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POST COMPLETION
OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Contents

OPT

Eligibility

Program completion

Start date

Timing

I-765 instructions

Requesting through iGlobal

Application materials

Other considerations

I-797 Receipt Notice and Submission

OPT Reporting

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What is OPT?

- OPT is an abbreviation for *Optional Practical Training*

- OPT is an optional benefit to F-1 status allowing students to obtain practical work experience full-time for one year **after completing their program of study**

Eligibility

F-1 students are eligible after:

- Being enrolled full-time for one full academic year (9 months) on the same SEVIS Record

- Completing their program of study
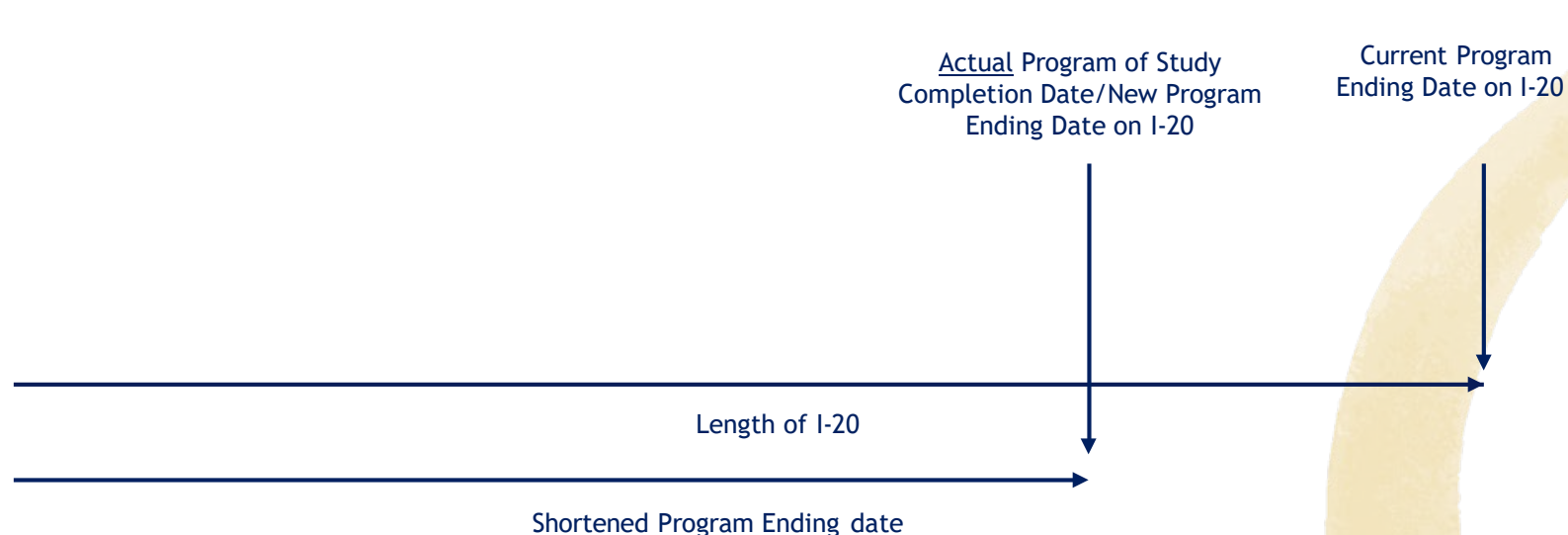
AND

Training must be directly related to the major field of study

What do you mean by:
"<u>Completing my program of study?</u>"

- **Program completion =**
  - You have finished all classes required to graduate

  - Your completion date <u>becomes</u> your new I-20 program ending date (if different from original).

  - Completion end date = term/quarter ending date *<u>OR</u>*

  - The last day of the month if you are working on-campus (which is rare for undergraduate students)

  - Your I-20 will be shortened to the date that you actually complete your program of study

    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 after your I-20 ending date.

