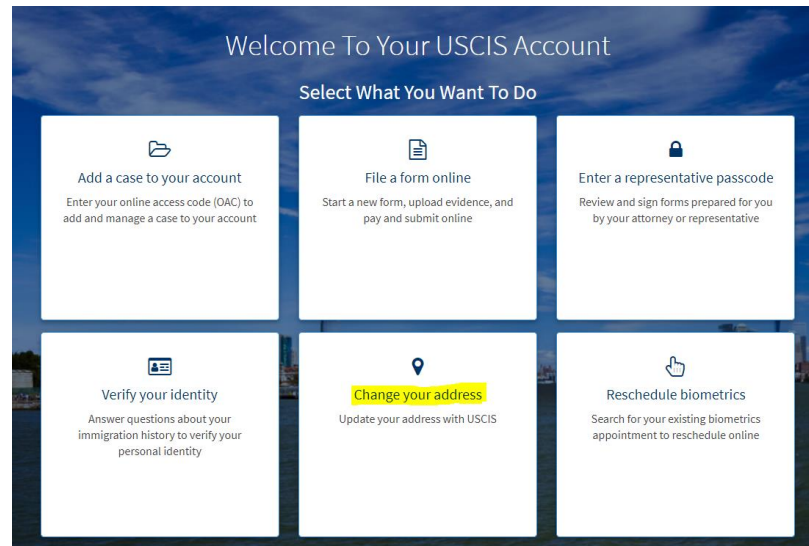
Can I leave the U.S. while my application is pending?

Yes, you can travel, but you must carry the following with you:

- your post-completion OPT I-20 with a valid travel signature

- an active F-1 visa (unless exempt)

- receipt notice from USCIS

- Employment Authorization Document (EAD card), if your application is approved while you are outside of the U.S

Travel risk considerations:

- If USCIS submits a request for additional evidence (RFE) while you are outside of the U.S., you may have difficulties responding, which could lead to a denial

- If your OPT is denied while outside the U.S. and after your I-20 program end date, you cannot re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status to reapply

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When can I start working?

- You have received your EAD card in hand;

- You are within the OPT employment authorization period on your EAD card; and

- You are working in a job directly related to your major field of study as listed on your OPT I-20.

Please note: If you do not complete your degree by your I-20 end date as expected, please contact ISSS immediately to discuss your options.

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EAD: Employment Authorization Document

OPT work authorization is granted in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

Dates of employment authorization
You CANNOT work outside of these dates

What else do I need to know about Post-completion OPT?

Reporting Requirements - SEVP Portal

- You will receive an email from do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov with instructions to create your SEVP Portal account on the first day of your authorized OPT start date.
  - If you do not receive the SEVP email and are in your approved period of post-completion OPT, please submit the *SEVP Portal Account Help: Email Address Update/Account Reset* e-form (available in MyISSS portal under "Training/Employment-Related Forms").

- The SEVP Portal allows students to update the following information:
  - Address
  - Telephone
  - Employer Information

- Immigration regulations require you to report changes to the above information within 10-days

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Reporting Requirements – Relevance Statement

- After entering your employment information in the SEVP Portal, submit the *Post-Completion OPT Information Update and Relevance Statement* e-form (available in MyISSS portal under "Training/Employment-Related Forms").

- ISSS will email you an updated I-20 with your employer information.

MyISSS

- Home
- Arrival & Immigration Check-In
- Departmental Services
- General Forms
- Immigration & Academic-Related Forms
- Insurance and Finances
- Training/Employment-Related Forms

Training/Employment-

Tasks

	Cap-Gap I-20 Request
	EAD Card Submission
	Post-Completion OPT Information Update and Relevance Statement

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How many unemployment days can I use?

90 days total

- Weekends count as unemployment days

To stop the unemployment days from accruing, you need to enter your employment information into the SEVP Portal.

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Employment

Hours:

- You must be performing your training for at least 20 hours a week.
- There is no maximum limit to the number of hours per week.

Multiple Jobs and Changes: This is allowed as long as:

- Employment is within the authorization period on your EAD
- Each job is directly related to your major field of study (as indicated on your I-20)
- You report all new employment and changes within 10 days via the SEVP Portal

How Training Relates to Major

Logical Connection:

- The SEVP Policy Guidance states there needs to be a "logical connection" between the duties involved in the practical training opportunities and the student's major field of study.

Student's responsibility: It is the student's responsibility to make the argument that their training relates to their field of study.

Key Questions to Assess Relevance:
- Does the training require a degree in my field of study?
- Do the job duties utilize knowledge from my studies?
- Are there specific courses I have taken that align with the job responsibilities?
- Does the job description mention qualifications or knowledge that aligns with my field of study?

ISSS advisors are not familiar with the specifics of your degree program.
- If you're unsure about the relevance of a position, reach out to your academic advisor or faculty member for guidance.
- If it is not clear from the job description that the work is related to your degree, you should obtain a signed letter from your hiring official, supervisor, or manager stating how your major field of study is related to the work performed.

Acceptable Training During OPT

Payment by Multiple Short-Term Employers
Obtain offer letter and maintain a list of all short-term employment including the employer's contact information and the dates and duration of employment.

