F-1 Post-Completion OPT

International Student Services – Texas A&M University

What is Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

- Post-Completion OPT is temporary employment available to F-1 students following completion of the course of study (i.e. after the program end date on the I-20).
- The employment must be directly related to the student's field of study and commensurate with their education level.
- A student may be eligible for up to 12 months of OPT per degree level.
- A student will become eligible for another 12 months of OPT when he/she completes a <u>higher</u> educational level.
- A student must receive an EAD card from the USCIS Service Center and the start date on the EAD card must arrive before they may begin their OPT employment.

Who is eligible to apply for Post-Completion OPT?

- An F-1 student who has completed full-time enrollment for at least one Fall and one Spring semester or who is within 90 days of doing so.
- Students who work full-time for 12 months or more on Curricular Practical Training (CPT) are not eligible for OPT.
- Students who leave the U.S. or are outside the U.S. after completion of their degree requirements, but before applying for OPT, are **not** eligible to apply for OPT if they reenter the U.S.
- Degree-Specific Eligibility Requirements:
  - All students who apply for graduation may request an OPT recommendation from ISS up to 90 days before graduation and 60 days after graduation. The requested OPT start date must be within 60 days after graduation. DHS must receive the OPT application no later than the 60th day of the grace period following graduation.
  - Any graduate student who receives a Letter of Completion from the Office of Graduate Studies may request an OPT recommendation from ISS within 60 days after receiving the Letter of Completion. The requested OPT start date must be within 60 days after the Letter of Completion was issued. DHS must receive the OPT application no later than the 60th day of the grace period following the Letter of Completion issue date.
  - Any Master's Thesis or Doctoral student who completes the coursework on their degree plan and sets the date of their defense may request an OPT recommendation from ISS up to 90 days prior to their requested OPT start date.

More information about Post-Completion OPT is included on the reverse side of this handout.

How does Post-Completion OPT differ from Pre-Completion OPT?

- Post-Completion OPT occurs after the I-20 program end date. ISS will shorten your I-20 program end date to your graduation date, your Letter of Completion issue date, or the day before your requested start date.
- If a student applies for Post-Completion OPT based upon completion of coursework and their requested OPT start date takes place during a semester, the student will have to be enrolled in courses until the EAD card start date arrives.
- With Post-Completion OPT, days of unemployment begin to accrue on the day the EAD card is valid.
- A student should work full-time (over 20 hours per week) while on Post-Completion OPT.
- If a student does not graduate by the end of the Post-Completion OPT authorization period, the student cannot extend the I-20 and they will be considered out of legal immigration status.
- Students may be eligible to apply for the 17-month extension of OPT (if applicable) while on Post-Completion OPT.
- Students may be eligible for the H-1B CAP GAP fix while on Post-Completion OPT.

How do I apply for Post-Completion OPT?

1. **Obtain ISS Recommendation**
   The following documents must be submitted to ISS:
   - Confirmation e-mail from Online OPT Workshop (not required if you attended an in-person OPT workshop)
   - F-1 Post-Completion OPT Student Form
   - F-1 OPT Department Form
   - Photocopies of the passport, visa, I-94 card (front and back) and most recently issued I-20 for the student and any F-2 dependents

2. **Mail the OPT Post-Completion Application**
   After receiving an I-20 with OPT recommendation from ISS, mail a complete application to the appropriate U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Service Center. The application must be received by USCIS within 30 days after ISS issues the OPT I-20. For details about how to complete and mail this application, please visit the *OPT Application Instructions and Forms* webpage (http://international.tamu.edu/iss/employment/optapplication.asp). USCIS will review the Post-Completion OPT application (this can take several months). If the application is approved, USCIS will issue an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

3. **Maintain Responsibilities While on OPT**
   Understand your responsibilities while on OPT as listed on the F-1 Post-Completion OPT Student Form, available on the *OPT Application Instructions and Forms* webpage (http://international.tamu.edu/iss/employment/optapplication.asp).

Additional Information

- Refer to http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/opt_policy_guidance_042010.pdf for more information about Post-Completion OPT.
- ISS strongly encourages you to maintain health insurance for you and your dependents throughout the duration of your OPT authorization period.
- You must keep your OPT employment information updated through the ISS OPT Data System (https://international.tamu.edu/iss/employment/optds/default.asp).
- Keep your local address updated through the Howdy Portal, "MyRecord" tab (https://howdy.tamu.edu/).