Actual Program of Study
Completion Date/New Program
Ending Date on I-20

Current Program
Ending Date on I-20

Length of I-20

Shortened Program Ending date

Your program completion date becomes your new I-20 ending date

Choosing an OPT Start Date

You have 60 days from the program completion date to begin OPT. This is also your *grace period.*

Your OPT start 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.

Day 1   Day 30   Day 60

Program end date
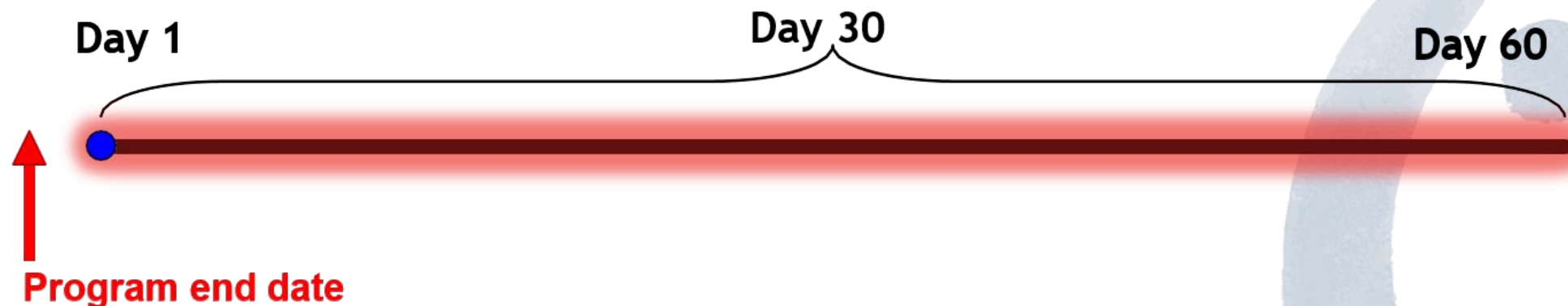
OPT Timeline Calculator

Use the [OPT Timeline Calculator](#) to get customized information about:

- Submitting your OPT request to SISS
- Submitting your OPT application to USCIS
- Counting unemployment*
- Maintaining status during your OPT period

Maximum allowed unemployment days = 90

Download and save this calculator to use during your OPT application

Using the OPT Timeline Calculator

https://siss.ucdavis.edu/optional-practical-training

Enter

- Type of degree (Bachelor's)
- Program End Date
- Contract information if you are working on campus

The calculator recommends start dates

Customize your OPT Timeline

Please plan ahead: SISS takes up to two weeks to process your request; USCIS takes **90 days**

1. Submit your iGlobal OPT request to SISS between: 9/11/2018 and 2/8/2019

- USCIS takes 90 days to process OPT requests; desired start date < 90 days away. MM/DD/YYYY

2. Enter the date next to the Advisor Signature on page 1 of the <u>new</u> I-20 issued by SISS:

- USCIS **only** accepts materials during your **Processing Period** 10/2/2018 through 3/1/2019

Maintain timely reporting to stay in status

Maintain F-1 Status during OPT

<u>Stay in status</u> by reporting all Employment and Address changes **within 10 days**.

- **Report** employer and address to SISS after OPT starts: 3/1/2019
- Report using the iGlobal portal: https://iglobal.ucdavis.edu   (Limited Services option)
- Keep personal records of employment, hours, and how it is related to your major field of study.
- Unemployment calculator   helps track all unemployment days (90 cumulative).

When will I get my EAD card?   USCIS takes an average of 90 days from the I-797 receipt date.

Can I work before I get my EAD card?

- You must have your card in hand to begin working
- You cannot work OR volunteer until the authorized period of employment begins (dates on card)

The most important thing to remember about OPT is
Timing!

