

# OPT & NEXT STEPS

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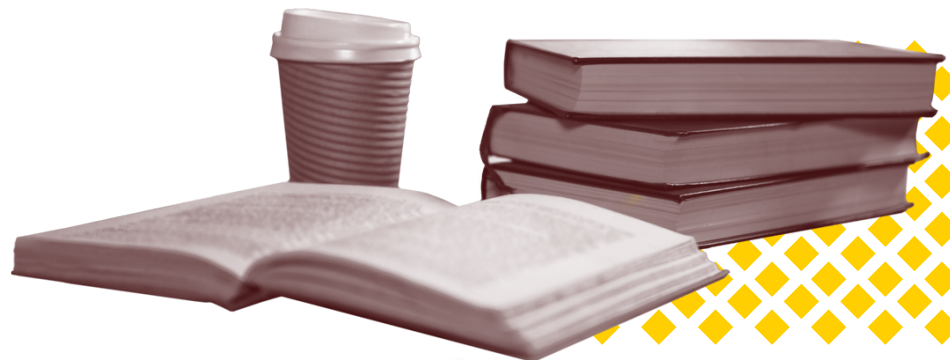
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Records



# THIS IS AN INSTRUCTIONAL TUTORIAL

- You alone are responsible for ensuring timely graduation, timely and accurate filing of your OPT application, and abiding by F-1 rules regarding OPT or maintaining F-1 status.
- Please review entire tutorial and prepare your documents and questions before contacting OISS about your OPT Application
- Consult Immigration Attorney if necessary





# AGENDA

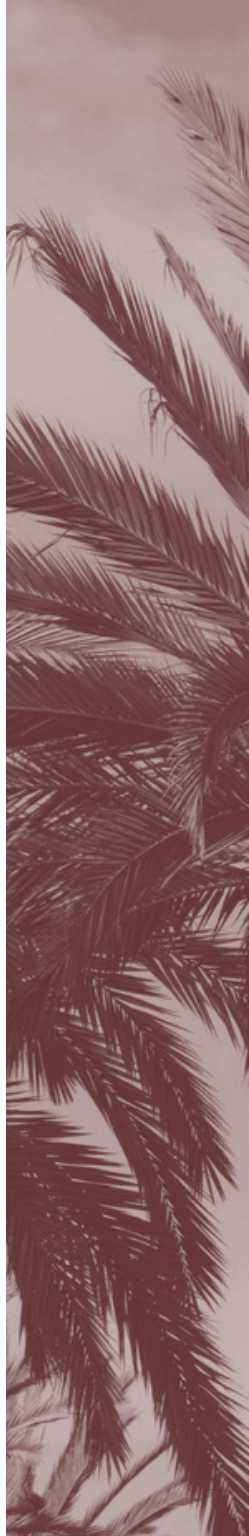
Post-  
Graduate  
Options

OPT:  
Process &  
FAQs

Maintaining  
your Status

Job  
Searching

OPT: Online  
Submission



# YOU'RE GRADUATING, NOW WHAT?

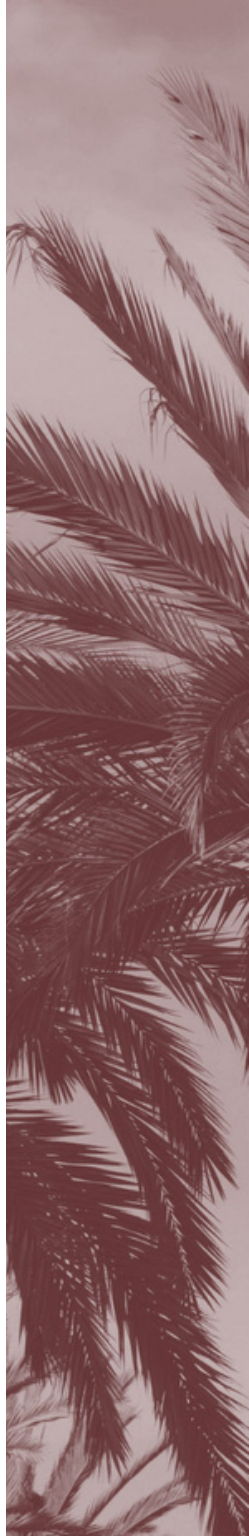
1. Return home to pursue work or an advanced degree
2. Transfer your academic record to a new institution  
to earn an advanced stage degree
3. Apply for OPT (Optional Practical Training)





