

When should I apply for post-completion OPT?

Refer to our [OPT Timeline](#) for instructions.

How much time am I eligible for?

A total of twelve months of training is available per education level. However, any pre-completion OPT will be deducted from this period when applying for post-completion OPT. Part-time OPT will be deducted at half the full-time rate. Likewise, if you have used 12-months of full-time CPT (Curricular Practical Training), you will no longer be eligible for OPT.

Do I have to have a job to apply for OPT?

No specific job offer is required at the time of application. Refer to the questions below regarding limits to periods of unemployment during OPT.

Can I begin working while my application is pending?

No. You can begin working only after you receive the Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) and only then on the start-date. You may not begin working even if you receive the card prior to the start date.

What am I required to report to the IO during my OPT period?

Students on post-completion OPT have reporting obligations. Refer to our [Post-Completion OPT Reporting Requirements](#) for instructions. Everyone must submit an initial report within 10 days of your EAD card start date, and everyone must submit a copy of your EAD card to the IO upon receipt.

Is there a limit to the number of days I can be unemployed while on OPT?

Government regulations now impose a 90 day unemployment limit during the 12 month OPT period. Each day you are not employed in a qualifying job is counted toward the limit on unemployment time. The 90 day total begins accruing on the EAD card start date if you have not begun working at a qualified job by that date. If your EAD card start date is earlier than April 8, 2008, your unemployment begins accruing on April 8, 2008 (unemployment time spent prior to April 8 while on OPT does not count).

What qualifies as “employment” for OPT purposes?

Generally, for a job to count as employment during your OPT period it must be paid, you must be working at least 20 hours per week, and it must be directly related to your level and field of study. You may work for multiple employers while on OPT provided the employment is directly related to your program and level of study. Paid or unpaid “volunteer” work, which does not violate labor laws, averaging - within one month - 20 hours per week, also qualifies as employment. You are encouraged to document all employment periods, paid or unpaid, by requesting written documentation from your employer.

Are there exceptions to the unemployment limit?

Periods of up to 10 days between the end of one job and the beginning of the next job will not be included in the calculation for time spent unemployed. You need not report this type of unemployment to the IO. However, you must remember to report that you’ve changed jobs within 10 days of the new employment.

What if I haven’t begun working within 90 days of my EAD card start date, or if I’ve accumulated 90 days of unemployment during my OPT period?

A student who exceeds the allowed period of unemployment while on post-completion OPT has violated his or her status unless he or she has taken one of the following actions:

- Applied to continue his or her education by a change of level or transferring to another SEVP-certified school;
- Departed the U.S. and forfeited the remaining OPT time;
- Taken action to otherwise maintain legal status.

Students may be denied future immigration benefits that rely on the student’s valid F-1 status if the Department of Homeland Security determines the student exceeded the limitations on unemployment. DHS may also terminate a student’s record if it fails to show the student maintained the proper period of employment.

What if I change my immigration status during the OPT period?

You must report this change to the IO within 10 days of the change via the [Post-Completion OPT Reporting Survey](#).

What if I decide to leave the U.S. permanently and forfeit the remainder of my OPT period?

You must report this change to the IO within 10 days of the change via the [Post-Completion OPT Reporting Survey](#).

What if I transfer to another school?

You must submit the [Transfer-Out Form](#) to the International Office prior to the expiration of your EAD card.

Do I have to pay taxes?

Refer to the [Tax Information](#) page for more information.

Can I travel after I've applied for OPT? What about when I'm on OPT?

Refer to our [Travel Information](#) page for travel and re-entry requirements while on OPT.

What about traveling after my visa stamp has expired?

If you do not have a valid F1 visa and you leave the U.S., you will need to obtain one prior to your return, unless you travel to Canada, Mexico, or the contiguous territories for less than 30 days. For more information please see the [Travel Information](#) page on the International Office website.