1. Submitting request to SISS
2. Submitting application to USCIS

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Recommended Timeline

- Submit a request for OPT to iGlobal one quarter before you think you will finish all the courses you need to graduate

Other critical timeframes

- **USCIS must receive your application**
  - No more than 90 days prior to program completion date
  - No more than 60 days after completion date (not recommended-results in unemployment accrual)
  - Within 30 days of the OPT I-20 issue date (the I-20 issue date is the date next to your advisor's signature on page 1 of the I-20)

- USCIS processing takes approximately 90 days from the Notice Date on your I-797 receipt

Application Timeline

You cannot work during this period

You cannot work during this period

Apply

Work Authorization

Grace Period

Completion Date

12 months of OPT

60-day grace period

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

=30 days
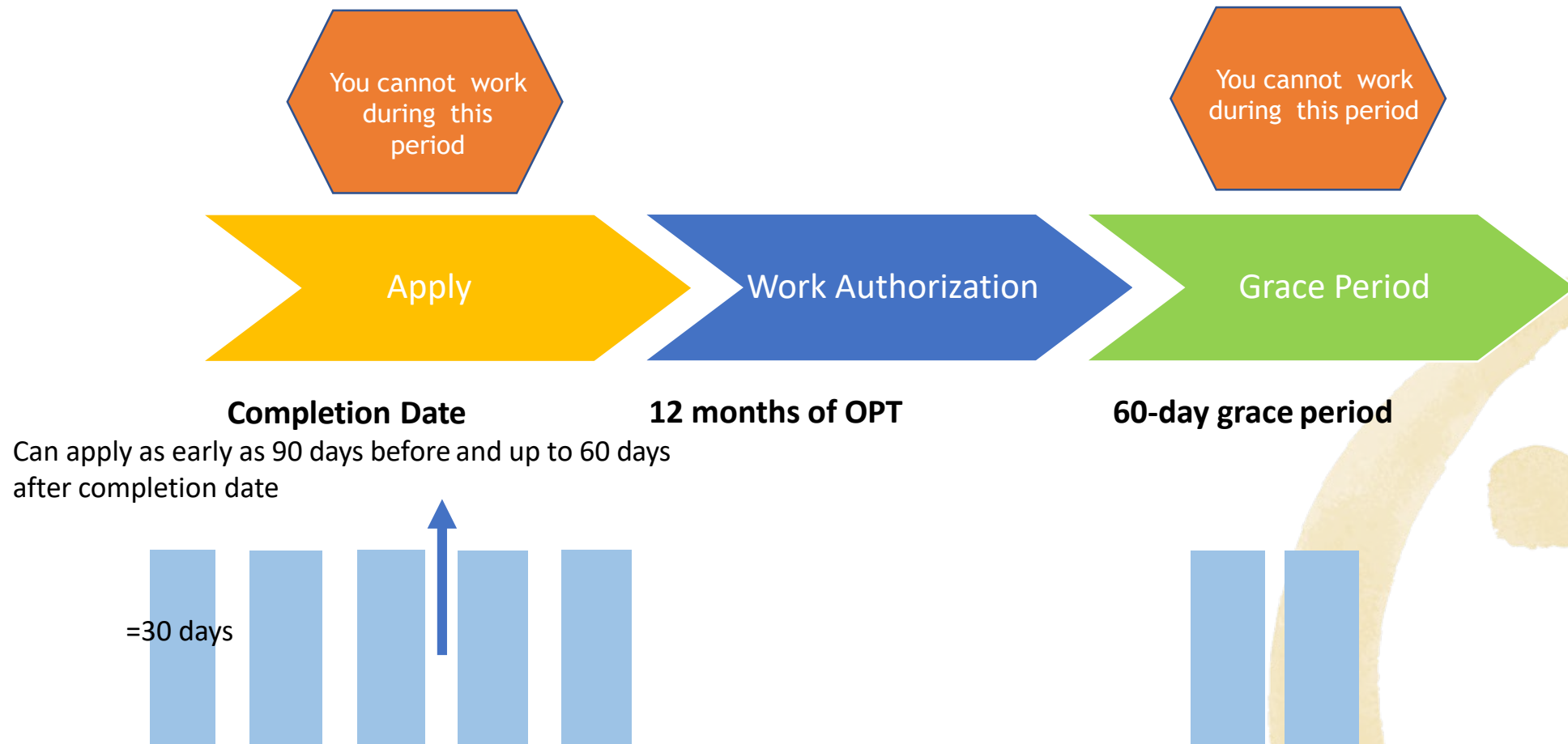
When can I start?
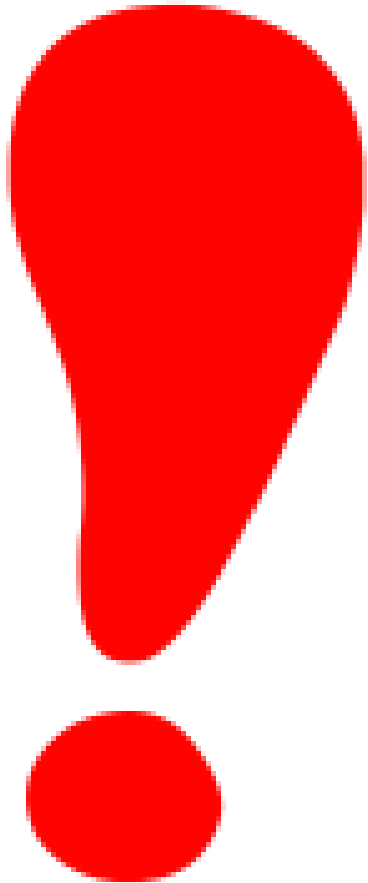
- You can *only* begin paid or unpaid training when:

