

**OPT
INFORMATION
SESSION**

FALL 2025

WHAT WILL I LEARN TODAY?

- ❑ **Frequently asked questions about OPT and eligibility**
- ❑ **General application information using the ISAO Portal**
- ❑ **Reporting requirements while on OPT**



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS OPT?

- Optional Practical Training
- **Temporary employment authorization** for work directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study (per CIP code* listed on your I-20)
- **Benefit of the F-1 visa** when the F-1 visa holder has successfully completed a degree program at a United States institution
- **Work authorization approved by USCIS** for F-1 graduate to work in their field for 12 months (with an additional 24 months possible for graduates of STEM programs based on your I-20's CIP code*)

**CIP code = xx.xxxx next to your degree program on your I-20*

AM I ELIGIBLE FOR OPT?

Have you...

- maintained your F-1 status?
- been enrolled full-time for at least one fall **and** one spring semester?
- applied for graduation?
- Are you completing a Bachelors, Masters, or Doctorate degree?**
- Do you have a valid, unexpired passport?**

AM I 100% SURE I WILL GRADUATE?

- Study hard and pass all your classes -- attend classes!
- Know your department's rules about required GPA for graduation
- Once you have applied for OPT authorization, it is almost impossible to cancel
- If you find out you will not graduate this semester, LET ISAO KNOW ASAP
 - It is better to apply later for OPT if you are struggling with grades

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

- You do not need to have a job offer to apply for OPT
- You can apply for OPT after each degree level (Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate)
- You are only eligible for OPT **once** at each degree level
 - If you've already done OPT at the Masters level, you cannot earn another year of OPT after a second Masters degree.
 - If you only used part of your OPT after a previous degree, you cannot use the rest of it after your next degree earned.

DOES CPT AFFECT OPT ELIGIBILITY?

- **PART-TIME** CPT does not affect your eligibility for OPT in any way
- **FULL-TIME** CPT *might* affect your eligibility for OPT
 - 12 full months (365 days) total of full-time CPT = **NOT** eligible for OPT
 - Less than 12 months total of full-time CPT = Still eligible for OPT!

WHEN CAN/SHOULD DOCTORAL CANDIDATES APPLY FOR OPT?

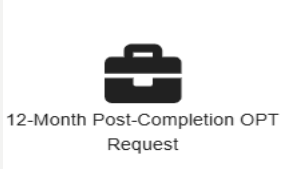
- Once you have completed your required coursework and comprehensive exams, you can apply for OPT
 - Only work that **DIRECTLY** impacts your ability to complete your dissertation research can be considered for CPT authorization.
 - This means that if you want to work in your field, but that work is not essential to completing your dissertation, you will need to apply for OPT work authorization.
 - You can continue to work toward your dissertation defense while working on OPT. It is best if you can defend your dissertation before the end of your 12-month OPT authorization period.



THE OPT APPLICATION

HOW DO I APPLY FOR OPT?

The 12-Month Post-Completion OPT application is an online application with USCIS. However, **do not submit** the application until you have done the following:

1. Go to the OPT webpage for any questions regarding OPT, and for instructions on how to pay for the ISAO OPT fee. Read the instructions found there. Remember to apply for graduation. (This is different than Commencement.)
2. Log into your ISAO Portal. Go to the Control Center, & click on the 12-Month Post-Completion OPT Request icon:
The icon consists of a black briefcase symbol above the text "12-Month Post-Completion OPT Request".
3. Follow all the instructions found there. Complete the Signature Document, the Quiz, the Questionnaire & upload the Fee Payment Receipt. Put your Academic Advisor information for the Approval Form. Submit the completed request.
4. ISAO will:
 - REVIEW your application submission. We must have the Approval Form from your Academic Advisor before we can continue the process.
 - SHORTEN your I-20 program end-date to **December 19th, 2025**.
 - PREPARE your OPT-requested I-20.
 - SEND AN EMAIL with the I-20 and an OPT USCIS application filing guide.
5. Once you receive your OPT-Requested I-20, you can start the application online. **READ** the instructions in the email first.
6. **You should apply within 28 days after your OPT-Requested I-20 is issued.** If you do not apply during that time, please request a new I-20 and we will be glad to send you one.

If you apply with an I-20 that is older than 30 days from issue date, your OPT application will be denied.

- **DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION TO USCIS WITHOUT AN OPT-REQUESTED I-20 ISSUED BY ISAO**

HOW DO I CHOOSE MY START DATE?

