Maintaining your F-1 Status while on OPT

OPT Eligibility
- Must be lawfully full-time enrolled for at least two semesters
- Pre-Completion OPT: F-1 students who want to work before graduation. (Meet with OISS Advisor to apply.)
- Post-Completion OPT: F-1 students who want to work after graduation.
- Graduate students who have completed all program requirements except for thesis/dissertation must enroll full-time and must submit their final thesis/dissertation before their OPT end date.

OPT Basics
- OPT is an F-1 benefit designed to provide students with practical work experience in the US directly related to the major field of study and commensurate with the level of education.
- OPT is not a work visa. You remain in F-1 visa status.
- You can extend OPT and you do not need a job to apply for Pre-Completion OPT.
- You can change jobs or have multiple jobs.
- Your employer does not have to sponsor you if you have a Pre-Completion EAD card.

Paid/Unpaid Work on OPT:
- You can do paid or unpaid work.
- You cannot do unpaid work when you should be paid.
- You cannot do unpaid work at a for-profit organization.
- You cannot do unpaid work at Washington University.

International Travel
- is possible during OPT period with the following documents:
  1) valid passport; 2) valid F-1 visa in your passport;
  3) I-20 with travel signature; 4) EAD card; and 5) proof of employment (optional)
- Travel while OPT is pending is possible, but risky.

Verify Admission Status after International Travel
- Every time you re-enter the US, check your I-94 to confirm you were admitted in “F-1” visa status with “D/S” admit until date.
- https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov

OPT Eligibility
- Eligible degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math.
- A separate application must be filed in the last 90 days of the Post-Completion OPT authorization period. USCIS must receive the application before your OPT end date.
- You must have a job with an employer enrolled in E-verify.
- You and your employer must complete form I-883.
- To apply: https://students.wustl.edu/12-month-opt-reporting-forms

Cap Gap Extension
- Students whose H-1B petitions are pending or approved may request an I-20 showing the Cap Gap extension added in SEVIS.
- The Cap Gap extension allows students to work after the end date of OPT until the start of the H-1B (October 1).

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OPT Filing Window
- The post-completion OPT filing window starts 90 days before the program end date on your I-20 and ends 60 days after.

Requested OPT Start Date
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Social Security Number (SSN)
- If you do not have an SSN, you can apply simultaneously.

Passport-style Photo
- Photo must be taken within 30 days before you apply.
- You must upload a clear.jpg image in the proper format.
- Examples of acceptable photos: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/how-apply/photos.html

OPT Processing Times
- 5-7 business days for OISS Advisor to process your OPT I-20.
- Approximately 3 months for USCIS to process OPT applications.

Questions? Contact OISS!
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Step 1: Complete the *OISS OPT Workshop* course in Learn@Work.

Step 2: Request your OPT I-20 from your OISS Advisor.

Step 3: Prepare and submit your online I-765 OPT application to USCIS.

Step 1: Complete the *OISS OPT Workshop* Course in Learn@Work

**Access the course**

Click [this direct link](https://wustl.sabacloud.com) to Register for and Launch the *OISS OPT Workshop* course in Learn@Work.

**If you have trouble with the direct link**

Navigate to find the course in Learn@Work.

2. Log in with your WUSTL Key.
3. In the Learning Catalog search box at the top right of the page, type *OISS OPT Workshop*.
4. Click on the *Not Registered* button under the OISS OPT Workshop course that appears in the list.
5. Click *Launch* to start the course.
6. You can download a transcript of the OPT Workshop and the FAQ Handout from *Class Attachments*.

**Complete the OISS OPT Workshop Course**

During the OPT course, you will learn about:

- Who is eligible to apply for OPT
- The timeline of applying for OPT
- How to choose an OPT start date
- How to maintain your F-1 status while on OPT
- How to request an OPT I-20 from your OISS Advisor
- How to prepare and submit the I-765 OPT application to the USCIS

**Download the Certificate of Course Completion**

1. Go to your Learn@Work ME page.
2. Select *Completed Learning* from the menu on the left.
3. Next to *OISS OPT Workshop* select *Print Certificate*. 
Step 2: Request your OPT I-20 from your OISS Advisor

Email your OISS Advisor the following items, completed and signed where indicated.