# RETURNING HOME

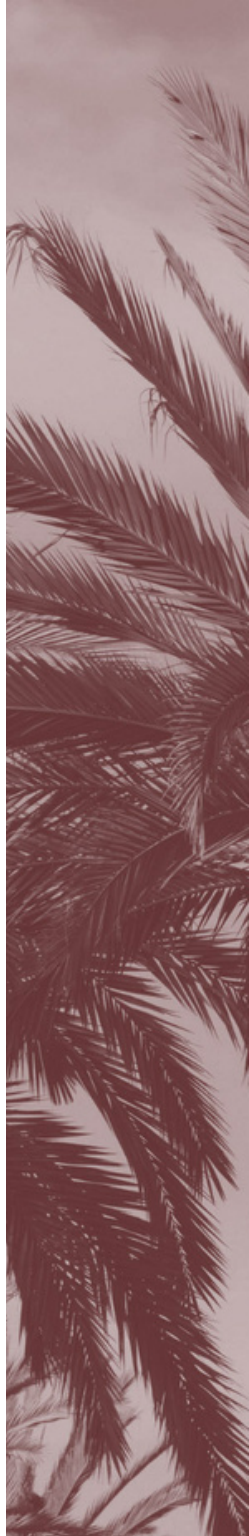
- Must exit US before or on the last day of 60-day grace period
  - Job Searching at home might vary from the US but the Office of Career & Professional Development is still happy to support your search
- If you leave the US prior to end of 60-day grace period you have forfeited your status and would need a new visa status to return (includes Canada & Mexico)
  - If you have applied for OPT, you must be in the US to process your EAD - do not leave the country until you have received your EAD card





# TRANSFERRING TO ANOTHER SCHOOL

- If not doing OPT, transfers must be within 60 day grace period after program ending to maintain an Active status in SEVIS
  - If on OPT, transfer will automatically end your OPT authorization
    - must submit transfer-in form & acceptance
- Must submit acceptance letter from new school of U of R program to release SEVIS record
- From time of record transfer, you will have 5 months, or at next available term start, to begin your new program (whichever is sooner)

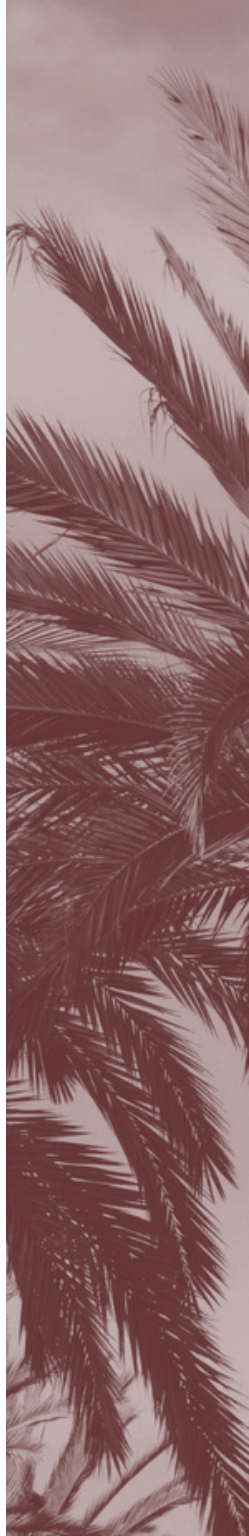






# OPT (OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING)

- What is OPT (Optional Practical Training)?
  - This is an employment benefit granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) for eligible F-1 students
    - OPT MUST be related your MAJOR field of study
    - Ex: If you majored in Biology and minored in Computer Science, you are only eligible to work in the field of biology
  - Initial OPT is for 12 full months
  - If you majored in a STEM field, there is an additional 24 month extension (separate application)

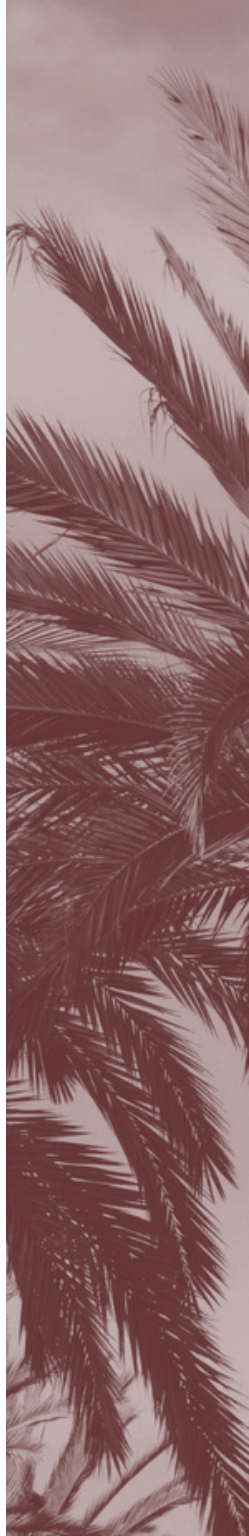






# OPT ELIGIBILITY

- Must have been in lawful F-1 student status for the two semesters immediately prior to your OPT Start
- You must be in your last semester to apply
  - apply within 90 days of graduation date
- You must actually “be in the U.S.” to apply
- You do not need to have a job offer to apply
- You must complete all graduation requirements before the end date on I-20 (keep an eye on this)
- You must NOT have completed 12 months or more of Full-time CPT
- OPT cannot be used for the same Education level twice





