Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) Online Workshop
What is OPT?

- Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a type of employment authorization approved by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for eligible F-1 students interested in engaging in employment in the U.S. directly related to their major field of study after their degree completion.

- F-1 students are eligible for an initial 12 months of OPT per higher degree level achieved.

- Applicants do not need an employment offer to apply for OPT.
Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible, F-1 students:

- Must have maintained valid F-1 status for at least one academic year
- **Must not** have had 12-months of OPT authorization for the same degree level
- **Must not** have accrued 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorization for the same degree level
  - Part-time CPT authorization does not affect OPT eligibility.
  - Heavy CPT usage (either part-time or full-time) can cause your OPT application to be subject to additional scrutiny.
- Must be completing a UCLA degree program in the next 90 days
- **Must not** have completed a UCLA degree program more than 60 days ago
- Must be within the U.S. at the time they submit their OPT application to USCIS
Application Timeline

When To Apply

- Students may request an OPT I-20 from the Dashew Center as early as 93 days before their program completion date (as confirmed on your Verification of Degree Completion Form)- see Slide 9 for earliest submission dates to the Dashew Center.
  - Students graduating in Winter 2022 must wait to submit their OPT I-20 requests to the Dashew Center after the campus reopens from the Winter Campus Closure

- It is highly recommended that students submit their OPT I-20 request to the Dashew Center at least 3 months before a student’s requested OPT start date.

- USCIS requires approximately 3-5 months to approve an OPT application.
Application Process

How To Apply

STEP 1: Complete the OPT Online Workshop

STEP 2: Pay the $40 Dashew Center **OPT Administrative Processing Fee**

STEP 3: Request an OPT I-20 from the Dashew Center

STEP 4: Receive OPT I-20 from the Dashew Center (via email or by FedEx)

STEP 5: Prepare and complete OPT application forms and supporting documents

STEP 6: Submit OPT application to USCIS for processing by mail or online
To request an OPT I-20, please:

- Update your email address in MyUCLA (make sure that you will have access to this email address after graduation, because it will be listed in your F-1 SEVIS record and used to create your SEVP Portal account)

And email the following to dcissflunit@saonet.ucla.edu:

- $40 OPT Administrative Processing Fee payment confirmation
- OPT I-20 Request Form
- Verification of Degree Completion Form
- F-1 Document Shipping Request Form (only required if you would like a paper-format OPT I-20 shipped to your address)

Your OPT I-20 will be issued within 15 business days and either emailed to you or mailed to your address (as indicated on your F-1 Document Shipping Request Form).
You must choose your OPT start date to request your new OPT I-20.

Please indicate your requested OPT start date on your OPT I-20 Request form.
Students must choose their OPT start date at the time they request their OPT I-20.

A requested OPT start date can be as early as 1 day after the program completion date and up to 60 days after the program completion date.

**NOTE:** Graduate students may set their program completion date to their defense date, filing date, or the official final quarter end date.

- It is recommended for graduate students to set their program completion date to the last day of their final quarter if they have an on-campus appointment and wish to work until the latest day possible.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Completion</th>
<th>Program End Date</th>
<th>OPT Start Date Window</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall Quarter 2022</td>
<td>12/9/2022</td>
<td>12/10/2022 – 02/07/2023</td>
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<td>(earliest submission to the Dashew Center: 09/06/2022)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>03/24/2023</td>
<td>03/25/2023 – 05/23/2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Law School Spring 2023</td>
<td>05/12/2023</td>
<td>05/13/2023 – 07/11/2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Quarter 2023</td>
<td>06/16/2023</td>
<td>06/17/2023 – 08/15/2023</td>
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<td>(earliest submission to the Dashew Center : 03/13/2023)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Session A 2023</td>
<td>08/04/2023</td>
<td>08/05/2023 – 10/03/2023</td>
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<td>09/16/2023 – 11/14/2023</td>
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<td>(earliest submission to the Dashew Center : 06/12/2023)</td>
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Select any date within this period as your OPT Start Date.
Application Timeline

Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date

90 days

Program Completion date

Program Completion date
Application Timeline

- Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date
- Program Completion date
- Requested OPT start date must fall within the 60-day grace period
Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date.

Program Completion date

90 days

60 days

Requested OPT start date must fall within the 60-day grace period.