1. **Requested OPT Start Date form**
2. **Academic Advisor Verification form** signed by you *and* your Academic/Faculty Advisor
3. **OPT Application Compliance Agreement**
4. **$150 OPT Administrative Fee Receipt**. Pay here: [https://students.wustl.edu/opt-fee/](https://students.wustl.edu/opt-fee/)
5. **Certificate of Course Completion** from the OISS OPT Workshop course in Learn@Work

**Please Note:**

- **Electronic Signatures:** OISS accepts images of original signatures electronically inserted into the forms or scans of original signatures. We cannot accept typed names in a script font in lieu of original signatures.
- If any of the above items are missing, your OISS Advisor will not be able to issue your OPT I-20.
- **Important Deadline:** You must submit your I-765 application to USCIS within 30 days of the Issue Date on page 1 of your OPT I-20.

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**Special Case: ABD OPT I-20 Request**

Use the ABD OPT form if you are a graduate student, you have completed all coursework *but* your dissertation/thesis, you have a job offer, and you plan to defend and complete your dissertation/thesis while you are working on OPT.

Prior to requesting your OPT I-20, OISS recommends that you meet with your OISS Advisor and Academic/Faculty Advisor to discuss your plan for completing your dissertation/thesis while working on OPT.

Email the following items to request an OPT I-20 from your OISS Advisor:

1. **Requested OPT Start Date form**
2. **ABD OPT form** signed by you and your Academic/Faculty Advisor
3. **OPT Application Compliance Agreement**
4. **$150 OPT Administrative Fee Receipt**. Pay here: [https://students.wustl.edu/opt-fee/](https://students.wustl.edu/opt-fee/)
5. **Certificate of Course Completion** from OISS OPT Workshop course in Learn@Work
Office for International Students and Scholars
REQUESTED OPT START DATE FORM

Student Name_________________________ ID#_________________ Date of Birth___________________________

How will you submit your application?
☐ I will use OISS’ resources and instructions to review and I will submit the application on my own after I receive the OPT I-20 from my OISS Advisor.

-OR-
☐ I will use OISS’ resources and instructions to prepare the application and I want to request a final review with my OISS Advisor before I submit the application.

Guidance for Choosing your OPT Start Date
If you are applying for Post-Completion OPT to work in the US after graduation, your Requested Start Date must fall within the 60-day grace period after graduation. Your Requested End Date would be 1 year minus 1 day after the start date (364 days later). Choose a start date based on your expected program end date.

Application Timeline and OPT Start Date Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>I-20 Program End Date</th>
<th>OPT Application Filing Window</th>
<th>OPT Requested Start Date Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2022</td>
<td>12/21/2022</td>
<td>09/23/2022 – 02/17/2023</td>
<td>12/22/2022 – 02/18/2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2023</td>
<td>05/15/2023</td>
<td>02/15/2023 – 07/13/2023</td>
<td>05/16/2023 – 07/13/2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2023</td>
<td>08/17/2023</td>
<td>05/20/2023 – 10/15/2023</td>
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<td>12/21/2023 – 02/17/2024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TIP: Submit your application to USCIS several days before the Filing Window deadline to ensure USCIS receives your application within the Filing Window. Applications received by USCIS after the end of the Filing Window will be denied.

I request the following Start and End dates of my OPT:

Requested OPT Start Date: ____________________________________________

Requested OPT End Date: ____________________________________________

For example: Requested Start Date: June 11, 2023
Requested End Date: June 10, 2024

I understand that I am requesting an OPT start date but it does not guarantee that I will be approved by this date and I will not be able to start work until I have received my EAD card.