- 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)

- You are not allowed to volunteer while waiting for OPT approval and EAD card.
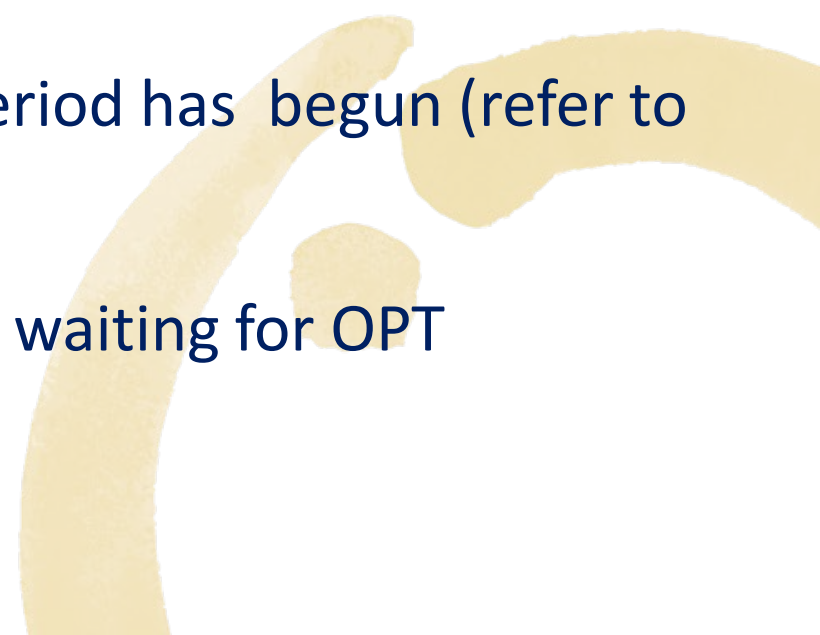
I-765 Instructions

Fill out the form using the instructions on our OPT webpage and in iGlobal at F-1 Practical Training, Optional Practical Training.

How to submit a request in iGlobal for OPT

1. Log into iGlobal
2. Click on F-1 Practical Training
3. Click on Optional Practical Training (Undergraduates)

1. In iGlobal, review instructions and links under **How to Apply for OPT. Take your time to read and follow the instructions carefully and thoroughly.**
2. Determine how many forms to fill out depending on the number of majors you have.
3. Click on **Request An I-20 With An OPT Recommendation**
   - Upload required documents
   - Submit
4. Click on **Dean's Office Advisor & Major Advisor Recommendation for OPT**
   - Fill out information
   - Submit
5. Click submit
6. Your SISS Advisor will receive the electronic forms after your dean's office and major advisors complete the recommendation forms

Other application materials

To submit materials in the correct order review the information:
- On our website: https://siss.ucdavis.edu/optional-practical-training
- In the iGlobal instructions
- In the email notification that your OPT I-20 is ready

Your OPT I-20

- SISS recommends OPT

- USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) is the approval authority

- Recommendation appears on page 2

Sample Check or Money Order

Check or money order payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Check the current filing fee before submitting. Do not pay the biometric fee.

