

OPT Frequently Asked Questions

When can I file my application for post-completion OPT?

You can file no earlier than 90 days before the program end date on your I-20 (last day of exams). For example, if the last exam is on April 19th, you can begin filing January 18th.

You can submit during your 60-day grace period (the 60 days following the last exam), but it is not recommended to wait this long because it takes months to process, and if mailing is slow and USCIS receives it late, you will be denied.

You must file within 30 days of receive the I-20 with the OPT recommendation.

What can or should my start date be?

You must request a specific start date before filing your OPT. The start date must be within the 60 days following the last exam. (e.g. If you finish April 19 your start date must be between April 20 and June 20.)

Consider where you are in your employment search. If you have an offer with a target start date and you are submitting your application early, this gives you a date to aim for. If you are early in your search process and/or late to applying, you'll probably want to choose a date towards the end of the 60-day period.

You will discuss this with Sarah or Younes who will put the desired start date on your new I-20.

Should I file online or through the mail?

This is up to you. The online option is more convenient and is just as reliable as filing through the mail.

How long do I have to find a job?

You have 90 days of unemployment once your OPT is in effect. However, employment opportunities are somewhat flexible. Volunteering, contract work, unpaid internships or other non-traditional job types are all acceptable for post-completion OPT as long as the work is directly related to your major and you are tracking your hours making sure to complete at least 20 hours per week.

Can I change jobs or have multiple jobs?

Yes, you may change jobs or work for multiple employers simultaneously with approved post-completion OPT. Each role must be directly related to your major and you must report each role to Sarah or Younes.

Can I travel outside the United States with pending OPT?

It is best to avoid travel outside the US with a pending OPT application. If you must exit the US, you should plan on remaining outside until your OPT is approved and someone can accept your EAD card by mail and send it to you so you have it for reentry. You will need the EAD card, in addition to your valid passport, unexpired F-1 visa, and I-20 with a travel signature for any travel while on OPT.

Can I study while on OPT?

No. If you plan to begin a new degree program, you must transfer your SEVIS record to the new institution, which effectively ends your OPT. Any unused time does not rollover to be used later.