Student Signature_____________________________________________ Date__________________________
Office for International Students and Scholars

ACADEMIC ADVISOR VERIFICATION FORM

Student Certification and Signature

Student Name ______________________ ID# _______ Date of Birth _________

First name Last name

E-mail address ______________________ Phone ______________________

I understand that the end date on my I-20 will be changed to reflect the Program Completion Date as listed below. I also understand that I must complete all requirements related to my degree (courses, revisions and projects as assigned) before the end date on my I-20. I understand that I must have a valid I-20 until my program is completed. I understand that, if I cannot complete my program by the date indicated below, I must seek an I-20 extension in a timely manner.

Student Signature ______________________ Date ______________________

Academic/Faculty Advisor Verification and Signature

The student listed above will complete their academic program at the end of the following semester:

☐ Fall 2022: December 21, 2022

☐ Spring 2023: May 15, 2023

☐ Summer 2023: August 17, 2023

☐ Fall 2023: December 20, 2023

☐ OTHER: This student has a thesis or dissertation and will finish on a different date than those indicated above. This student will complete their academic program, including dissertation defense, all revisions to the thesis/dissertation and all other requirements on:

Month / Day / Year

Academic/Faculty Advisor Name ______________________ Email ______________________

First name Last name

Academic/Faculty Advisor Signature ______________________ Date ______________________

Note About Electronic Signatures: OISS accepts images of original signatures electronically inserted into the forms or scans of original signatures. We cannot accept typed names in a script font in lieu of original signatures.
Office for International Students and Scholars
ABD OPT FORM

This form is only for graduate students who have completed All work But their Dissertation.
If you are ABD, have a job offer, and will complete and submit your thesis or dissertation while working on OPT, you must use this form to request your OPT I-20 from OISS. Your Academic Advisor must complete the bottom section

Student Name ____________________________ ID# ______________ Date of Birth __________________
First name     Last name

Eligibility:
• You have finished all your coursework and only have your thesis or dissertation remaining.
• You have not filed an intent to graduate for the current semester.
• You will finish and submit your thesis/dissertation within the next 12 months and be enrolled full time every Fall and Spring until final submission.

Student Certification and Signature
☐ I have met with my OISS Advisor and my Academic/Faculty Advisor to ensure my thesis/dissertation will be completed by my OPT end date.
☐ I understand that if I do not complete and submit the final version of my thesis/dissertation by the end date on my EAD card, I will need to change my visa status or return to my home country to complete my degree. I will no longer be eligible for the STEM OPT Extension (for applicable degrees).
☐ I understand that I cannot work, get paid, or receive a stipend from WashU after the date listed below unless I have my EAD card in-hand.
☐ I understand that the Program End Date on my I-20 will be changed to the date listed below.
☐ I will ensure that I am enrolled full time every Fall and Spring semester to maintain my F-1 status while on OPT.

Student Signature ____________________________ Date __________________

Academic/Faculty Advisor Verification and Signature
This student will complete all requirements for their academic program, except for their thesis/dissertation on: __________ Month / Day / Year

Academic/Faculty Advisor Name ______________________________ Email __________________

Academic/Faculty Advisor Signature ____________________________ Date __________________

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Office for International Students and Scholars

OPT APPLICATION COMPLIANCE AGREEMENT

PLEASE READ EACH STATEMENT AND CONTACT YOUR OISS ADVISOR WITH QUESTIONS BEFORE SIGNING.

☐ I understand that it is not possible to change my requested OPT start date after the application has been submitted to USCIS. I can request to Withdraw my OPT application before it has been approved by USCIS, but Withdrawal is not guaranteed.

☐ I understand I cannot pay and submit my OPT application online without first requesting an OPT I-20 from my OISS Advisor. OPT I-765 applications that are submitted to USCIS without an I-20 with OPT recommendation will be denied.

☐ I understand that the program end date of my I-20 will be changed, if necessary, to reflect the program end date indicated on the Academic Advisor Verification form or ABD OPT form.

☐ I understand that my eligibility to work on campus at Washington University ends on the program end date on my I-20.