# OPT APPLICATION CHECKLIST

## STEP 1

- Read about the OPT process on Study in the States

## STEP 2

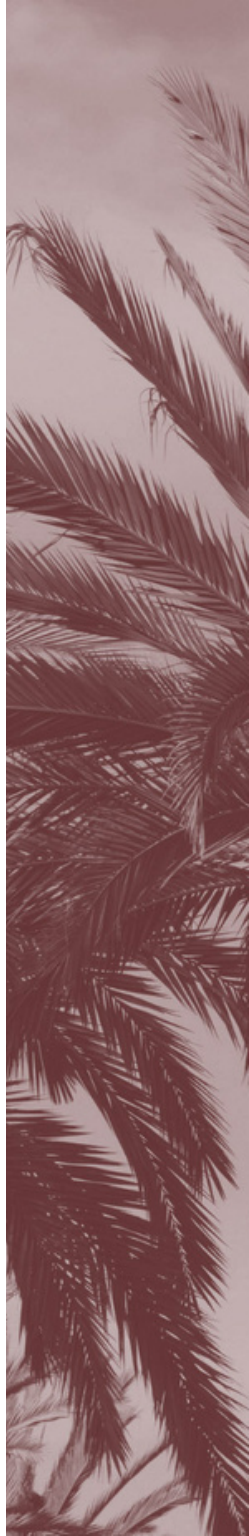
- Gather all necessary documents (see handout) and complete Application form I-765

## STEP 3

- Make appointment with OISS to review completed application form (I-765) & issue OPT authorized I-20
  - Choose your start date

## STEP 4

- Submit application form i-765, payment, and documents
  - Follow the PDF guide for online submission



# WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOUR DSO MEETING:

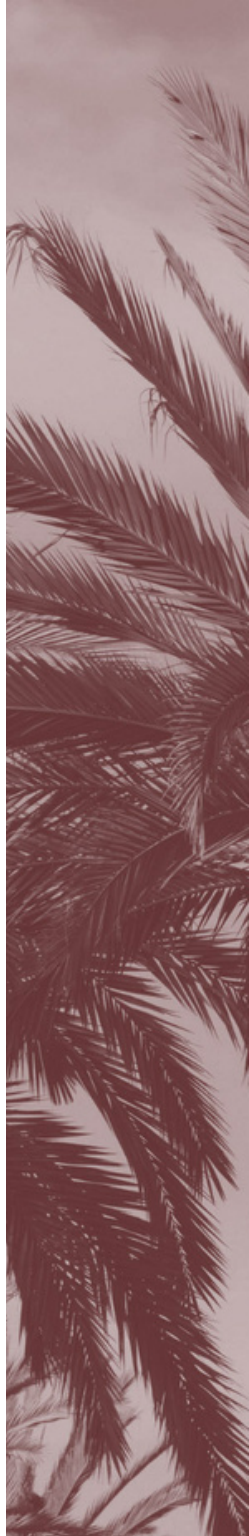
- Review application and all documents for completion and SEVIS accuracy
- Provide a signed I-20 with OPT authorization
  - This will provide you the green light to submit your application online
- Job Search support/referrals
  - Office of Career & Professional Development
  - Referrals to helpful websites:
    - My Visa Jobs
    - LinkedIn





# REQUIRED MATERIALS FOR OPT APPLICATION

- Filing Form I-765 online– Application for Employment Authorization
- U.S. passport-style photo
- Copy of Most Recent I-94 and Arrival/Departure Record
- Copy of passport ID page (must be valid for at least 6 months)
- Copy of F-1 visa in passport
- Copies of all previous I-20's, esp. those for CPT authorizations
- Payment of \$410 (subject to change)

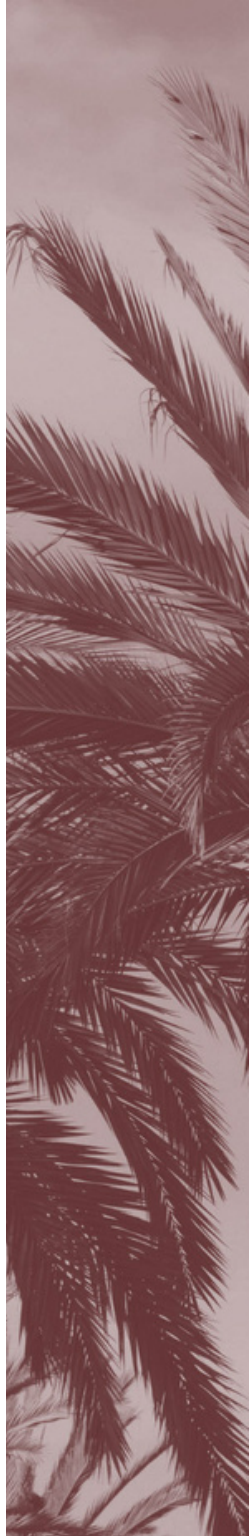






# HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR OPT START DATE

- Your OPT start date must be within your 60-day grace period after the program completion date.
- It is the date that your 12 months of work authorization begins (i.e. a July 2, 2022 start date would have a July 1, 2023 end date.)
- Estimate when you would like to be available to work and choose that start date.
  - The OPT application can take a few months to process
  - A typical hiring process will also take a few months and start dates for work can be negotiable
- This date is needed to issue your I-20. Most students choose one on a Monday in the middle of the grace period.





# SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION VIA MAIL

Once OISS issues your I-20, you have 30 days to mail:

U.S. Postal Service (USPS):

USCIS

PO Box 805373

Chicago, IL 60680

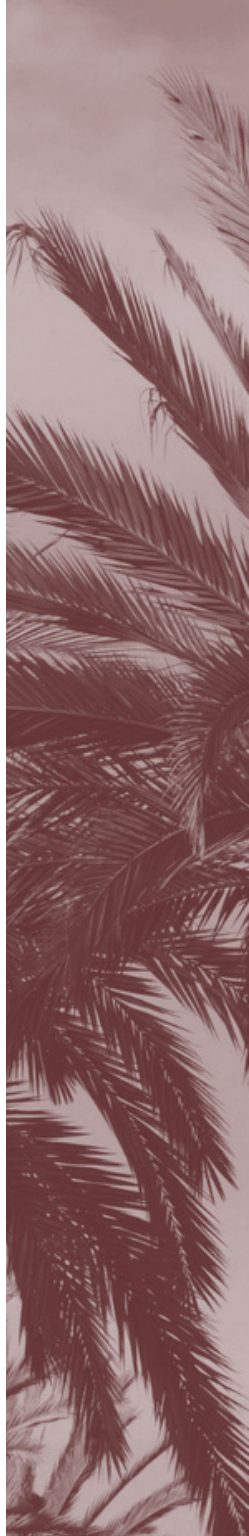
FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries (fastest):

USCIS

Attn: I-765 C03

131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor

Chicago, IL 60603-5517



# I-765 SUBMIT APPLICATION ONLINE

- Required documents are the same for filing by mail and online
- Create PDFs or JPEGs for everything that you upload
- Visit: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>

## Online Filing Benefits



Case status alerts and secure messages



See all case correspondence



Check your case status and update personal information



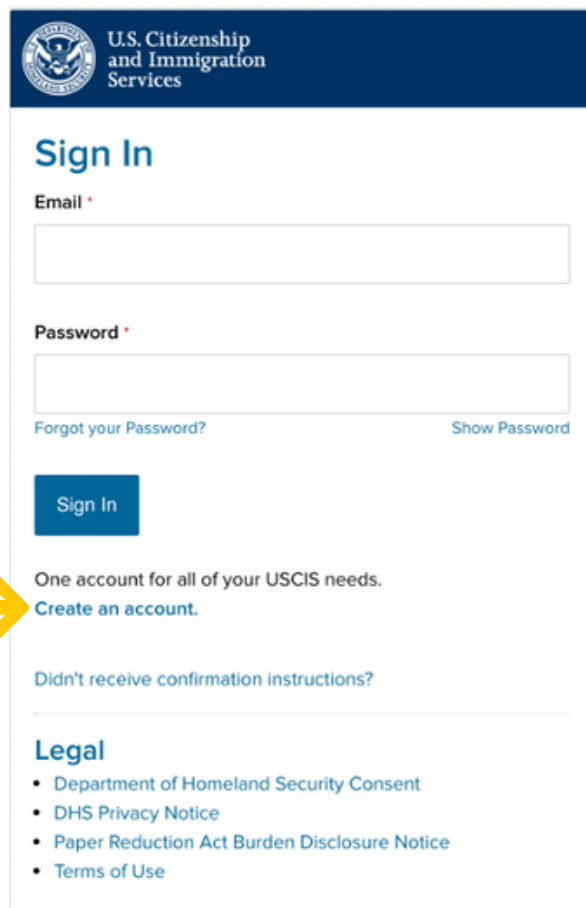
Upload evidence



# I-765: CREATE YOUR USCIS ACCOUNT

- Go through the steps
- Dual verification with email code (takes up to 10 minutes)

1



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

## Sign In

Email \*

Password \*

[Forgot your Password?](#) [Show Password](#)

[Sign In](#)

One account for all of your USCIS needs.  
[Create an account.](#)

[Didn't receive confirmation instructions?](#)

### Legal

- Department of Homeland Security Consent
- DHS Privacy Notice
- Paper Reduction Act Burden Disclosure Notice
- Terms of Use

2

Welcome to your USCIS Account

Select what you want to do

[Edit My Profile](#)

Editing your profile includes email, password, phone number, security questions, two-step verification and backup code.

Login to a USCIS Service

 USCIS

Apply for immigration benefits, find tools and resources to assist in preparation for naturalization, and search for doctors in your local community.