- Make payable to the order of exactly as it is in this sample
- Do not abbreviate Department of Homeland Security

Credit Card Payment Option

https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450

OPT Photo Requirements

Clear image,
White
background

2 x 2 inches
(51 x 51 mm)

- 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.

- Print your full name, birthdate 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.

And what about…

An RFE

The EAD card

Job relation to major

Traveling out of the United States

Renewing my visa

Canceling

Starting a new course of study

When you receive you I-797 Receipt Notice

Unemployment

What is a Request for Evidence (RFE)?

- When USCIS needs clarification or more documentation about your OPT application
- Sent to the address you provide to USCIS in the I-765 application form
- Usually a blue cover sheet with a response deadline
- Usually an additional sheet(s) with a list of information to provide

What to do if you get an RFE?

- Schedule an appointment with your SISS Advisor immediately
- Prepare all documents requested – **even if you already submitted them with the original request**
- Make photocopies of all documents before sending
- Review packet before mailing
- Send by the deadline indicated on the cover sheet

RFEs are serious

Not submitting what is requested in a timely manner may lead to an OPT denial

Sample Employment Authorization Document EAD

- **Review all information -- name, date of birth, validity dates -- for accuracy!**
- **If any information is incorrect contact your SISS Advisor & USCIS right away!**

How do I know if my job directly related to my major?

Employment is an extension of what you learned and must be directly related to your major field of study

- Ways to document a direct relationship:
  - Job Description requires knowledge and skills you learned at UC Davis
  - Your degree is a minimum or preferred job requirement
  - You took specific coursework that makes you qualified for the job

- If in doubt:
  - Ask a professor

- Maintain documented evidence of relationship

Traveling during OPT

For more information https://siss.ucdavis.edu/resources/travel/international-students

Once you have applied for/been approved for OPT,
you must have the following 5 items when you 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)

1. I-797 receipt notice/**EAD card***

2. 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

    - Ask your SISS Advisor for a sample job offer letter to provide to your employer

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?

- Contact your SISS Advisor
  - Your SISS Advisor can cancel your OPT in SEVIS if you haven't mailed your application.

  - If you have mailed your application, you will need to withdraw. Consult your SISS Advisor for guidance. You will not receive a refund.

What if I go back to school before OPT expires?

If you are admitted to a program at UC Davis or another institution that requires you to have an I-20, your OPT will end the day before your new degree program start date. Discuss this with your SISS Advisor because it will require either a *Change of Level I-20* for UC Davis or a *SEVIS Transfer* to another institution.

While on OPT, you are permitted to take a class here and there if the institution allows you to do so as a non-admitted student (meaning not needing an I-20 for the other program).

I-797 Receipt Notice

- You will receive an I-797 Receipt Notice approximately 3 weeks after you submit your OPT application to USCIS
- Your Receipt Notice will have the Received Date and Notice Date
- The Received Date is the date that USCIS received your application
- The Notice Date is the date that USCIS created the receipt to notify you that they have your application
- If your EAD is approved, it should arrive at the address you provided in the I-765 application at least 90 days after the **NOTICE DATE**
- **YOU ARE REQUIRED TO SCAN AND EMAIL A COPY OF YOUR I-797 RECEIPT NOTICE TO YOUR SISS ADVISOR IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIPT**
  - Your SISS Advisor will verify that your I-797 was received within the 30 day required timeframe
  - If there is a problem with your Receipt Notice, your SISS Advisor will contact you to discuss options

What if I am unemployed?