☐ I understand that it may take 5-7 business days for OISS to process my OPT I-20 Request.

☐ I understand that I must submit my I-765 to USCIS within 30 days after the issue date on page 1 of my OPT I-20.

☐ I understand that USCIS must receive the I-765 application from me no later than 60 days after the program end date on my I-20.

☐ I understand that if I receive a Request for Evidence (RFE) Notice from USCIS, I should consult with my OISS Advisor as soon as possible. I understand that an incomplete response to my RFE could result in the denial of my OPT application.

☐ I understand that if I move prior to receiving my EAD card, I am responsible for contacting USCIS to change my US Mailing Address.

☐ I understand that to work, I must have the EAD card in-hand, and I can only work during the authorized dates on the EAD card.

☐ I understand that all employment on OPT must be directly related to my major program and commensurate with my level of education listed on my I-20.

☐ I understand that international travel is risky while my OPT application is pending. I will talk to an OISS Advisor before I finalize plans to travel outside the US.

☐ I understand that I cannot accrue more than 90 days of unemployment while on OPT during the authorized dates on the EAD card. I understand that the 90 days of unemployment begins to accrue on my EAD card start date. To be considered employed full-time on OPT, I must work 20 hours or more per week.

☐ I understand that I must report my employment information within 10 days after starting a job, leaving a job, or changing jobs. I will report all changes in the SEVP Portal: https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/.

☐ I understand that I must report my US home address information within 10 days after moving. I will report all changes online in the SEVP Portal: https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/.

☐ I understand that I should request an I-20 with my current OPT Employment listed on page 2 from OISS every time I report a change to my employment in the SEVP Portal.

☐ I understand that USCIS might approve my OPT application after the start date I am requesting and I will not be able to start work until I have received my valid EAD card.

I have read and understand each of the preceding statements.

Student Name _______________________________  First name __________  Last name __________

Student Signature ___________________________  Date _________________
Step 3: Prepare and submit your online I-765 OPT application to USCIS

PREPARE YOUR ELECTRONIC FILES TO UPLOAD AS EVIDENCE
The Evidence files you upload to your OPT application must be in a specific format and file size. Please read this information carefully. All files must be saved as PDF, JPG, or JPEG. Maximum size: 12 MB per file.

IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS
- PDF of your current, valid Passport ID page showing your photo and passport expiration date
- PDF of your I-94 Admission Record (Travel History page is NOT required.)
  https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94

PREVIOUS OPT & CPT DOCUMENTS (if applicable)
- PDF of your Previous CPT or OPT I-20s (pages 1 & 2).
- PDF of your previous EAD card (front and back).

2-inch-by-2-inch PASSPORT-STYLE PHOTO
- JPG or JPEG image of a NEW 2-inch-by-2-inch passport-style photo.

  Photo Specifications:
  1. Photos must be no more than 30 days old.
  2. Do not use a photo that was used in your passport or visa.
  3. Use a clear image of your face.
  4. Do not use filters or digitally modify your photo.
  5. Have someone else take your photo. No selfies.
  6. Take off your glasses for your photo.
  7. Use a plain white or off-white background.
  8. Your digital photo must be in .JPEG file format, at least 600 by 600 pixels, and at least 54 kilobytes in size.

  Digital Image Head Size Template
  - The top of the head, including the hair, to the bottom of the chin must be between 50% and 69% of the image's total height. The eye height (measured from the bottom of the image to the level of the eyes) should be between 56% and 69% of the image's height.
  - Image pixel dimensions must be in a square aspect ratio (meaning the height must be equal to the width). Minimum acceptable dimensions are 600 pixels (width) x 600 pixels (height). Maximum acceptable dimensions are 1200 pixels (width) x 1200 pixels (height)

Verify your Photo:
Your photo should look the same as the examples of acceptable photos with the green checkmarks on the US State Department website: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/how-apply/photos.html. Scroll down to Photo Examples. If you look at your photo and it does not look the same as the acceptable examples with the green checkmarks, you should obtain a new photo before submitting your application to the USCIS.
CREATE YOUR MYUSCIS ACCOUNT