12 months

OPT End Date
Application Timeline

- Apply up to 3 months before Program Completion date
- Program Completion date
- Apply up to 90 days before Program Completion date
- OPT End Date
- Students must depart the U.S., transfer to another school or change visa status by this date

Grace period: Students may remain in the U.S. but may not continue employment

- Requested OPT start date must fall within the 60-day grace period
Verification of Degree Completion

This form must be signed by an Academic Counselor or Student Affairs Officer (SAO).

Your Academic Counselor or SAO must confirm your expected program completion date.

Electronic signatures will be accepted.

Undergraduate students must be enrolled in at least one degree-required course taken on campus during their final quarter.

UCLA
Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars

VERIFICATION OF DEGREE COMPLETION

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is designed to provide F-1 students an opportunity to gain practical experience in their field of study. Students may apply for OPT as early as 90 days before the completion date of their degree program. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) considers a student's completion date as the date the degree requirements are completed, not the date that students participate in their commencement ceremony. Graduate students may use their defense date, thesis date, or the actual quarter end date as their completion date. Graduate students may not continue to work or receive funding/financial support from their department after their completion date.

Student's Name: ____________________________ Last Name: ___________ First Name: ____________________________

UCLA ID #: ____________________________ Date of Birth: ____________________________

Month Day Year

TO BE COMPLETED BY ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT

I verify that the student is expected to complete their degree requirements by:

__________________________ ____________________________ Academic Term: ____________________________

Month Day Year

Academic Program / Major: ____________________________

Degree to be awarded at time of completion: [ ] Bachelor's  [ ] Master's  [ ] Doctorate

Student's Cumulative GPA: ____________________________ Number of Units Currently Completed: ____________________________

Additional Comments:

Name of Student Affairs Officer (SAO) or Academic Counselor: ____________________________

Signature of SAO or Academic Counselor: ____________________________

School / Department: ____________________________ Phone / Extension: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

DCISS
109 Bradley International Hall  417 Charles Young Drive West, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1171  Phone: 310-384-5816  Fax: 310-384-5812
What does the OPT Administrative Processing Fee cover?

The Dashew Center OPT Administrative Processing Fee pays for systems required by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to maintain a student’s F-1 SEVIS record during their OPT period.

SEVIS maintenance fees are covered for currently enrolled UCLA students through enrollment fees. Since students will not be enrolled at UCLA during their OPT period, they will be charged an OPT Administrative Processing Fee by the Dashew Center, as SEVIS record maintenance is still required during a student’s OPT and STEM OPT Extension period to allow the Dashew Center to process F-1 benefits such as travel authorization, I-20 requests, STEM OPT Extension requests, Cap Gap requests, and OPT employment and address updates.

Students are required to pay the Dashew Center OPT Administrative Processing Fee each time they apply for Post-Completion OPT or STEM OPT Extension.
The Dashew Center OPT Administrative Processing Fee for the initial 12-Month Post-Completion OPT application is $40.00

To Pay the fee:
- Log in to your Dashew Center account
- Click on the ‘Pay’ link for ‘F-1 OPT: Initial 12-Months’
Follow the instructions on the payment site to pay the OPT Administrative Processing Fee by debit or credit card.

To review your payment submission, click on ‘My Payments’ and a record of your payment submission will appear.
Receipt of your payment will be sent to your email address from UCLA Corporate Financial Services.

A copy of your payment receipt is required for your OPT I-20 Request.
After you submit your OPT I-20 Request to the Dashew Center

- After you submit your OPT I-20 Request documents to the Dashew Center via email, an F-1 Counselor will issue your new OPT I-20 and send it to you via email or by FedEx (students who would like a paper-format I-20 shipped to their address must submit a completed F-1 Document Shipping Request Form with their OPT I-20 request documents).

- Once you receive your new OPT I-20, please sign the bottom of page 1 of the OPT I-20
  - If submitting your application by mail, make a copy of pages 1 and 2 to include with your OPT application.
  - If submitting your application online, please note that USCIS will accept an electronically reproduced original signature on the I-20. Digital signatures or your name typed in script font are not accepted.