- International students are required to maintain employment that is directly related to their field of study during the OPT authorized period

- Ninety (90) days of total unemployment is allowed (not consecutive but aggregate)

- Unemployment begins <u>after</u> the start date of your EAD

- Students approaching 90 days of unemployment must make plans to leave the United States or to transfer to another program of study

- Calculate your unemployment using the <u>unemployment calculator</u>

OPT Reporting Requirement

What is OPT Reporting?

- International students on OPT are required to report
  - New employment
  - End of employment
  - Changes to employment
  - Address Changes
  - Verification of employment every 6 months
- Reporting verifies to USCIS that you are not accumulating unemployment days
  - All unreported days will be considered unemployed days
  - USCIS will begin terminating student SEVIS records who exceed the 90 day unemployment limit

When do I report?

- You will not be able to report OPT until the first day of your OPT employment.
- You must report changes through iGlobal within 5 days of the change
  - Late reporting may be considered a status violation by USCIS
  - Late reporting may lead to unlawful presence

How do I report OPT & what do I report?

- Report using 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/change of 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.)

A word about the SEVIS OPT PORTAL

What is the portal?
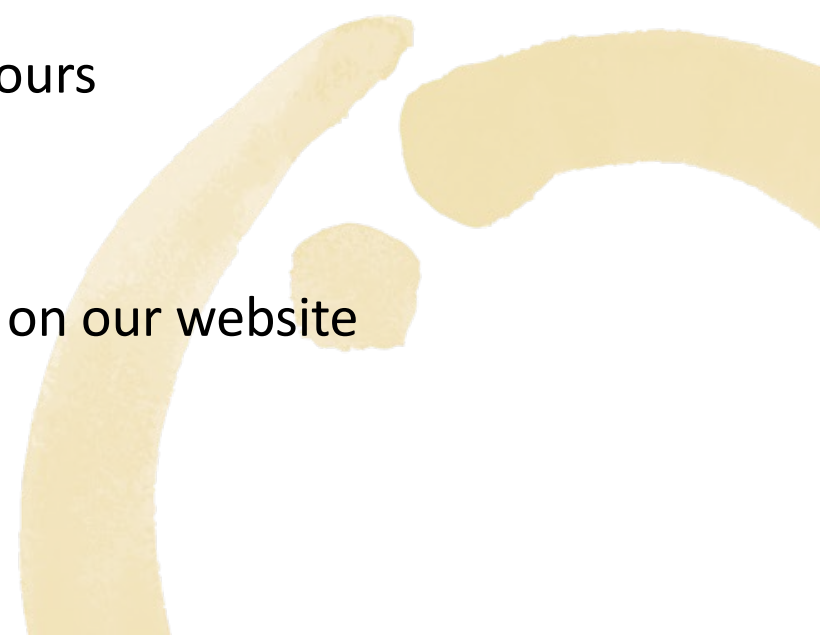- A way for students on OPT to directly report employment and address changes to SEVIS

Is the SEVIS portal mandatory?
- No and SISS does not currently support the portal

Can I report using the portal?
- No—for now report all OPT activities using iGlobal

Review of steps to Prepare your OPT Application

1. Choose your OPT start date – you do not need to have a job to apply
2. Fill out the [I-765 form](#).
   - Use the instructions on our OPT webpage and in the [iGlobal](#) OPT request form
3. Submit the OPT eform in iGlobal
4. SISS will email you when your new I-20 is ready
5. Optional courtesy check when you pick it up during drop-in hours
   - Mondays & Thursdays 1-3:45pm
6. Make a copy of your new I-20 to mail (keep original)
7. Mail documents in the order listed on the iGlobal e-Form and on our website
8. Report your OPT in a timely manner
9. Review this online workshop as often as needed

Contact SISS

- Come to drop-in advising if you have additional questions about your OPT application/process
  - Mondays: 1-3:45pm
  - Thursdays: 1-3:45pm

OR

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

SISS also conducts OPT workshops some Fridays
Check website for employment workshop schedule.

There are no scheduled drop-ins or appointments on Fridays

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