   - Click: Create an Account.
   - Add an email address and cell phone number if you want to receive email and/or text message notifications about the status of your OPT Application.
   - You do not have to use your @wustl.edu email.
2. Set up your account and follow all security steps.
   - **TIP:** You need your cell phone to receive SMS text codes for the duo-factor authentication process.
3. Click: MyUSCIS to login
4. Account Type: I am an applicant, petitioner, or requestor
5. Click: File a Form Online
7. Click: Start Form
8. Read the disclosures and notices. Click: Start

TIPS FOR DRAFTING FORM I-765 APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION

Getting Started

1. Select **Basis of Eligibility** from drop down list and Click: Next
   - **Choose:** c(3)(B) Student Post-Completion OPT
     - to work after graduation; or
     - Graduate students who have completed all program requirements except for their thesis/dissertation and want to work prior to graduation.
       - Students interested in this option should meet with their OISS and Faculty Advisors to ensure thesis/dissertation is completed by the OPT end date and that they comply with enrollment requirements to maintain F-1 status. Graduate students who do not complete their thesis/dissertation by the OPT end date will need to change their visa status, or return to their home country to complete their degree.
2. Select **Reason for Applying**
   - Initial permission to accept employment to apply for OPT for the first time at this education level.
   - Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document if you need a replacement card for reasons NOT due to USCIS error.
   - Renewal of permission to accept employment if you have previously applied for OPT.
3. Select Yes if you have previously filed a form I-765, or No if this is your first time filing I-765. Click: Next
4. **Preparer and interpreter information:** Select Yes if someone is assisting you with completing this application, or No if you are completing this form alone. (Select No if you are only working with your OISS Advisor.)

About You Section

Your Name

1. Input your legal name as it is on page 1 of your I-20.
2. **Have you used any other names since birth?** Select Yes if you have used any other name in the U.S. such as preferred names at WashU on your I-20, and provide all other names. Select No if you do not have other names.

Your Contact Information

1. Input your phone number and email address. (You do not have to use your @wustl.edu email.)
2. Input a U.S. Mailing Address. Use the address where you want to receive your EAD card and SSN card (if requested).
   - **TIP:** Use a U.S. mailing address that will not change in the next 3 to 5 months. If you will move while your OPT Application is pending, you will be responsible for contacting USCIS to update your mailing address. If your card is lost, you will be responsible for working with USPS and USCIS to locate it or to apply for a replacement card.
   - Consider asking someone you trust to receive your OPT-related mail for you. List your friend’s name in “In care of” and their US Mailing Address.
   - **TIP:** Do not put your name in “In Care of”. Use “In Care of” only if someone else will receive your EAD card at their mailing address on your behalf.
   - **TIP:** When the recommended address box pops up, select “Use selected address” to use the USPS-verified address.
3. Select Yes if the U.S. Mailing Address is where you physically live now. Select No if you live elsewhere now. Then provide your current US Physical Address.
Describe yourself
1. Select your gender. Click: Next
2. Select your marital status. Click: Next

When and where you were born
1. Input your demographic information. Click: Next
   **TIP: Be sure to write your Date of Birth in the format used in the US: MM/DD/YYYY**

Your Immigration Information
1. Select from the drop down all countries in which you are a citizen or a national.
2. Input your I-94 Arrival/Departure Record number and the date of your last arrival in the U.S. listed on your Most Recent I-94. Use MM/DD/YYYY format.