- Prepare your OPT application for submission to USCIS by following the OPT Application Submission Instructions.
  - USCIS must receive your OPT application within 30 days of your OPT I-20 issue date (as indicated on page 1 of your OPT I-20, next to your F-1 Counselor’s signature)
OPT Application Materials
(for applications submitted to USCIS by mail)

- **I-765 Form**
- **2 U.S. style passport photos** – Photos must have been taken within 3 months of your OPT application submission. Write your name and SEVIS ID number on back of each photo.
- **$410 check or money order made payable to ‘U.S. Department of Homeland Security’** – Write your date of birth and SEVIS ID number on the front of the check in the memo section
  - On 9/29/2020, a U.S. District Court issued a preliminary injunction on USCIS’ Fee Schedule and Changes to Certain Other Immigration Benefit Request Requirements rule. USCIS will continue to accept the 8/25/20 edition of the I-765 Form and $410 filing fee for applications postmarked on or after 10/2/2020 until further notice.
- **1 copy of your I-94 Admission Record**
  - Electronic I-94: Print record from U.S. Customs and Border Protection [website](#), or
  - Paper I-94: Copy both front and back sides
- **1 copy of the most recent U.S. entry stamp in your passport**
- **1 copy of your passport biographical page**
- **1 copy of pages 1 and 2 of OPT I-20 (with your signature)**
- **1 copy of all CPT I-20s (if applicable)**
- **1 copy of any previous F-1 I-20s and/or J-1 DS-2019s with SEVIS ID numbers that are different than your current SEVIS ID (if applicable)**
- **1 copy of any other previous U.S. employment authorization documents (e.g. EAD card), if applicable**
As of 4/12/21, USCIS has made the online filing of the I-765 Form available to F-1 students applying for OPT. Please note that the Dashew Center does not have step-by-step instructions for filing OPT applications online, so please follow the instructions provided by USCIS if you choose to submit your application online.

To file your application online, please visit [https://www.uscis.gov/i-765](https://www.uscis.gov/i-765) and click on the blue ‘File Online’ button. The link will redirect you to a new page with instructions on how to create a USCIS account.

Once you have created a USCIS account, please select that you would like to file the I-765 Form to apply for OPT to be directed to the online I-765 Form. The questions on the online I-765 form will match the questions on the PDF I-765 Form, but will appear in a different order. It is recommended that you review the following Slides 22-43 of this workshop to prepare your I-765 Form, even if you will be submitting your application online.

You will see that you must upload supporting documents to complete your online application. Please wait until you receive your OPT I-20 from the Dashew Center before submitting the application, since the OPT I-20 is a required supporting document. Incomplete applications will be denied by USCIS.

Once you submit your completed OPT application online, you will be issued an application receipt number and will be able to access your application receipt notice through your USCIS account. Your EAD card will be mailed to the U.S. mailing address provided on your I-765 Form.
Please type and print the I-765 Form, or if completing by hand, use black ink only!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1. Reason for Applying</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am applying for (select only one box):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.a. Initial permission to accept employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.b. Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document, or correction of an employment authorization document NOT DUE to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) error.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.c. Renewal of my permission to accept employment. (Attach a copy of your previous employment authorization document.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 2. Information About You</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your Full Legal Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.a. Family Name (Last Name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.b. Given Name (First Name)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.c. Middle Name</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Names Used</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.a. Family Name (Last Name)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.b. Given Name (First Name)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.c. Middle Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.a. Family Name (Last Name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.b. Given Name (First Name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.c. Middle Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.a. Family Name (Last Name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.b. Given Name (First Name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.c. Middle Name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Select “Initial permission to accept employment”

I am applying for (select only one box):

1.a.  ☒ Initial permission to accept employment.
1.b.  ☐ Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document, or correction of my employment authorization document NOT DUE to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) error.

NOTE: Replacement (correction) of an employment authorization document due to USCIS error does not require a new Form I-765 and filing fee. Refer to Replacement for Card Error in the What is the Filing Fee section of the Form I-765 Instructions for further details.

1.c.  ☐ Renewal of my permission to accept employment. (Attach a copy of your previous employment authorization document.)
Part 2. Information About You

Your Full Legal Name

1.a. Family Name (Last Name)  
BRUIN

1.b. Given Name (First Name)  
Joe

1.c. Middle Name

Other Names Used

Provide all other names you have ever used, including aliases, maiden name, and nicknames. If you need extra space to complete this section, use the space provided in Part 6.

