POST COMPLETION
OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING
FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS
What is OPT?

OPT is an abbreviation for Optional Practical Training.

OPT is an optional benefit to F-1 status that allows F-1 students to take part in practical training full-time for one year after completing their program of study.
The most important thing to remember about OPT is **Timing**!

...but first
Eligibility

F-1 students are eligible when:

• They are enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year (9 months) on the same SEVIS Record.

• Training is directly related to the major field of study.

• They complete their program of study.
What does it mean to “complete my program of study?”

You have finished all the classes required for your program and
  • You are in the process of completing your thesis or dissertation OR

  • Filing fee - ok

Your completion date becomes your new I-20 program ending date.
  • Quarter ending date or
  • The last day of the month if you are working on-campus on a TA or GSR contract

Your completion date is NOT the day you graduate or receive your degree
Importance of the completion of program of study date

- You must finish your program of study, before you can begin OPT.
- Your OPT start date is based upon your I-20 ending date.

Your program completion date becomes your I-20 ending date
OPT can overlap Filing Fee

UCDavis Program of Study

CPT

OPT

STEM OPT

H-1B

Filing Fee
Recommended Timeline

- Do not apply for OPT more than one quarter before you file the thesis/dissertation.

Example: If you file too soon and plan to finish your thesis/dissertation while on OPT, you *may* not finish in time and will have no option to remain in the U.S. to complete your degree following OPT.

- Additional documentation from your academic advisor/PI is required to apply earlier.
- SISS recommends that you file the quarter before you file the thesis/dissertation.

UCDAVIS

Services for International Students & Scholars (SISS)
Timing of the OPT Process

1. Submit iGlobal request three-four months before you would like to begin work.
2. Submit complete application with supporting documents to USCIS
3. Stay in status while on OPT by reporting to https://iglobal.ucdavis.edu
   • Check all the regulations about maintaining status here: http://siss.ucdavis.edu/students/current_students/employment/OPT-info.html
iGlobal Services Home Page

Online Services for International Students, Scholars, and Staff: Update your institutional information, request signatures, work authorization, certificate of enrollments, sign-up for sessions, and more.

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About Services for International Students and Scholars (SISS)

Established in 1998, Services for International Students and Scholars (SISS) reports to the Vice Provost for Global Affairs. SISS is helping to build a campus community that includes students and scholars from over 100 countries and six continents. SISS serves over 6,000 international students, faculty, and researchers and their accompanying family members who come to UC Davis each year. We welcome the world to UC Davis.

SISS assists incoming and current international students and scholars, and their families with visa and immigration issues while they are at UC Davis. In addition to preparing the necessary documents to apply for a U.S. visa, SISS assists international students and scholars in maintaining their legal status while in the United States. SISS also provides orientation, assistance, information, and referral to international students, faculty, and researchers regarding financial, personal, cultural, and academic concerns.
Optional Practical Training Grad

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an employment benefit where for F-1 students can apply what they have learned in a degree program through off-campus employment after completion of all degree requirements. Employment approval takes at least 90 days, so careful planning is required.

How to Apply for OPT

1. Attend an OPT workshop or view the online OPT workshop.
2. Meet with your Academic Advisor(s) to discuss your degree completion.
3. Use the OPT Calculator to help you customize a timeline.
4. Submit this form to SISS along with:
   - USCIS I-765 form
   - I-94 Record
5. Your Graduate Coordinator or Academic Advisor will also have to electronically sign off on these forms.
   - Once you fill out all required forms, your Coordinator or Advisor will get an e-mail to complete their recommendations.
6. After your I-20 is issued, you need to mail a copy of the new I-20 recommending OPT along with the other required materials to USCIS.

- Request An I-20 With An OPT Recommendation
- Graduate Coordinator Recommendation for OPT
- Submit OPT Request

- Incomplete
- Submit Another
- Follow-Up Required
- Optional
- Not Yet Available
- Awaiting Answer
- Complete
- Pending Review
- Denied
- Draft
Your OPT I-20

- SISS recommends OPT. USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) is the approval authority.

- Recommendation appears on page 2.
Best Practices:

- **Part 1.a.** Check Initial permission to Accept Employment if this is your first OPT.

