



OPT Application Procedures

You may apply for OPT 90 days before you finish your program or up to 60 days after you finish.

1. *PREPARE* the following documents (see enclosed forms for more details). The forms must be completed for your appointment.
2. *Make an appointment with an International Student Advisor.* (If you are not able to come to your appointment, please call 895-0143 to cancel so we can see other students that need help).
3. *BRING* the required documents and materials with you to the appointment (original documents):
 - ★ Your current and all previous *I-20* forms
 - ★ Passport
 - ★ F-1 visa
 - ★ I-94
 - ★ 2 passport-style photos (Michael's Photos at Trop/Maryland Vons shopping center knows how to do the pictures. Bring your UNLV ID with you.
→ These photos must be recent – within the last 6 months.
 - ★ Your PROOF of GRADUATION (copy of graduation application or letter from academic advisor)
 - ★ *Check or money order (pay to: USCIS), to pay the \$340.00 fee*
 - ★ *I-765*/Application for Employment Authorization (enclosed) – please complete #1 - 10

Failure to have ALL the above mentioned documents at the appointment will restrict you from applying at that time.

****IMPORTANT!****

If you apply for OPT and do not graduate (failed a class, etc.) you can only work PART-TIME while you finish the remaining courses during your OPT. You will need to notify OISS if this happens.

WHAT is OPT?

Optional Practical Training is work authorization granted by the Department of Homeland Security through the United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS), which enables a student to gain full-time work experience in their major area of study for up to one year. The work authorization is granted with an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card, and is valid anywhere in the United States.

WHO can APPLY?

International students in F-1 student status **should apply the semester they are completing their degree (defending thesis, taking final courses).**

If students DECIDE NOT TO APPLY, they must depart the United States within 60 days after the “completion of studies” date (last day of class in final term).

WHO is ELIGIBLE?

To be eligible for OPT, students must have been in lawful (F-1) status for an academic year, 2 full semesters and be near the completion (within 90 days) of the course of study. In addition, the student may NOT HAVE exceeded 12 months or more of *full-time* Curricular Practical Training (CPT - work experience/internship).

WHEN do I APPLY?

Students must apply for OPT 90 days **prior** to their completion of studies date, OR no more than 60 days **after** they complete their program. USCIS must receive the application during this period. The application process for the EAD takes approximately 90 days.

HOW do I APPLY?

Follow the “Application Procedures,” on page 1 and bring ***ALL of the REQUIRED, documents and materials listed*** to the OPT appointment or workshop.

OPT Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Q: When is the deadline to apply for Optional Practical Training?**
SPRING graduates, the last possible date is JULY 1; FALL graduates must apply by FEBRUARY 1, and SUMMER graduates must apply by OCTOBER 1. However, you should **NOT** wait so long. You need to apply 3 months before you will graduate. For example, students who wait until one month before graduation cannot work until nearly 3 months AFTER they have graduated.
2. **Q: Can I cancel my application for Optional Practical Training if I change my mind? Even if I've already mailed it to Immigration?**
YES! You MUST see an ISS Advisor to complete your request! However, if your OPT card has been issued, you will not be able to cancel.
3. **Q: Can I travel outside of the United States after the semester is over before I receive my Employment Authorization Card (EAD)?**
If the semester has ended and you have completed all of your required courses, it is **strongly** recommended that you do not leave the United States until you have your official receipt (notice of action). Why? Because if your EAD card is delayed, you will have difficulty resolving the problem from outside of the U.S.

HOWEVER – you may be able to re-enter the U.S. while you are waiting for the OPT to be approved. In this kind of case, you would need

1. You must have your I-20 signed and dated by an advisor in the ISS office right **BEFORE** you leave the U.S.
 2. You must have a valid passport
 3. You must have a valid F-1 visa to reenter the U.S.
 4. You must have the Receipt Notice for your OPT application (form I-797)
4. **Q: Can I travel outside the United States after I have received Employment Authorization Card (EAD)?**
You may travel outside of the United States temporarily (less than 5 months) if you meet these conditions:
 - a. You must have your I-20 signed and dated by an advisor in the ISS office right **BEFORE** you leave the U.S.
 - b. You must have a valid passport
 - c. You must have a valid F-1 visa to reenter the U.S.
 - d. You must have a valid Employment Authorization Card (EAD)
 - e. You must have a letter from your employer to prove that you have a job – **REQUIRED!!**
 5. **Q: If I finish school in Las Vegas and receive an EAD, can I get a job outside of Las Vegas?** Yes. You may accept employment anywhere in the United States. Remember to update ISS with your new address.
 6. **Remember:** Any time spent out of the United States during OPT is subtracted from the student's practical training time. This means that you lose the time that you don't use!

7. **Q: What if I change my address before I receive my EAD?** Changing your address will cause your EAD to be delayed. The post office will NOT forward the EAD card to your new address, even if you forward your mail. Therefore, you must write an address on the I-765 form that will be valid for at least 3-4 months (a friend or relative that can receive mail for you, for example).
8. **Q: My I-20 expires while I am doing the full-time post-completion practical training? Am I going to be out of status?**
No, the (EAD) takes over from where the I-20 leaves off. You are in status as long as the EAD is valid. After the EAD expires, you have 60 days to leave the country, but you cannot work during those 60 days.
9. **Q: What is required of me while I am on OPT as an F-1 student?** You are required to do four things with us while you are on OPT:
- Provide OISS with a copy of your OPT card
 - Provide OISS with your employer's name/address
 - Provide OISS with your most current address/phone number/e-mail address
 - Provide OISS with any changes in your employment status
10. **Q: Can I start to work before I get my EAD?** *No.* You must wait until you receive your EAD. If you have a work permit that will end on May 12 for example, you should tell your employer that you cannot work after that until you receive your OPT card. *This includes students who work for UNLV (as a GA, for example)!!! You can NOT work for UNLV after the last day of the semester, until you receive your OPT card.*
11. **Q: If I use my optional practical training after receiving a Bachelor's degree, do I get another 12 months after I receive a Master's degree?** YES! Students may be eligible to apply for OPT again after completing a *higher* degree. Please note that this does not apply if you complete a degree at the same level (such as a Second Bachelor's degree).
12. **Q: What happens if I have the EAD and I change schools before the EAD has expired?** If you complete your immigration transfer to the new school before the EAD has expired, not only do you abandon the EAD, but you lose the remaining time on the EAD. Please discuss your plans to take classes during your OPT with the international office at the school you want to attend.
13. **Q: What if something goes wrong with my application?** Contact the Office of International Students and Scholars, or call us at (702) 895-0143.
14. **Q: Can I study while I am on OPT?** You can study PART-time while you are on your OPT. If you decide to study full-time, you must get a new I-20! This means that you are giving up your OPT and any time remaining on the OPT card.
GRADUATE ASSISTANTS: You cannot use your OPT and be a Graduate Assistant at the same time. So if you want to use your OPT, you can study part-time but NOT be a graduate assistant too. Also, you cannot be an employee of UNLV after the end of the semester until you receive your OPT card.
15. **Q: What if I fail a class and I've already applied for OPT?**
You will have to repeat the class while you are on your OPT, and only work PART-time while completing the class. You will need to contact an advisor, because your I-20 will be extended.

*You can check the status of your case online at:

<https://egov.immigration.gov/cris/caseStatusSearchDisplay.do> (you will need your Notice of Action #).

- ✓ **ALWAYS KEEP COPIES OF ALL YOUR IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS. YOU WILL NEED THEM IN THE FUTURE!!!**