Additional Information.

2.a. Family Name (Last Name)

2.b. Given Name (First Name)

2.c. Middle Name
• This address must be an address in the U.S.
• Your EAD card will be shipped to the address you provide here.
• This mailing address must be valid for at least 4 months into the future from your OPT application submission date to USCIS.
• This address may be a residential, commercial, or P.O. Box address.

If you listed a ‘U.S. Mailing Address’ that is NOT your current, physical address, select “No,” provide the name of someone who resides at that address in the ‘In Care of Name’ field, 5.a., and complete #7.a – 7.d.
If you answered “No” for Question #6, please provide your physical address here.

**U.S. Physical Address**

7.a. Street Number and Name


7.c. City or Town

7.d. State [ ] 7.e. ZIP Code
If you have ever applied for benefits from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, you may have an A-Number (also known as a USCIS-Number).

F-1 students usually do not already have a USCIS Online Account Number. (Even if you have created a USCIS Online Account for your OPT application submission, USCIS Online Account Numbers are only generated after a complete application is received by USCIS.)
• Check “No” if you have never applied for an EAD from USCIS

• Check “Yes” if you have previously applied for an EAD. You must provide copies of your previous EADs.

• This question does not apply to previous on-campus employment or CPT

Answer

#10 and #11

10. Gender
   □ Male  □ Female

11. Marital Status
   □ Single  □ Married  □ Divorced  □ Widowed

12. Have you previously filed Form I-765?
   □ Yes  □ No
If you currently have a Social Security Number (SSN), enter the number here.

13a. Has the Social Security Administration (SSA) ever officially issued a Social Security card to you?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

NOTE: If you answered “No” to Item Number 13a., skip to Item Number 14. If you answered “Yes” to Item Number 13a., provide the information requested in Item Number 13b.

13b. Provide your Social Security number (SSN) (if known).
If you would like to apply for a new or replacement Social Security Number card with your OPT application, please check ‘Yes’ for Questions #14 & 15 and complete #16.a. - 17.b.

- If you are applying for a replacement Social Security Card, you will retain the same Social Security Number.

You will receive your Social Security Card in the mail 2 weeks after you receive your EAD card.

Check ‘No’ for Questions #14 & 15 if you do not want a new or replacement Social Security Card and skip #16.a. – 17.b.
List all countries of citizenship, as applicable.
Please submit copies of all country passports if you have more than one country of citizenship.

Provide your birth city/town/village and state/province

List the name of the country as it was named when you were born, even if its name has changed.
Make sure your Date of Birth is in the correct format: MONTH/DAY/YEAR (01/31/1998 not 31/01/1998)
Enter the information directly from your passport.

Your most recent U.S. entry date can be found on your paper or electronic I-94 Admission Record.

- If your most recent entry date on your I-94 and admission stamp do not match, please use the date on the I-94 Admission Record.

The name of the Port of Entry city from your most recent entry can be found on your most recent admission stamp or Travel History.

Leave blank.

Enter your I-94 Admission Record Number here.

This should match the country of citizenship on your I-20.

Enter immigration status at your last arrival and current immigration status (for most applicants, this should be 'F-1 Student' for both).

You can find your SEVIS number on the top left side of your current I-20.
Most Recent I-94

Admission (I-94) Record Number: 123456789 11
Most Recent Date of Entry: 2017 January 02
Class of Admission: F1
Admit Until Date: D/S
Details provided on the I-94 Information form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last/Surname</th>
<th>BRUIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First (Given) Name</td>
<td>JOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Date</td>
<td>1996 January 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passport Number</td>
<td>A123456789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of Issuance</td>
<td>Bruinsland</td>
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Retrieve a copy of your Electronic I-94 Admission Record on the CBP Website:

https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#!/home
Most Recent U.S. Entry Stamp

- Date of Last Entry to the U.S.: JAN 02 2017
- Place of Last Entry: LAX

Sample
27. Eligibility Category. Refer to the Who May File Form I-765 section of the Form I-765 Instructions to determine the appropriate eligibility category for this application. Enter the appropriate letter and number for your eligibility category below (for example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii)).