[FIRST](#)

Submit, manage and receive Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

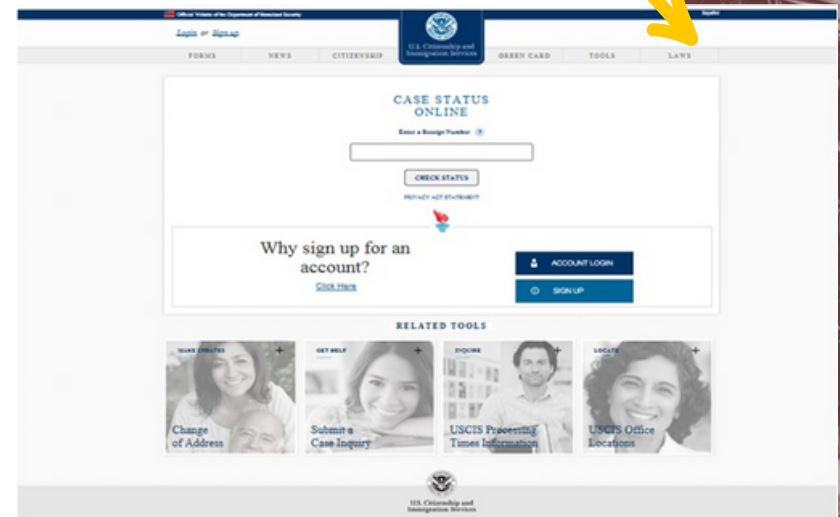
[myE-Verify](#)

Confirm your records for employment eligibility, track E-Verify or Self-Check case status, and protect your identity by locking your Social Security Number (SSN).



# WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU SUBMIT?

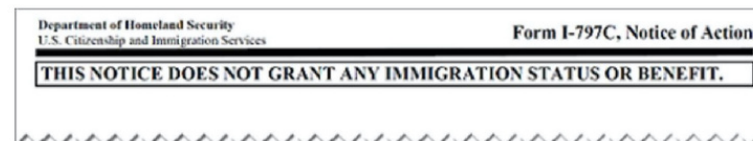
- USCIS emails you a receipt notice with your individual receipt number. You will also get it mailed
  - Receipt Number
  - The case number for the OPT application at USCIS. Check the status of the case on the USCIS web site at <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>
- USCIS emails/mailed approval notice and mails Employment Authorization Document (EAD) (3 weeks-5 months)
  - DO NOT work without your EAD



# RECEIPT FORM I-797C

- You should receive the notice by mail within 2-4 weeks after mailing the OPT application to USCIS.
- The I-797C is necessary if you want to:
  - inquire about the status of your OPT application.
  - travel outside the U.S. while your OPT is pending.
- Receiving the I-797C does NOT grant you work authorization.

FORM I-797C AFTER 4/2/2012



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.**

FORM I-797C BEFORE 4/2/2012



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

I-797C, Notice of Action

**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

*Previous versions of the Form I-797C issued prior to April 12, 2012, remain valid and should be kept for your records.*

#### Does the Form I-797C Grant any Specific Immigration Benefits?

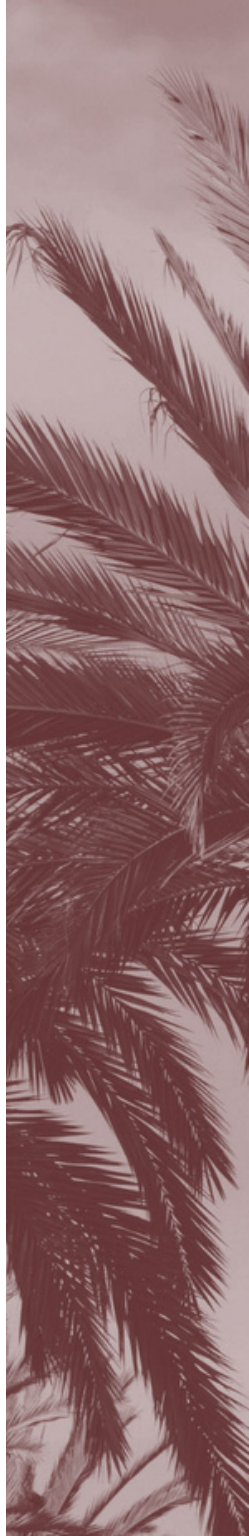
USCIS recognizes that some state, local, public, or private benefit granting agencies may accept Form I-797C as collateral evidence for awarding a benefit they administer. USCIS reminds those agencies that Form I-797C is only a receipt proving an applicant has submitted a benefit request; USCIS has not determined whether that applicant is eligible for an immigration benefit.