Work for Hire (1099 employment)
An individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. Must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods (hours worked per week) and the name and address of the contracting company.

Self-Employed Business Owner
You may start a business and be self-employed. Must work full-time and be able to prove you have a proper business licenses and that work is degree-related.

Employment through an Agency
Must be able to provide evidence showing you worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.

Volunteering on OPT

- Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns but the employer must ensure compliance with labor laws.

- Students must provide evidence from their employer verifying they worked more than 20 hours per week

- To participate in volunteer work at CU Boulder, the activity must be a formally established volunteer opportunity.

- CU Boulder departments creating formal volunteer positions should consult the University Risk Management website for guidance and ensure the project is formally recognized by the university as a volunteer work opportunity. Questions can be directed to: urmucbdirs@cu.edu

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Unable to Work in Marijuana (Cannabis) Related Industries

Legal permanent residents or individuals on immigrant or non-immigrant visas should **avoid marijuana use or involvement in marijuana-related activities** as it can have a negative immigration consequences.

This includes working in industries associated with marijuana and cannabidiol (CBD), such as working in a lab extracting CBD oils for medical purposes.

Travel Considerations on OPT

If you do not have a job, travel outside of the U.S. is **not recommended** as the regulations allow re-entry to the U.S. to *resume* training.

- **An absence from the U.S. should be temporary, <u>less than 5 months</u>.**
  - Even with a job offer and valid EAD, an absence greater than 5 months will not be considered temporary and you could be denied re-entry to the U.S.
- **You need a valid F-1 visa to return to the U.S. while on OPT**
  - Review the ISSS Visa Renewal Handout for information on the renewal process
- **Travel Signatures are valid for 6 months on OPT I-20s**
- **Review the following resources prior to travel**
  - Travel Handout: Re-entry from Travel Outside the U.S. & Printing Your Electronic I-94
  - International Travel FAQs for Students on OPT and STEM OPT

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Potential Issues

If your I-765 is pending <u>beyond USCIS's posted processing time</u> and no Request for Evidence has been issued, you can contact USCIS:

- Call the USCIS Contact Center at 1-800-375-5283 to create a service request.
- Have your receipt notice number ready.
- Note the date, time, representative's name, and referral ID number.

Consult an ISSS advisor immediately if:

- You **do not complete your degree requirements** prior to your program end date on your OPT I-20.
- You want to **cancel** an OPT request before submitting the application to USCIS.
- You want to **withdraw** your OPT application after submitting to USCIS.
- You qualify for **cap-gap** and require a **cap-gap extension I-20.**

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Grace Period After Post-Completion OPT

- There is a **60-day grace period following the completion** of your post-completion OPT for students who maintained status and did not exceed 90 days of unemployment.
  - You are not eligible for employment or to re-enter into the U.S. in F-1 status during the 60-day grace period.
  - During the grace period, you may request to transfer your SEVIS record to another institution if you have been admitted and will begin the program within 5 months.
  - You can apply for a change of status during the grace period

Studying on OPT

Enrolling in courses while participating in OPT may impact your OPT work authorization.

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.

Consult ISSS if you are considering beginning a new course of study or will seek to transfer your SEVIS record to another institution.

Studying on OPT

- Classes that can be applied toward a degree program can impact your OPT work authorization

- Enrolling in recreational and avocational classes is permissible

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

- Consult ISSS before starting a new course of study or transferring your SEVIS record to another institution.

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Career Services

CU Boulder Career Services empowers students and alumni to become more employable and find meaningful work.

- Some Features of Career Services:
  - **Mock Interviews**
    Practice and perfect your interview skills before the real deal.
  - **Resume & Cover Letter Help**
    Our career development advisors can help you create and edit these essential documents for applying to jobs and internships.
  - **Career Fairs**
    Large events where you can meet with a variety of employers all at once to find jobs and internships.

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ISSS Workshops & Resources

Attend our '**So You've Applied for OPT… Now What?'** Workshop

Workshops are available on the ISSS Programs & Events page

Review our Post-completion OPT web page!

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If you have questions after reviewing our Post-completion OPT website

- Email your questions to isss@colorado.edu
- Speak to an advisor during ISSS Advising
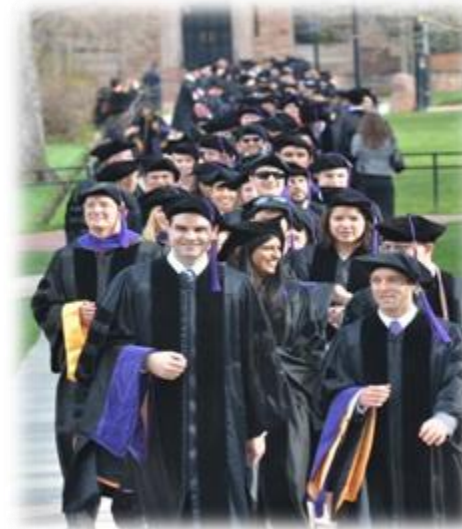
Congratulations on completing your degree program at CU Boulder!