Use the code (c)(3)(B) for post-completion OPT.

Skip questions 28 – 31.b.
Select 1.a. to indicate that you have read and understood the questions.
Hand sign your name and provide the date of the signature.

USCIS will also accept an electronically reproduced original signature. Digital signatures or your name typed in script font are not accepted.

Read the entire declaration carefully.
Part 6 needs to be completed ONLY if:

- You have previously had other SEVIS IDs (different than your current SEVIS ID)
- You have ever been authorized for CPT or OPT

If neither of these apply to you, leave Part 6 blank and you are done with the I-765
If you have been previously authorized for CPT:

If you have had previous CPT authorization, please list all periods of part-time or full-time CPT, the appropriate degree objective, the employer’s name, and dates.

Please submit copies of any/all CPT I-20s.

Copy this ‘Page Number, Part Number, and Item Number’ for previous CPT authorization.
If you were previously authorized for OPT:

If you have previously been authorized for OPT, provide your USCIS # (located on your previous EAD card) here.

Copy this ‘Page Number, Part Number, and Item Number’ for previous OPT authorization.

Please list any periods of authorized part-time or full-time OPT, and the appropriate degree objective(s).

Please submit copies of any/all EAD cards.

(you may need to contact your previous schools if you are missing any of this information)

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<th>Part 6. Additional Information</th>
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<tr>
<td>If you need extra space to provide any additional information within this application, use the space below. If you need more space than what is provided, you may make copies of this page to complete and file with this application or attach a separate sheet of paper. 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.</td>
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<tr>
<th>1.a. Family Name (Last Name)</th>
<th>FAMILY NAME</th>
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<td>First Name</td>
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<th>2. A-Number (if any)</th>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
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<th>3.a. Page Number</th>
<th>2</th>
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<td>3.b. Part Number</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3.c. Item Number</td>
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<tr>
<th>3.d. Full-time Post-Completion OPT</th>
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<tr>
<td>(Bachelor's level)</td>
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<td>07/15/2017 - 07/14/2018 YSC1234567890</td>
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<td>See attached documentation for previous OPT authorization.</td>
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If you previously attended UCLA or another U.S. institution in F, J or M status and were issued a SEVIS ID number that is different from your current SEVIS ID:

Copy this ‘Page Number, Part Number, and Item Number’ for previous SEVIS IDs

Please list all previously used SEVIS numbers from all previous F/J/M programs in the U.S., including high school, short stays, community colleges, or previous I-20s at UCLA.

Please submit copies of those I-20s and DS-2019s.

(you may need to contact your previous school(s) if you are missing any of this information)
You have completed the I-765 Form!

Review all the information on the form for accuracy. You must submit ALL 7 pages of the I-765 to USCIS if submitting your application by mail.

Make a copy of your completed I-765 application to keep for your records, in case there is a problem with the application.
For applications submitted to USCIS by mail:

USCIS accepts the following payment methods for the $410 I-765 Form filing fee:

- **Personal Check**: Use a check from your personal U.S. debit/bank account. Funds will be drawn directly from your personal bank account.

  Note: Providing a personal check with insufficient funds or a Canadian check will result in the denial of your application.

- **Cashier’s Check**: Go to your local U.S. bank (where you have your debit account) and request a Cashier’s Check. A Cashier’s Check is a draft guarantee drawn from your bank’s own funds. Your bank will withdraw funds from your personal account to create the Cashier’s Check.

- **Money Order**: A money order can be purchased at a U.S. post office, Western Union or CVS/pharmacy. Cash will need to be exchanged to obtain a money order for a specified amount.

  **Note**: the Dashew Center recommends using a Personal Check or Cashier’s Check. A Personal Check or Cashier’s Check can be tracked and are more secure payment methods since they are guaranteed by a bank.
Joe Bruin  
12345 Main Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90095  

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

Four Hundred Ten and 00/100  

DOB: 01/01/1996  
SEVIS ID#: N00000000000  

Write your Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY) and your SEVIS ID # in the memo section.  

Note: Do NOT write on the back of your Personal Check or Cashier’s Check.
For applications submitted to USCIS online:

The online OPT application will redirect you to Pay.gov to make your $410 filing fee payment.