# TOP REASONS FOR DENIAL

- Payment Issues:
  - Check or Credit Card payment: Money is not in account at time of processing
  - Incorrect fee amount
  - Check or money order form not completed properly
  - Wrong dates on check, money order (U.S Date style = MONTH/DAY/YEAR = MM/DD/YYYY)
- Application Received Too Late: USCIS must receive application no later than 60 days after OPT recommendation
- I-765 problems: Incomplete or incorrect fields
  - Not signed: sign your FULL NAME (first and last)

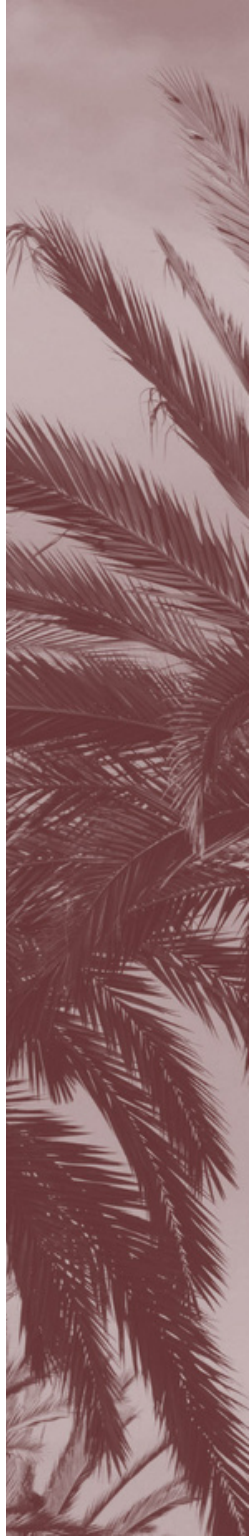
NOTE: if your application is denied please contact OISS immediately.





# STATUS ONCE OPT IS PENDING

- You are permitted to remain in the U.S. until OPT start date
- It is not recommended that you leave the country until you receive your EAD card
- No employment, either on-campus or off-campus is permitted between graduation and the start date of OPT)







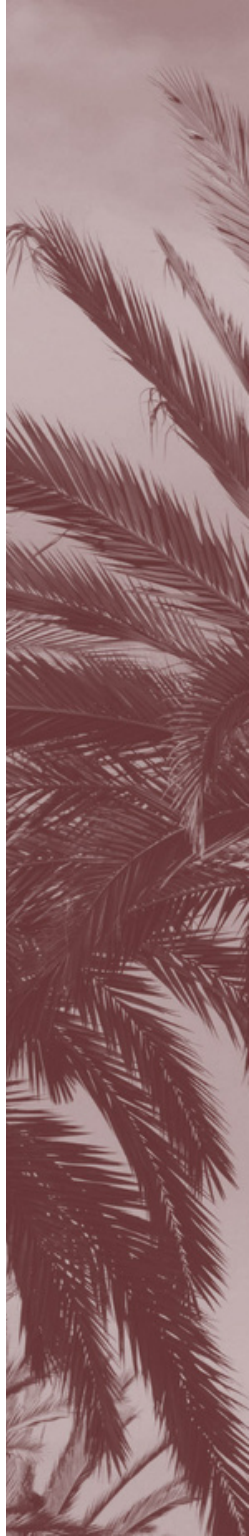
# STATUS DURING OPT

OPT is an extension of F-1 status, not a different status:

- You'll still have an active SEVIS record at U of R
- You'll need to update OISS with any changes
- You'll still have an active I-20
- You'll still need to get Travel Signatures
- You'll still need to have a valid F-1 visa to reenter the U.S.

Maintaining status of OPT:

- Must be engaged in paid or unpaid work
  - at least 20 hours per week or full-time (40 hrs/wk)
- Can only work in your major field of study
- Cannot exceed your 90 days of unemployment




# SEVP PORTAL

While on OPT, you MUST report all employment and address changes within 10 days of change.

- Will receive email from SEVP when OPT begins
- You'll be able to report changes to:
  - Residential address
  - Phone number
  - Employment start/end dates
  - Supervisor changes
  - Add second employer

An official website of the United States government OMB 1655-0054 (Expires 7/31/2021)

 **SEVP Portal | Student and Exchange Visitor Program 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 [Postal Page](#) for more information.

Email

Password

[Reset Password](#)

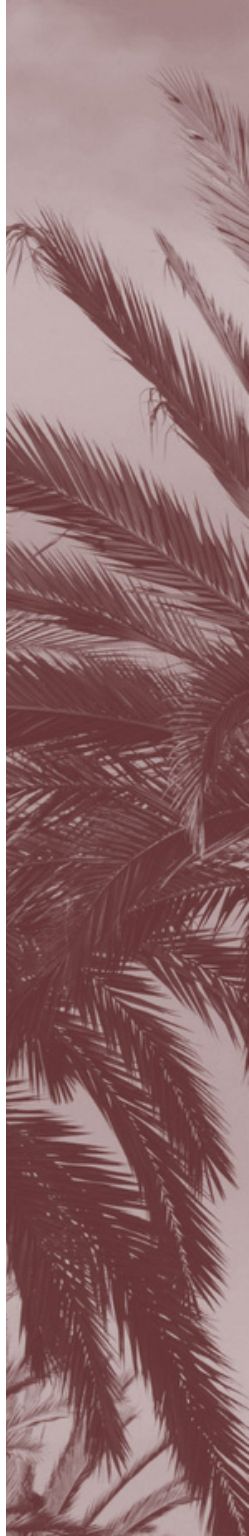


# SEVP PORTAL

There are four basic steps for creating an account in the SEVP Portal:

1. SEVIS notifies the SEVP Portal of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS) approval of the student's OPT or practical training and the OPT authorization is active; the portal emails the student instructions for creating a portal account.
2. Student receives the email which contains a link they must use to create the account. This link is unique to the student and cannot be shared or reused.
3. Student clicks the link in the email, enters their SEVIS ID and creates a password.
4. The SEVP Portal creates the student's user profile.

- <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/create-an-sevp-portal-account>



# EAD CARD

- Review your EAD card to make sure the information is accurate. If it is not, contact OISS
- Present your EAD to employers as proof that you are legally authorized to work in the US.
  - You will need this for hiring paperwork, such as the I-9
- The EAD is a required document for entry to the U.S. during OPT





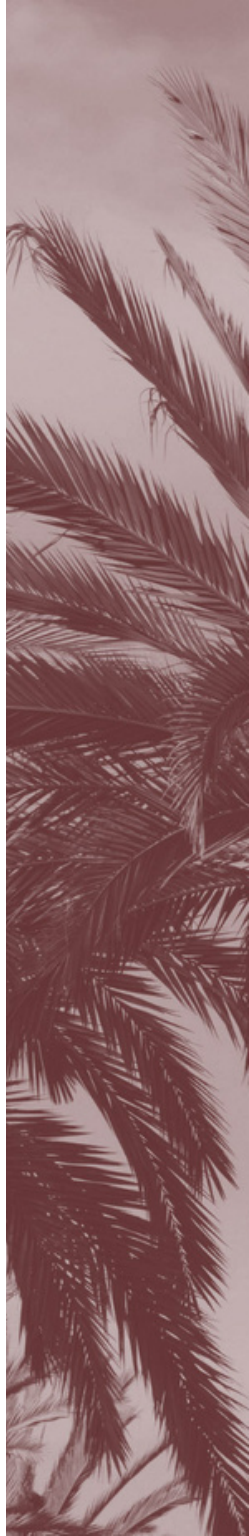
# JOB SEARCHING

- You do not need a job offer to apply to OPT
- It is your responsibility to find appropriate employment
  - You need to be able to make the case for how it is directly related to your program of study (major)
- It may also take months to be secure a job offer - start your search early and look often
- When confronted with the question, "Are you authorized to work in the U.S.?", on job applications:
  - select 'YES' - that is what your EAD card proves.
- Network with U of R alumni
  - International alumni can help share their job search tips
  - All alumni still working in the U.S. can help guide your search



# TYPES OF ACCEPTABLE EMPLOYMENT

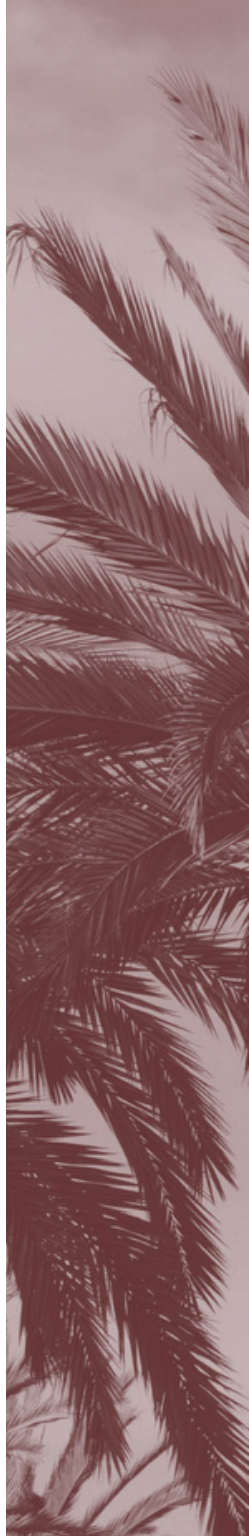
- Paid employment - at least 20 hrs/wk
- Multiple employers or short-term employers - performing artists
- Work for hire – contract work (1099 employment)
- Self-employed business owner - full-time only
- Employment through an agency
- Unpaid employment – volunteer or unpaid internship (not violating any labor laws)
  - Detailed record keeping by student required





