SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

International Student Center
Optional Practical Training

After attending an OPT application meeting, you will receive a new I-20 with your requested OPT dates.
Your OPT application can **NOT** be sent to USCIS until you sign your new I-20 and it must be received by USCIS within 30 days of I-20 issuance.

APPLICATION PROCESSING AND TRACKING

1) Receipt Notice	2) Application Tracking	3) Processing
When the USCIS has received your application, you should receive an E-Notification if you submit the Form G-1145 with your OPT Application. USCIS will notify you within 24 hours of accepting your application by e-mail or text message. A paper receipt notice I-797 from the USCIS Service Center will be mailed to you within 4 weeks after your application has been sent. If you have not received any type of notification and your check has not been cashed within 4 weeks, notify one of the ISC advisors.	On the receipt notice, you will find an application tracking number. You can use this to check the status of your application on the USCIS Case Status website here: https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp . Please note - Many times your application status will go directly from "received" to "approved" without providing any detailed information about the process.	It takes approximately 90 days to process your OPT application. If your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) has not been approved after 90 days from the "received date" on the receipt notice, please contact the ISC. **Change of Address** –Use an address on your I-765 that will be stable for at least the next 3-4 months. Do not rely on a change of address with the US Postal Service as the USPS will **NOT** forward EAD cards. If you need to change your address before your EAD is issued, you can do so on the Case Status website.

TRAVEL (While on OPT, you are required to have your I-20 signed within 6 months of your return into the US)

Before EAD Card is Issued	After EAD Card Issued
1) Valid passport 2) Valid F-1 visa 3) I-20 signed within the past 6 months 4) I-797 Receipt Notice 5) Offer letter from company (if available)	1) Valid passport 2) Valid F-1 visa 3) I-20 signed within the past 6 months 4) Employment Authorization Document (EAD) 5) Offer letter from company (if available)

EMPLOYMENT (Students are allowed ONLY 90 days of unemployment from start date to end date on EAD)

While on OPT, any changes to your address or employment need to be reported within 10 business days on the ISC's OPT Update Form: http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/internationalstudents/optupdate.aspx

Paid Employment	Must be at least 20 hours/week to be counted as employment.
Multiple Employers	Students may work for multiple employers as long as you are working at least 20 hours per week. Please keep records of all employers and hours worked.
Contract Employment	Contract dates and hours worked should be kept and available if requested by DHS. Must average at least 20 hours/week within each month.
Self-Employment	Must work and document at least 20 hours per week and have all proper business licenses.
Unpaid Employment (Volunteer/Unpaid Internship)	Must maintain 20 hours per week and not violate any labor laws. Important to keep records of time or request letter from company with amount of hours you will be volunteering per week.

OPT COMPLETION (It is essential that your SEVIS record is maintained and completed properly so you will not have any problems re-entering the US in the future.)

60-day grace period	Transferring Schools	Change of Status	24 Month STEM Extension
You are allowed a 60-day grace period upon completion of your OPT. If you leave before your OPT ends you **must** notify the ISC, or you may have problems re-entering the US on later visits. Send an email to one of the advisors with the exact date that you will leave the US.	If you plan to transfer to another school, during your OPT or within the 60-day grace period after it, submit the ISC's "Transfer Out" form found on the ISC's website.	It is very important that you inform the ISC when you change to another visa status, such as an H1-B. Please submit your approval notice to the ISC after you change to status. Remember you must keep your F-1 status valid until your change of status is approved.	Students in a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) degree could be eligible to apply for a 24-month OPT extension. You can apply as early as 90 days before your OPT ends. Your application for extension must be received by the USCIS before your Post-OPT ends**.** • Must work for E-Verified employer. • Must be able to provide I-983 Training Plan. • Must be paid.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I start working if I receive my EAD card early?
You cannot begin working until the authorized start date on your Employment Authorization Document.

Does my visa need to be valid while on OPT?
No, you are allowed to remain in the U.S. with an expired visa. Your visa only needs to be valid any time you are entering the U.S. from abroad.

Do I need to purchase health insurance?
It is not required; however it is highly recommended that you have health insurance if it is not being provided through your employer. If you would like to continue your Ascension health insurance on OPT, you cannot let your Ascension insurance lapse more than 30 days or you will not be eligible to re-enroll through the ISC.

Can I take classes while on OPT?
Registering for classes may automatically cancel your OPT. You are only allowed to take classes that are "incidental" (ex. Cooking, Recreational, etc.). Please speak to an immigration advisor at the ISC before taking classes.

I lost my EAD card, how do I replace it?
The only way to receive a new EAD card is by filling out a new I-765 form and submitting it to USCIS with supporting documents and paying $410 to U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Can I volunteer at my company while I wait for my EAD card?
This may violate labor laws. Find more information about unpaid employment in the U.S. Department of Labor website
http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.htm

Who to contact for further questions?

Lucas Olson – lolson@mail.sdsu.edu
Lisa Lyons – llyons@sdsu.edu
Jane Kalionzes – jkalionz@mail.sdsu.edu
USCIS National Customer Service Center- 1-800-375-5283