APPLICATION PROCESSING AND TRACKING

1) Receipt Notice
After USCIS receives your OPT application, you should receive an email or text message from them within 1 week if you submit Form G-1145 with the application. An I-797 paper receipt notice will be mailed to you from the USCIS Service Center within 4 weeks after they receive your application. If you do not receive the I-797 from USCIS and the money has not been deducted from your account within 4 weeks, contact USCIS or the ISC.

Change of Address - Use an address on your I-765 that will be stable for the next 3-5 months. Do not rely on a change of address with the US Postal Service as USPS will NOT forward EAD cards. If you need to change your address before your EAD is issued, you can do this on the USCIS Case Status website.

2) Application Tracking
On the I-797 receipt notice, you will find an application tracking number. Use this tracking number to sign up for an account on the USCIS Case Status Website at https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do to receive email updates on your application. You should use the same U.S. address that you wrote on your I-765 application.

Please note: after signing up for the account, you will only receive a few emails from USCIS, such as when they are mailing you a new document or when there is an update to your application.

Check your I-797 receipt notice to ensure that all information is correct (your name and U.S. address). If there is an error, contact USCIS immediately to correct the error.

3) Processing
The current average processing time is 3 to 4 months, but it can take between 2 ½ to 5 months to process your OPT application. If your Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) has not been approved, visit USCIS at https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/ (Form=I-765 and Field Office=Potomac Service Center).

If the “received date” on your I-797 receipt notice is on or before the “Case Inquiry Date”, then on that webpage under “Case management tools”, you can “Inquire about a case outside normal processing.” If the “received date” on your I-797 receipt notice is after the “Case Inquiry Date”, it is too early to submit an inquiry to USCIS about your application and you’ll need to wait.

TRAVEL (While on OPT, you are required to have your I-20 signed within 6 months of the date you will re-enter the U.S.)

Before EAD Card is Issued
1) Valid passport
2) Valid F-1 visa
3) I-20 signed for travel on Page 2 within past 6 months
4) I-797 Receipt Notice
5) Offer letter from company (if available)

After EAD Card is Issued
1) Valid passport
2) Valid F-1 visa
3) I-20 signed for travel on Page 2 within past 6 months
4) Employment Authorization Document (EAD card)
5) Letter from company confirming your employment or offer letter from company (if available)

EMPLOYMENT (Students are allowed ONLY 90 days of unemployment from start date to end date on the EAD card)
All employment, internships, and volunteer work must be directly related to your major field of study on Page 1 of your I-20.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paid Employment</th>
<th>Must be at least 20 hours per week to be counted as employment.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Employers</td>
<td>Students may work for multiple employers as long as you are working at least 20 hours per week total. Please keep records of all employers and hours worked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract Employment</td>
<td>Please keep records of all contract dates and hours worked so they are available if requested by DHS. Must average at least 20 hours per week within each month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employment</td>
<td>Must work and document at least 20 hours per week and have all required U.S. and California business licenses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid Employment (Volunteer/Unpaid Internship)</td>
<td>Must maintain 20 hours per week and not violate any labor laws. Important to keep records of time or request letter from company with volunteer dates and number of hours you volunteer per week.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Updated September 2018
MAINTAINING YOUR F-1 IMMIGRATION STATUS (It is essential that your SEVIS record contains your correct employment and personal information so you will not have any problems re-entering the U.S. in the future.)

How do I maintain my legal immigration status while on OPT?
In addition to following the Employment requirements on Page 1, you MUST report all employment information and changes in your U.S. address and phone number in your SEVP Portal Account, which sends the information to your SEVIS immigration record. After your OPT is approved, you will receive an email from SEVP to create your SEVP Portal Account. Always enter the actual dates that you are employed and the physical address of your employment. For changes to your email address, you must email the ISC with your new email address so we can update your SEVIS record for you. All updates must be submitted within 10 days of the change.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>60-day Grace Period</th>
<th>Transferring Schools</th>
<th>Change of Status</th>
<th>24-Month STEM Extension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are allowed a 60-day grace period upon completion of your OPT, which is the end date on your EAD card. If you depart the U.S. before your OPT ends and do not plan to finish it, you must notify the ISC or you may have problems re-entering the U.S. in the future. Send an email to the ISC with the exact date that you will depart the U.S.</td>
<td>If you plan to transfer to another school in the U.S., you must submit the Acceptance Letter to the new school and the “Transfer Out” form (found on the ISC’s website). You may submit these documents to the ISC during your OPT or within the 60-day grace period after the completion of your OPT.</td>
<td>It is very important that you inform the ISC when you change to another visa status, such as an H1-B. Please email your approval notice to the ISC after your change of status approval. You must keep your F-1 status valid until your change to the new status goes into effect.</td>
<td>Students with a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) degree may be eligible to apply for a 24-month OPT STEM extension. You can apply as early as 90 days before your OPT ends and your application must be received by USCIS before your OPT ends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Must be paid employment.  
• Must work for E-Verified employer.  
• Must work minimum 20 hours per week.  
• Must be able to provide I-983 Training Plan.  
• No staffing companies. |

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I start working if I receive my EAD card early?
You can begin working on or after the authorized start date on your Employment Authorization Document, but not before.

Does my F-1 visa need to be valid while on OPT?
No, you are allowed to remain in the U.S. with an expired F-1 visa. Your visa only needs to be valid when you are entering the U.S. from another country.

Do I need to purchase health insurance?
It is not required; however, it is highly recommended that you have health insurance if your employer does not provide it. You can purchase JCB health insurance in 3-month blocks during your Post-Completion OPT within 30 days of the expiration of your current health insurance. JCB health insurance is not available to students on OPT STEM Extension.

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 international student 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 completing a new I-765 form and submitting it to USCIS with supporting documents and paying the $410 fee again.

Can I volunteer at my company while I wait for my EAD card?
This may violate U.S. labor laws. You and your prospective employer can visit the U.S. Department of Labor website at http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.htm for detailed information about unpaid employment.

Who can I contact with further questions?
Lisa Lyons - llyons@sdsu.edu  
Laura Ribitzky - lribitzky@sdsu.edu  
USCIS National Customer Service Center - 1-800-375-5283 or www.uscis.gov

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