USCIS accepts the following payment methods for the $410 I-765 Form filing fee:

- **Withdrawal from a Checking or Savings Account (ACH):** You will be required to provide your account number and routing number.

- **U.S. Debit/Credit Card**
U.S. Style Passport Photos

Photo Requirements

- Photo must be new and recent (taken within 3 months of your OPT application submission)
- Photo cannot be the same photo used for your F-1 Visa or Passport
- Photo must be 2 inches by 2 inches
- White background only
- Neutral expression only
- Eyes and ears must be visible
- No glasses or eyewear
- Photos must be on photo stock paper and pre-cut (to 2 inches by 2 inches)

Recommended locations to have your photo taken:

Campus Photo Studio
Ackerman Union A-Level
310-206-8433

FedEx Office Ship & Ship Center
Westwood Location:
10924 Weyburn Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90024 • 310-443-5501

Wilshire South Location:
1520 Westwood Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90024 • 310-475-0789

Write LAST NAME, First Name and SEVIS ID Number on back side of photos.
Once you have prepared all of your OPT application forms and supporting documents using the [OPT Application Submission Instructions](#), please ship your application to the USCIS Chicago Lockbox.

- Please ship your application to USCIS using a courier service with mail tracking.

- If you need USCIS’ phone number to process your OPT application shipment, please use: 800-375-5283
Applicants who mailed their OPT application to USCIS will receive an I-797 Notice of Action Receipt Notice from USCIS approximately 2-4 weeks from the date their OPT application was received by USCIS.

Applicants who filed their OPT application online will be issued an application receipt number immediately after submitting their application and will be able to access their application receipt notice through their USCIS account.

Applicants can check the status of their OPT application online using the receipt number in their I-797 Notice of Action Receipt Notice on the USCIS Case Status page: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do

Applicants will receive a Notice of Approval from USCIS approximately 3-4 months from the date their OPT application was received by USCIS.

Applicants will receive their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card by mail to the Mailing Address provided on the I-765 Form approximately 3-5 months from the date the OPT application was received by USCIS.

Once your OPT application has been approved and your OPT start date has been reached, you will receive an email from SEVP with a link to create a SEVP Portal account. Follow the instructions provided in the email to create your account. If you are locked out of your SEVP Portal account, email OPT@saonet.ucla.edu for assistance.
After you receive your EAD card, submit PDF copies of the front and back of your card to OPT@saonet.ucla.edu (include your UID in your email).

**Note**: You may only begin employment once you have physically received your EAD Card and your EAD Card ‘Valid From’ date has been reached.
EAD Card Restrictions

- Students may not begin employment until they have received their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card and the start date as indicated on the EAD card has been reached.

- Students may not continue working beyond the end date of the EAD card.

**Exception:** Students with a timely filed, pending 24-month OPT STEM Extension application or a valid Cap-Gap I-20 may continue employment beyond their OPT end date without receiving a new EAD card.
Students on OPT have a total of **90 calendar days** (including weekends and holidays) of allowed unemployment time during their 12-month OPT period that begins on the start date of their EAD card.

OPT employment must be directly related to the student’s degree program/major field of study (employment directly related to minor fields of study is not allowed).

OPT employment must be appropriate for the student’s degree level.
OPT Employment Types

- **Paid Employment:** A student may work part time (at least 20 hours per week), or full-time.

- **Multiple Employers:** A student may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the student’s degree program. Employment for 1 employer must be at least 20 hours per week.

- **Short-term multiple employers (performing artists):** A student, such as a musician or other type of performing artist, may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration. Employment must be at least 20 hours per week.

- **Work for Hire:** This is commonly referred to as 1099 employment, where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than employment relationship. If requested by DHS, the student must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract period and the name and address of the contracting company. Employment must be at least 20 hours per week.

**NOTE:** For the duration of the COVID-19 emergency, SEVP considers students who are working in their OPT opportunities fewer than 20 hours a week as engaged in OPT.
Self-Employed Business Owner: A student on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. The student must be able to prove that they have the proper business licenses and are actively engaged in a business related to the student’s degree program. Employment must be at least 20 hours per week.

Employment Through an Agency or Consulting firm: A student on OPT must be able to provide evidence showing they worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.

Unpaid Employment: A student may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, where this practice does not violate any U.S. labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week. A student must be able to provide evidence acquired from the student’s employer to verify that the student worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.