   ![Most Recent I-94](image)

3. Select the place of your last arrival from the drop down. (Found on your I-94 Travel History)

   ![I-94 Travel History](image)

4. Select your status at your last arrival from the drop down. “F-1 Student, Academic or language Program”.
5. Input the passport number of your most recently issued, valid passport.
6. Input travel document number if applicable. (This does not typically apply to most F-1 students.)
7. Input passport expiration date. Use MM/DD/YYYY format.
8. Select the country that issued your passport.
9. Select your current immigration status. This should be “F-1 Student, Academic or language Program”.
10. Input your SEVIS ID number. (Found on the top left corner of your I-20.) Click: Next

Other Information
1. Input your A-Number or Check “I do not have or know my A-Number” (Most F-1 students do not have an A-number.)
2. Provide your USCIS Online Account number or Check “I do not have or known my USCIS Online Account Number.” (Most F-1 students will not have a USCIS Number.)
3. Has the Social Security Administration ever officially issued a Social Security Card to you?
   Select Yes if you have ever been issued an SSN. Input your SSN.
   -OR-
   Select No if you do not have an SSN.
4. Do you want the SSA to issue you a Social Security Card?
   Select Yes if you want the Social Security Administration to issue you an SSN Card. Complete the Consent for Disclosure fields. Click: Next
   **TIP:** If you already have an SSN, select “NO” because you do not need to apply for one again.
   If you already have an SSN, but you lost your SSN card, select No. You should contact the SSA to apply for a replacement SSN card. Do not apply for a replacement SSN card using this OPT application.
   **TIP:** If you do not already have an SSN, select “YES” to apply for one with this application.
   After your OPT is approved, your SSN card will be mailed separately to the US Mailing Address you list in this application. Questions about the status of your SSN card delivery should be directed to the Social Security Administration directly.
EVIDENCE
Refer to page 7 for examples and specific requirements for the evidence files you must upload.
1. 2 x 2 photo: Upload your image file
2. I-94 Arrival Record
   • Upload PDF
   • Document type, Select: Form I-94
3. Employment authorization or Government Issue ID
   • Upload a PDF of your Passport ID page.
   -OR-
   If you had previously authorized OPT, upload the front and back of your previous EAD card.
4. Previous CPT or OPT Authorizations: Upload evidence of all previously authorized CPT or OPT under all SEVIS records you have had.
   • Upload your I-20(s) showing your previous CPT or OPT work authorizations (pages 1 & 2 of each I-20).
   • Upload the front and back of your previous EAD card.
5. Form I-20: Upload a scanned copy of your new OPT I-20 with the OPT recommendation on page 2. You must have first signed the I-20 by hand, in pen on page 1.
   TIP: Verify that your OPT I-20 recommendation shows your Requested OPT Start Date on page 2.
   TIP: Verify that the Issue Date on page 1 of the I-20 by your OISS Advisor’s signature is within 30 days of the date you will submit the application to USCIS.
   TIP: SEVP has updated their guidance to allow DSOs to electronically send I-20s to student with electronic travel signatures. SEVP has NOT authorized students to sign I-20s electronically. You must print this I-20, sign and date the bottom of page 1, by hand in pen, then scan and upload it with your application.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (For students with previous CPT or OPT work authorizations)
1. Click Add Response if you have had any previous CPT or OPT work authorizations.
2. Select the following from the drop down options:
   • Section: Evidence
   • Page: Previous CPT or OPT
   • Question: Previous CPT or OPT
3. Type your information in the box.
   TIP: The government wants to know about CPT and OPT work authorizations you have previously had. Type an explanation using the Sample Text, modifying it with your information:
   Under SEVIS Number N???????????, I was previously authorized for full-time/part-time OPT/CPT at the Bachelor’s/Master’s/Doctoral level from MM/DD/YYYY to MM/DD/YYYY.
4. Click “Save Response”.

REVIEW AND SUBMIT
1. Your Application Summary: Review all of the information that you have entered to ensure that your application is accurate and complete.
2. Your Statement: Check the box to confirm you can read and understand English and you understood the application.
3. Your Signature: Check the box to confirm that you “have read and agree to the applicant’s statement”. Sign the application by typing your full legal name.
4. Pay and Submit: Click on Pay and Submit to go to the secure Pay.gov website to pay the $410 application fee.