- OPT start date = date your **employment authorization** will begin
- Must be between 1 and 60 days after your graduation date (Grace Period)
 - **Fall 2025** graduation date = **December 19th, 2025 (12/19/2025)**
 - Therefore, start date must be between --
12/20/2025 to 02/18/2026 (December 20th, 2025, to February 18th, 2026)
- Remember that it can take **3-5 months** for USCIS to process applications
- (It may be a shorter or longer processing time depending on the influx of applications USCIS is processing. That is why we suggest applying as soon as possible if you know for certain that you are graduating.)

WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE NEEDED?

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED BY ISAO FOR REVIEW

- Completed Request in the ISAO Portal, including
 - ISAO OPT Fee Receipt Upload - \$100
 - OPT Academic Advisor Approval – must be completed by Academic Advisor before we can process the OPT application
- Once you receive your OPT I-20, do not then send other documents for review to our office. You should start the application to USCIS.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS TO INCLUDE IN ONLINE APPLICATION

- Payment of \$470 to U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
 - You can pay via debit/credit or use a banking account
 - Payment is expected at submission of application
- Digital 2x2 passport-style photo
- Your I-94
- Color scan copies of your passport and F-1 visa(s)
- Previous I-20s ONLY IF they show prior CPT authorization
- Copies of the front and back of any/all previous EAD cards
- Don't forget: ISAO issued OPT-Requested I-20

WHEN CAN I APPLY FOR OPT?

- Apply for OPT during your graduating semester at UMKC
- Application must be received by USCIS:

As early as 90 days before graduation	As late as 60 days after graduation
Fall 2025 – September 20th, 2025 We will return OPT I-20s starting September 22nd, 2025	Fall 2025 = February 12 th , 2026 To our office

- You do **NOT** need to wait for a job offer to apply
- **Do NOT submit your application to USCIS until you have received an OPT-Requested I-20 from ISAO**
- Remember that it can take **3-5 months** for USCIS to process applications.

CAN I EXPEDITE MY APPLICATION?

ISAO = 2 WEEKS

- No, we do not accept expedite requests
- ISAO will process your application in the order it was received
- Submitting an incomplete application will delay processing
- CHECK YOUR EMAIL in case we are missing any required materials for your application
- Repeatedly calling/emailing our office for status updates delays processing time for ALL applicants

USCIS = 3-5 MONTHS

USCIS may consider an expedite request, but only if it meets one of the following criteria:

- Severe financial loss to a company or person, provided that the need for urgent action is not the result of the petitioner's or applicant's failure to:
 - File the benefit request or the expedite request in a reasonable time frame, OR
 - Respond to any requests for additional evidence in a reasonably timely manner;
- Urgent humanitarian reasons;
- Compelling U.S. government interests (such as urgent cases for the Department of Defense or DHS, or other public safety or national security interests); OR
- Clear USCIS error.

New “Premium Processing” offered at **\$1,685.00** extra. This can speed up the time to slightly over one month. We suggest students wait for regular processing at this time.

HAS USCIS RECEIVED MY OPT APPLICATION?

- Once the online I-765 application is submitted, you should receive a two-part verification of the receipt
 - an immediate notice that it was uploaded and received
 - your receipt number within 24 hours
- The I-797 Receipt Notice from USCIS
 - This notice includes a **Receipt Number** which you can use to request updates with USCIS:
 - <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do> or Google “USCIS Case Status”

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Form I-797C, Notice of Action

THIS NOTICE DOES NOT GRANT ANY IMMIGRATION STATUS OR BENEFIT.

NOTICE TYPE Receipt	NOTICE DATE June 16, 2020
CASE NUMBER I-765, Application for Employment Authorization	USCIS ALIEN NUMBER
RECEIPT NUMBER YSC20 [REDACTED]	RECEIVED DATE June 10, 2020
	PAGE 1 of 1
	DATE OF BIRTH November 16, 1992

PAYMENT INFORMATION:

C/O ISAO 5000 HOLMES ST STE G04 KANSAS CITY, MO 64110	7 00002436	Application/Petition Fee: \$410.00
		Biometrics Fee: \$0.00
		Total Amount Received: \$410.00
		Total Balance Due: \$0.00

NAME AND MAILING ADDRESS

Eligibility Category: C03C

The above case has been received by our office and is in process. Please verify your personal information listed above and immediately notify the USCIS Contact Center if there are any changes.

Please note that if a priority date is printed on this notice, the priority does not reflect earlier retained priority dates.

If you have questions, please visit the USCIS Contact Center at www.uscis.gov/contactcenter to connect with a live USCIS representative in English or Spanish.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this notice or the status of your case, please contact the USCIS Contact Center.

You will be notified separately about any other case you may have filed.

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE!!!