NOTE: For the duration of the COVID-19 emergency, SEVP considers students who are working in their OPT opportunities fewer than 20 hours a week as engaged in OPT.
Students currently participating in OPT may work remotely if their employer has an office outside of the United States or the employer can assess student engagement using electronic means. Students engaging in remote employment should report their employer’s address (and not the address where the remote employment is taking place) in the SEVP Portal.

For the duration of the COVID-19 emergency, SEVP considers students who are working in their OPT opportunities fewer than 20 hours a week as engaged in OPT.
OPT Reporting Requirements

Submit Copy of EAD Card to the Dashew Center
- Email copies of the front and back sides of your EAD card to: OPT@saonet.ucla.edu

F-1 students on OPT are required to report the following information during their OPT period within 10 days of any change through the SEVP Portal:

1. OPT Employment Status
   - Job title and description of how the job is related to your degree
   - Start and end dates of employment
   - Part-time (up to 20 hours/week) or Full-time (more than 20 hours/week) employment
   - Company name, address and phone number

2. Change of Contact Information
   - Change of residential address or U.S. telephone number
Students may request an updated I-20 from the Dashew Center after they receive their EAD card in the mail. An updated I-20 is not required to maintain F-1 OPT status, but is highly recommended if a student will be traveling internationally and re-entering the U.S. after their program completion date.

- The updated I-20 will show a student’s OPT status as ‘APPROVED’ on page 2 and will include employment information that has been reported through the SEVP Portal.

To request an updated I-20, please email the following documents to OPT@saonet.ucla.edu:

- Completed I-20 Request Form
- Copies of the front and back of your EAD card
- Completed F-1 Document Shipping Request Form (only required if you would like a paper-format I-20 shipped to your address)
Cap Gap – a period in which a student’s F-1 status and OPT authorization is automatically extended to bridge the gap between the end of their F-1 status and the start of their H-1B status.

The most common situation occurs when a student’s OPT ends in the spring or summer and their F-1 status expires 60 days later, leaving a gap of several months before the start of the student’s H-1B status on October 1.

The Cap Gap I-20 will automatically extend a student’s F-1 status and OPT authorization without requiring a new EAD card.
The Cap Gap is available to F-1 students in all fields of study engaging in OPT with pending or approved cap-subject H-1B petitions.

To request a Cap-Gap I-20:
1. Report any/all OPT employment through the SEVP Portal
2. Email the following documents to OPT@saonet.ucla.edu:
   • Completed I-20 Request Form
   • Copy of H-1B Receipt Notice or Approval Notice from USCIS
   • Copy of the front and back of EAD Card
   • Completed F-1 Document Shipping Request Form (only required if you would like a paper-format I-20 shipped to your address)
Travel Abroad During OPT

F-1 students who have applied for OPT are able to travel overseas and return to the U.S. in F-1 status as long as they have the required documents for re-entry:

**Documents required to re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 status BEFORE the degree completion date indicated on their OPT I-20:**
- Valid Passport
- Valid F-1 Visa
- Endorsed OPT I-20 (each travel authorization signature is valid for 1 year from the date it was last signed and must be valid at the time of entry to the U.S.)

**Documents required to re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 status AFTER the degree completion date indicated on their OPT I-20:**
- Valid Passport, Valid F-1 Visa, Endorsed OPT I-20 (each travel authorization signature is valid for 6 months from the date it was last signed and must be valid at the time of entry to the U.S.)
- EAD Card
- Proof of Employment or Offer Letter (Verification document from an employer verifying your job title, job duties, duration and start date of employment written on company letterhead)
Visa Status During OPT

- F-1 students engaging in OPT will still hold F-1 status in the U.S.

- The Dashew Center will still maintain and update an F-1 student’s SEVIS record during their approved OPT period.

- F-1 students may continue to request services from the Dashew Center such as advising appointments, support letters and travel authorization during their approved OPT period.