- **Part 2. #5.a.:** (in care of) Put the name of a trusted friend if you think you will be moving during your pending application.

  **5.b.** Address must be valid when EAD card is sent.

- **#14.** If you do not have an SSN you can request one here!
Best Practices Continued:

- #24. and 25. Write F-1 Student
- #27. Write (C)(3)(B)
- Do not use commas.

Part 3

3. Telephone number
4. Mobile number
5. Email address

7.a. When signing, make sure your signature fits INSIDE the box; no touching any lines.

7.b. Date of Signature
What if I have had CPT or OPT in the past (at any school) or what if I have had more than 1 SEVIS number?

- Use **Part 6. Additional Information** to provide all previously used SEVIS numbers and evidence of any previously authorized CPT or OPT and the academic level at which it was authorized.

- If you need more space than what is provided in Part 6., you may make copies of Part 6. Type or print your name and A-Number (if any) at the top of each sheet; indicate the Page Number, Part Number, and Item Number to which your answer refers; and sign and date each sheet.
Preparing your OPT Application

- Download and print a copy of your most recent I-94.
- Complete the I-765 form.
- Complete **G-1145** (optional: USCIS will text you the official receipt number of your application).
- Copy your passport biographical page (with photo and expiration date).
- SISS will email you when your new I-20 is ready.
- Copy all the pages of your new I-20 (keep the original).
- Provide copies of I-20’s with previously authorized CPT or OPT.

**IMPORTANT 30 Day Rule:** USCIS (United States Citizenship & Immigration Service) must receive your OPT application within 30 days of your SISS International Student Advisor’s recommendation date of OPT. Please refer to the date next to your advisor’s signature on page 1 your OPT I-20.
Sample Check or Money Order

Chisaho Hirozane
18 Russell Blvd.
Davis, CA 95616

Check 2281
date May 2, 2011

Pay to the order of: U.S. Department of Homeland Security

$$$

$$ dollars and 00/100 cents only

for __________________________

Chisaho Hirozane

For the current I-765 application fee, visit www.uscis.gov
Other Means of Payment

OPT Photo Requirements

• All photos must be of only the applicant and must be identical.

• All photos must meet the specifications for full frontal/passport photos and must be no more than 30 days old when an application is filed.

• Make sure pictures are clear with a white background.

• Pictures must be 2 x 2 inches (51 x 51 mm) in size.

• Print your full name and SEVIS number (10-digit number beginning with N in the top left corner of your I-20) in pencil on the back of each photo.

• To see if your photos meet the standard, use the Department of State photo tool!
When Can I Apply?

- As early as 90 days prior to program completion date and up to 60 days after completion date (not recommended-USCIS must receive application by 60th day).
- Processing takes approximately 90 days from the date your OPT package is received by USCIS.
- You may lose training time if you apply less than 30 days before program completion date and want to begin working before the end of your 60 day grace period.
- You do not need a job to apply for OPT
- Cannot Volunteer while waiting for OPT approval and EAD card.
Application Timeline

Completion Date

OPT start date must be within 60 days* from program completion date

You cannot work during this period

Can apply as early as 90 days before and up to 60 days after completion date

12 months of OPT

You cannot work during this period

60-day grace period

* Must be received by USCIS by 60th day

Services for International Students & Scholars (SISS)
Choosing an OPT Start Date

You have a 60-day period from the program completion date to begin OPT.

Your OPT starting date can be as early as the day after your program ending date or any day up to 60 days after your program ending date.
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OPT Timeline Calculator

Use the **OPT Timeline Calculator** to get customized information about:

- When to submit your OPT request to SISS
- When to submit your OPT application to USCIS
- When to expect a decision from USCIS
- When to expect to be able to begin working
- When you must begin working (will count maximum unemployment days*)
- How to stay in status during your OPT period

*Maximum allowed unemployment days = 90.

We recommend that you download and save this calculator for use as you work through the OPT process.

Services for International Students & Scholars (SISS)
Using the **OPT Timeline Calculator**

- Enter Type of Degree, Program End Date and Contract information if you are working on campus
- The calculator will provide the start dates you can choose from and a recommended start date based on that day’s date.
1. Once you choose a start date, you will get customized information on when to apply to both SISS and USCIS.

