

What is OPT?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a 12-month work authorization issued by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). When you apply for OPT, you are applying for your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card which allows you to work anywhere in the United States for one year.

What kind of work can I do?

- Any job or internship you do must be related to your major(s)
- You must work full-time, 20+ hours or more a week
- You can have multiple jobs at one time and they can be temporary
- Self-employment is an option on OPT, but it must be related to your major(s)
- Jobs and internships can be paid or unpaid

Do I need a job before applying for my work authorization?

NO! You can apply for your work authorization before finding a job.

When should I apply for my EAD card?

Application processing time takes 90 days so you need to think about when you'd like to start working as well as when you realistically think you can find a job. You cannot apply more than 90 days before your graduation date or more than 60 days after your graduation date.

Example: If you graduate after the Spring semester, your graduation date is June 1st. You cannot apply for OPT before March 1st.

When can I start working?

That is your choice! When you apply for your EAD card, you pick your start date. Your start date must be within 60 days after your graduation date.

Example: If your graduation date is June 1st, the latest start date you can choose is July 30th.

How do I pick my start date?

You have to think about your future!

- Do you have a job lined up after graduation?
- What are your travel plans?
- Do you want some relaxation time after graduation or would you rather start your career right away?
- Have you started to apply for jobs or plan to start during your last semester?

What if I chose my start date but I don't have a job by then?

That is OK! During OPT you get 90 days of unemployment. This 90-day clock begins on your approved start date. Furthermore, this unemployment time does not need to be used consecutively, so you can use it later on during your one-year of work authorization.

What if I found a job and they want me to start right away but I don't have my EAD card, can I start working?

No, you cannot start working until you have your EAD card and your start date is effective. Even if you do not get paid, you should not begin employment unless you have your card and your start date has begun.

How will Homeland Security know when I get a job or change jobs?

You will report it yourself through the OPT Student Portal, which you will receive an email to set up after your OPT is approved. You must update your Portal within 10 days of any changes to your employment (i.e. starting a new job, changing jobs, quitting a job, etc.).

Can I travel while my OPT application is pending or after it is approved?

While your application is pending, travel outside the United States is highly discouraged. There is a high risk of entry denial when you return. If your application is approved, travel is only recommended if you have a job(s) related to your major and is 20+ hours a week. You should bring proof of your employment from your employer to show the Customs Officer, if necessary. Travel within the United States is fine for either pending or approved applications. For more specific questions/scenarios regarding travel, speak to ISS Coordinator.

So, how do I apply for OPT?

Make an appointment with ISS Coordinator. Bring the following documents to the appointment:

- Passport
- F-1 Visa
- ALL I-20s from MMC and any other U.S. institution you attended
- I-94 printout (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>)
- Social Security Number (if applicable)
- Check or Money Order for \$410 – details will be filled in during the appointment
- Two passport-size pictures (taken within 30 days of application submission)

Appointments will last about one hour and you will be responsible for sending out the application through FedEx.

****We cannot process your OPT application if your graduation is not confirmed by the Registrar.