- ❖ **DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR USCIS ONLINE APPLICATION BEFORE RECEIVING THE OPT I-20 FROM OUR OFFICE.** To do so will result in an automatic denial by USCIS.
- ❖ Do not email/call our office asking for updates on your OPT application with USCIS unless it has been pending (I-797 Receipt Notice received) **MORE THAN 130 DAYS**
- ❖ If it has been more than 72 hours and you have not received an I-797 Receipt Notice online, you should first check to see if your application fee was removed from your account or charged to your card. If it was, you should reach out to USCIS.
- ❖ If you move before you receive your card, you **must** update your address for delivery. If the card is sent back to USCIS by mis-delivery, it is very hard to receive the card in a timely manner. It is your responsibility to keep your address current in the portal.



OPT RULES & REGULATIONS

HOORAY! I HAVE MY EAD CARD!

To begin working, you must:

1. Have your EAD card **IN-HAND**
2. AND it must be ON or AFTER the START DATE printed on the card

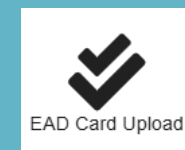
Remember that you are still an F-1 student!

- You are still required to report any/all changes to your address, name, visa status, etc. This can be done in the ISAO Portal.
- You will no longer be enrolled in classes, so you will no longer have UMKC health insurance
- You should carry at least a copy of the front and back of your EAD card on your phone, along with I-20 and visa/passport copies on your phone



Once you have your EAD card:

Log into the ISAO Portal. Click on this icon:



Upload copies of the front & back of the EAD card.

We will issue you a new I-20 showing that you have been approved for OPT

WHAT IS THE SEVP PORTAL?

- This is where you will update your OPT employment
- Report any/all employment updates DIRECTLY in the SEVP Portal
- Failure to report employment could cause delays or denials for future OPT/STEM or H-1B applications
- F-1 visa regulations require that you report all of your OPT employment

SEVP PORTAL:

<https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/>

Do not use Fire Fox to access the portal.

Sign In

Attention: Only students who have OPT approved may use the SEVP Portal. You must create an account and set a password before using this log in page. Go to [Portal Help](#) for more information.

Email

Password

Login

[Reset Password](#)

WHEN WILL I HAVE ACCESS TO THE SEVP PORTAL?

- You will have access starting on or soon after your first day of OPT authorization as printed on your EAD card
- You will receive an email from do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov to your UMKC email account
- The link in this email will expire in **14** days
 - Check your junk mail if you don't see the email
 - Email ISAO at isao@umkc.edu if your link has expired and you need a new one sent to you – we will ask SEVP to send a new one.

An official website of the United States government

 **SEVP Portal | Student and Exchange Visitor Program Portal**

Register

SEVIS ID

Submit

WHAT DO I UPDATE IN THE SEVP PORTAL?

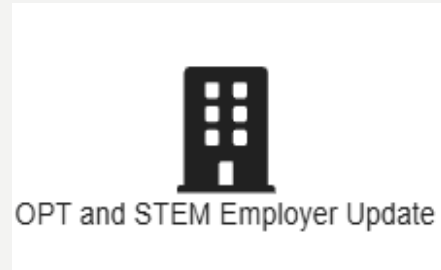
- Mailing/local/physical address in the U.S. every time you move
- Telephone number
- Employer information: name, address, dates, job titles, supervisors
- View and edit/update your current and past OPT employers
 - To show the end of employment for an employer, put the last day worked as the end date. **DO NOT delete** employers in your record. To delete employers will add unemployment time to your account. Reach out our office and explain why you want to have the employer deleted.

MORE SEVP PORTAL INFORMATION

- The SEVP Portal is FREE -- SEVP will never ask for money in an email.
- do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov is the ONLY email address SEVP will use to contact you regarding your portal account.
- The portal login page is different from the account setup page! Once you have your account set up, please be sure you log in on the main SEVP Portal page.
- Updates made in the SEVP Portal will NOT update your UMKC Pathway record
 - This means you should update your **address** in Pathway, ISAO Portal & the SEVP Portal.
 - Any employment updates made by ISAO will take 2-3 business days to reflect in your SEVP Portal. Even if you update in SEVP, you must still submit the Employment Request in the ISAO Portal, as DSOs must know your employment information.
- [Portal Email Notices to Students | Study in the States \(dhs.gov\)](#) for more information

12-Month Post-Completion OPT Employer Reporting in the ISAO Portal

- Log into the portal and go to the Control Center.
- Click on this icon:



- Select your OPT Employment Period and click on it.
- Click on the Plus sign for reporting New Employment. Complete the request & hit submit.
- Submit each time you change jobs.
- If something about your job changes, you will only need to click on the Employer Name, select this is not a new employer, next, & make the updates/changes.