2. Enter the issue date from your new I-20 in the blue box for customized mailing information.
1. Sample timeline— if USCIS got your paperwork today
2. Unemployment end (date you must begin working by)
3. Your customized timeline for USCIS (fill in blue box)
4. How to stay in status while on OPT

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**Sample** wait time for USCIS processing:
- If USCIS received your complete OPT application **today**, you could expect a decision in 48 days before your authorized employment period begins. Wait to begin employment until the start date.

**Official** processing status can be verified using the WAC number from the I-797C receipt notice.
- Official USCIS processing status website: https://egov.uscis.gov/casesstatus/isis
- With the Employment Start Date you **requested**, your 90 days unemployment eligibility.

**Customized Estimated timeline** using the date from the I-797C receipt notice
- Enter the date from I-797C Receipt from USCIS:
- Expected completion of EAD card processing:
- Estimated days of unemployment you will count before receiving your EAD card.

**Stay in status** by reporting all Employment and Address changes within 10 days.
- Report here: http://sis.s.uchicago.edu/students/current_students/opt.cfm
- Submit a copy of your EAD card to SISS in person or via email at **sis@ucdavis.edu**
- Keep personal records of employment, hours, and how it is related to your major field.

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**Services for International Students & Scholars (SISS)**
You can only begin paid or unpaid training when:

- You have received your EAD (Employment Authorization Document) and

- The date of your authorized training period has begun (refer to the dates on your EAD card)
Employment is an extension of what you learned and must be directly to your major field of study

Ways to Show Direct Relationship:

- **Job Description**
- **Degree Required**
- **Coursework**
- **Ask a professor**
- **Document relationship**
Review all information -- name, date of birth, validity dates -- for accuracy! If any information is incorrect you must contact USCIS right away!
Once you have been approved for OPT, you must have the following 5 items to return to the U.S.

1. Unexpired passport, valid for 6 months in the future.
2. Unexpired F-1 visa.
3. Most recent I-20 with a current travel signature • (travel signatures are only valid for 6 months on OPT).
4. I-797 receipt notice/EAD card*.
5. Proof of job/job search/training.

Risk of being denied entry for if entering without
*If you have your EAD card you MUST return with a job offer
What if I’m traveling and my visa has expired?

Bring all your travel documents and apply for an extension
What if I have to cancel OPT?

- SISS can cancel your OPT in SEVIS if you haven’t physically mailed your application.

- Once you have mailed your application, you cannot cancel your time or receive a refund.

- Please contact SISS right away if you find yourself in this situation!
What if I get accepted to another degree program?

- While on OPT you are still an F-1 student based on a UC Davis I-20.

- If you start another degree program at UC Davis or another institution, your OPT will end when the day before your new degree program start date at UC Davis or the date we transfer your record to your new institution.
What about OPT Reporting?

You will not be able to report OPT until the first day of your OPT employment.

- OPT Reporting Requirements
- How to report
- Report using [https://iglobal.ucdavis.edu](https://iglobal.ucdavis.edu) within 5 days of a change
- Login under Limited Services using your student ID, Date of Birth and a temporary PIN number that you can have emailed to yourself.
- Upload your Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) the first time you report.
- Report any changes of:
  - Legal name
  - Residential or mailing address
  - Email address (permanent, non-UCD)
  - Employer name and address
  - Employment status
    - loss of employment
    - start & end dates of employment
  - How employment is directly related to your major field of study
  - Departure from the U.S. (permanent leave)
  - Change of Status (such as H-1B approval, etc.)
IMPORTANT NOTE:
THE SEVIS OPT PORTAL

What is the portal? – a means for students on OPT to directly report employment and address changes directly to SEVIS

What is your responsibility as a UC Davis student? – you must report all changes already discussed

BUT

PLEASE report all required OPT changes through iGlobal
Contact SISS

• If you have additional questions about your OPT application/process, come to drop-in advising:
  • Mondays: 1-3:45pm
  • Thursdays: 1-3:45pm

OR

• Email siss@ucdavis.edu with any questions you have

• We also have OPT workshops some Fridays. Check website for schedule.

NO drop-ins or appointments on Fridays