# ACCUMULATING UNEMPLOYMENT

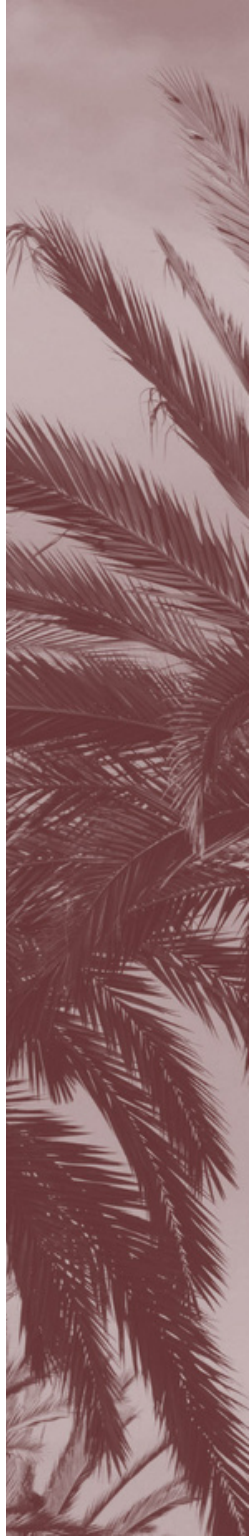
- You may not accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment
  - If you reach 90 days of unemployment, you need to leave the U.S. or you will be in violation of your visa
- Unemployment “adds up” whether you are in the U.S. or not
- Keep track of your unemployment
- Once you find an opportunity, or have switched to a new opportunity, the unemployment calendar stops





# EXTENDING OPT

- You have a 60-day grace period following the end of OPT during which time you can transfer to another level of education, or file an Extension or USCIS Change of Status
- If you intend to apply for an OPT STEM Extension, you must do so before the expiration of your 12 month OPT (can apply 90 days prior to OPT ending)
  - [Follow the guide for online submission](#)
- The only additional extension of OPT available is the OPT Cap Gap Extension, for students who have an accepted cap-subject H1-B application.
- If you receive an Extension of your OPT, the grace period will begin after the end of the Extension period.

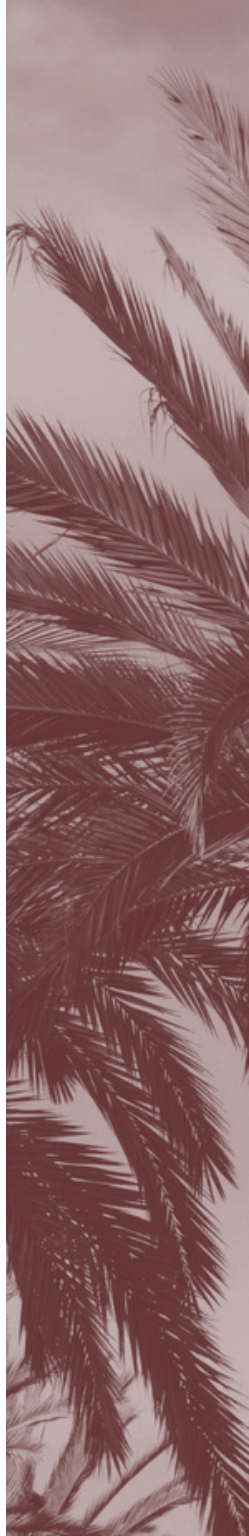






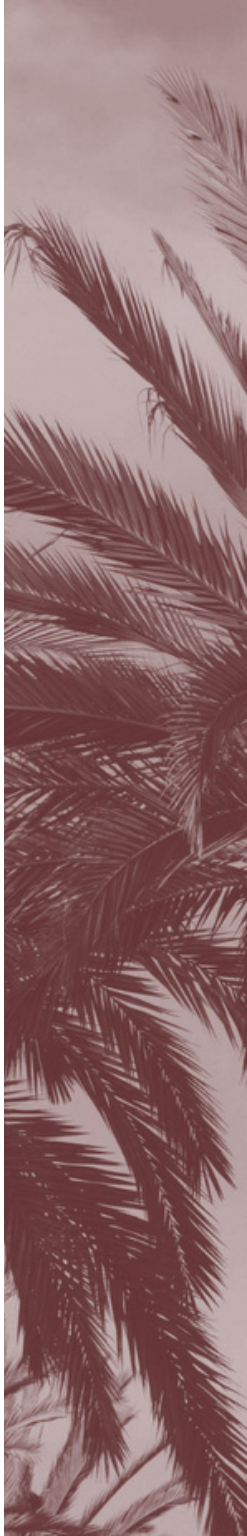
# COMPLETING OPT

- If you do not extend your OPT, and your EAD expires, you have the following options before the end of the 60 days grace period:
  - Exit the US within 60 days
  - Continue your F-1 Status & Studies: Transfer your I-20 to continue studies at another school OR request a Change of Educational Level to begin new studies at UOR
  - Work with immigration legal counsel regarding a Change of Status application to a new visa category. You will need to check with your legal counsel regarding your allowed period of stay or required exit date if you have a pending change of status when your grace period ends.





# WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE?



# LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

[oiss@redlands.edu](mailto:oiss@redlands.edu)



[OISS Website](#)

[OCPD Resources](#)