- F-1 students engaging in OPT are still required to obtain a travel signature from the Dashew Center on their I-20 to re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 status after traveling abroad. Each travel authorization signature is valid for 6 months from the date it was last signed and must be valid at the time of entry to the U.S.
FAQ

How early can I apply for OPT?
You may submit your OPT application to the Dashew Center as early as the submission date indicated for the graduation term in the OPT Workshop (see Slide 9). F-1 students may submit applications to USCIS as early as 90 days before their degree completion date. It is highly recommended that students submit their OPT application to the Dashew Center at least 3 months before a student’s requested OPT start date to accommodate USCIS processing times.

How long will it take USCIS to approve my OPT application?
USCIS requires approximately 3 - 5 months to approve an OPT application. Visit the ‘Check Case Processing Times’ page to see current USCIS processing times (see ‘Form I-765’ for ‘Potomac Service Center’).

How do I choose my OPT start date?
Your OPT start date can be as early as the day after your degree completion date, or as late as 60 days after your degree completion date (see Slide 8).

What if I submitted my OPT application, but will not be completing my degree as expected?
Contact the Dashew Center front desk to schedule an appointment with an F-1 Counselor to discuss your situation.
What if I move before receiving the EAD card?
You may risk losing your EAD card in the mail if you file a change of address with USCIS after submitting your OPT application to USCIS for processing. Please note that the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) does not forward federal mail, even if you request mail forwarding services from USPS. We recommend that you provide a mailing address for your OPT application that will be valid for at least 4 months from your application submission date.

Can I travel abroad while my OPT application is pending?
It depends:

Yes, if you have received your OPT application I-797 Notice of Action Receipt Notice from USCIS, your re-entry date to the U.S. is before the degree completion date stated on your OPT I-20 and you have all of the required re-entry documents.

No, if your re-entry date to the U.S. is after the degree completion date stated on your OPT I-20.

The Dashew Center does not recommend that you travel while your OPT application is pending, as it may result in a Request for Evidence from USCIS, which will delay the processing of your application or result in a denial.
Which documents do I need if I want travel overseas and re-enter the U.S. after my OPT I-20 End Date?

Valid Passport
Valid F-1 Visa
OPT I-20 Endorsed for travel by the Dashew Center (each travel signature is valid for 6 months from the date it was last signed and must be valid at the time of re-entry to the U.S.)
Employment Verification or Offer Letter

My F-1 visa expired. Can I travel abroad during OPT?

Yes, you may travel abroad, but you must apply for a new F-1 visa from an overseas U.S. Embassy or Consulate, since you will require a valid F-1 visa to re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 OPT status.

Please note that it may be more difficult to obtain a new F-1 visa while on OPT, especially if you have not secured OPT employment. Please also expect extended wait times for F-1 visa application processing.
FAQ

Who determines if my OPT employment is related to my degree?
U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) leaves this discretion to students to determine. Should DHS audit your OPT employment and find that your employment is not related to your degree, you will be in violation of your F-1 status.

What if my employment is not related to my degree?
Working in a field that is not related to your degree (e.g. major) is considered unauthorized employment and is a serious violation of your F-1 status, which may negatively impact future immigration benefits in the U.S.

Can I begin employment before receiving my EAD card?
No, you may not engage in any employment in the U.S. until you have received your EAD card and your OPT start date has been reached.

What do I do if I lost my EAD card?
You must apply for a replacement EAD card from USCIS, which will require a new I-765 form, $410.00 filing fee, and supporting documents. Contact the Dashew Center to schedule an appointment to apply for a replacement EAD Card.
When does my 90-day unemployment period start?
Your 90-day unemployment period begins on the first day of unemployment after your OPT start date (as stated on your EAD).

What should I do if I am approaching my 90th day of unemployment?
We recommend the following options: transfer to another school, depart the U.S., or change your visa status. For other options, please consult an immigration attorney.

Q15: Where do I report my OPT employment information?
Report your OPT employment status through the SEVP Portal.

Q16: Where do I report my change of address or phone number during OPT?
Please report any changes in your U.S. address or phone number within 10 days of the change through the SEVP Portal.

Q17: What happens after my OPT ends?
After your OPT ends, you have an additional 60-day grace period to: transfer to another school, depart the U.S. or change your visa status. For other options, please consult an immigration attorney.
Important Reminder

Questions?
Schedule an appointment with an F-1 Counselor by contacting our
Virtual Dashew Center Front Desk
M – F | 9AM – 11:30AM, 1:30PM -4:00PM