EMPLOYMENT REPORTING

- Upload your EAD card using ISAO Portal
- You have **10 days** from your first day of work to report your employment
- Put the information in your SEVP portal, but also complete the information in the ISAO Portal
 - Once we receive the request from the ISAO Portal, we will update your information and generate an updated I-20 showing your employment
 - If you cannot put the correct data in your SEVP portal, put what you are able to input and we will be glad to put correct data from the ISAO Portal that you submit to our office (start date of the employment for instance).

OPT/STEM REPORT PARTICIPATION

(FORMERLY KNOWN AS VALIDATION REPORT FORM)

To make the OPT Participation report, log into your ISAO Portal and select this icon:



This can be done as early as five months after the start date on the EAD card, but must be done by the six months after that date

Complete the Questionnaire. Hit submit when completed.

- This is required from students to confirm their data: current address and employer.
- Students should complete this request at every six-month anniversary of their OPT EAD card dates and submit it using the ISAO Portal.
- You can submit it to our office after the five-month date from your start date.
- Students cannot upload this information to SEVP themselves. They must submit the completed request to our office.

WHAT WORK QUALIFIES AS OPT?

- Employment **MUST** be directly related to your field of study (per CIP code)
- You **MUST** work at least **20** hours per week (“full time”)
 - Working below 20 hrs/wk is counted toward unemployment
- You can work for multiple employers – as many employers as you wish but you must report your employment for each employer even if you work a few hours a week for an employer
- Internships or other unpaid work **CAN** count as OPT
 - The work still needs to be related to your earned degree
 - You still need to submit the Employer form
 - You should request a “job offer” letter for your own records

WHAT ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT?

- F-1 students on OPT are given 90 days of unemployment
- The unemployment clock starts on the start date printed on your EAD card
- The count stops when a student reports work. However, if a student loses a job, the count begins where it stopped.
- SEVP has automatically terminated students in the past if their record showed more than 90 days of unemployment
- Exceeding 90 days of unemployment could affect future STEM or H-1B applications – it can lead to a denial of either
- Non-paid internships or volunteer positions in your degree program are considered employment and are treated as such. These will stop the unemployment count.

CAN I TRAVEL?

STATUS	TRAVEL?	TRAVEL RISK LEVEL	WHAT YOU NEED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applied for OPT OPT app is PENDING Still a student (I-20 end date has not yet passed) 	OK	Very Low —You should plan to re-enter the US at least a couple of weeks before the end date on your I-20.	Travel Endorsed I-20 Valid passport Valid visa
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applied for OPT Application is PENDING No longer a student (I-20 end date has passed) 	NO. Do not leave unless it is an emergency.	HIGH —If you leave the US while an application is pending, USCIS may see that as abandonment and cancel your application.	Travel Endorsed I-20 Valid passport Valid visa I-797 Receipt Notice Letter of Support from ISAO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OPT is APPROVED You have your EAD card You do NOT have a job offer 	NO , unless you are still a student (meaning your I-20 end date has not yet passed).	HIGH —If you decide to travel, you should take proof that you are actively looking for a position (i.e. proof that you submitted resumes, upcoming interviews, etc.). <i>Even if you have this proof you may be denied re-entry.</i>	Travel Endorsed I-20 Valid passport Valid visa EAD card Proof that you are actively looking for a job
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OPT is APPROVED You have your EAD card You have a job offer but the job has NOT started 	PROBABLY OK	Moderate to Low —If you decide to travel, make sure that you take a job offer letter on official letterhead which should include your expected start date.	Travel Endorsed I-20 Valid passport Valid visa EAD card Job offer letter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OPT is APPROVED You have your EAD card You have begun work 	OK	Very Low —If you decide to travel, request a letter from your employer indicating that they approve your travel and listing the date they expect you back.	Travel Endorsed I-20 Valid passport Valid visa EAD card Letter from employer

FREQUENT QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS ON ISAO'S WEBSITE

- What is the current USCIS processing time estimate for my I-765?
- What types of unique employment situations are accepted on OPT/STEM?
- What do I do if I've lost my EAD card?
- What about health insurance?
- What do I do if I receive a Request for Evidence (RFE) from USCIS?
- Am I eligible for a STEM extension? (and STEM OPT application info)

<https://info.umkc.edu/ISAO/current-students/opt/>

WHILE ON OPT, PLEASE DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Pay off any balances owed to UMKC, as part of the STEM application is to have either a diploma or official transcripts, or both. **If you owe money to the university, you will not be able to request those documents.**
- Do not submit your STEM application to USCIS until you have received a STEM-Requested I-20 from our office. If you submit your STEM application without an I-20 requesting it, your application will be denied. Students are also limited when they can submit their STEM applications. If you submit your application too early, it will be denied. You will have to pay the application fee again.



QUESTIONS?