General Information

F-1 students often want to work. However, employment opportunities are limited and strict rules apply. This document discusses different types of optional practical training (OPT), as well as, required forms, processes, and updating SEVIS.
What is Optional Practical Training?

Optional practical training is one type of work permission available for eligible F-1 students. It allows students to get real-world work experience related to their field of study.

While a Designated School Official (DSO) recommends OPT in SEVIS, it is the student who must apply for the work permit with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). If the OPT is approved, USCIS will issue an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). The student must not begin working before the start date on the EAD.

Regulations and Policy Guidance

Complex rules and guidance apply to OPT. Any OPT requests entered into SEVIS must comply with federal regulations. DSOs must understand the following regulations and policy guidance:

- 8 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 214.2(f) (10) through (13)
- 8 CFR 274a.12(c)(3)
- SEVP Policy Guidance on OPT

OPT Types

There are three general types of OPT:

**OPT:** For students enrolled full-time in post-secondary schools, seminaries, conservatories, or seminaries for one full academic year. Twelve months of practical training is available for each higher level of study. (For example, a student may have 12 months for a bachelor’s degree and another 12 months for a master’s degree.)

- **Pre-Completion OPT:** Any portion of OPT used before the student’s Program End Date. It may be part-time or full-time.
- **Post-Completion OPT:** Any portion of OPT used after the student’s Program End Date. It must be full-time.

**17-month (STEM) OPT Extension:** For students who majored in designated Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) degrees approved by DHS. This type of OPT is a 17-month extension of OPT.

**Cap-Gap OPT Extension:** For students whose prospective employers filed a qualifying H-1B cap-subject petition.
OPT Request Statues

The table below lists the statuses used to identify the stages of OPT requests in SEVIS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Status Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Requested</td>
<td>DSO requested OPT in SEVIS on behalf of the student, but USCIS has not yet received the Application for Employment Authorization (Form I-765).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pending</td>
<td>USCIS has received the Form I-765.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>USCIS has approved the Form I-765.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denied</td>
<td>USCIS has denied the Form I-765.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canceled</td>
<td>DSO has canceled the OPT request in SEVIS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawn</td>
<td>USCIS approved the student’s request to withdraw the Form I-765.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OPT Eligibility

A student is eligible for OPT if:

- The student has been a full-time student for one academic year in an SEVP-certified:
  - College
  - University
  - Conservatory
  - Seminary
- The student is not studying English as a Second Language.
- The student’s proposed employment directly relates to the student’s major area of study.
- The student has not used all of the practical training available at the current level of study.
- The student has not been authorized for 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT).

Note: Full-time CPT at a previous school at the same program level counts toward the 12-month total. CPT at another program level does not count toward the 12-month total.
OPT Process at a Glance

The OPT application process involves many players and several steps:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Users Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Student follows school processes to submit an OPT request to the DSO.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2    | • DSO confirms eligibility, enters the request in SEVIS and prints the Form I-20.  
    • The DSO signs the Form I-20.  
    • The status of the OPT request in SEVIS immediately changes to Requested.  
    Note: Any OPT status updates to SEVIS are automatic and require no action on the part of the DSO. |
| 3    | Required paperwork:  
    • The student signs the Form I-20.  
    • The student completes an Application for Employment Authorization (Form I-765). The Form I-765, fee, and supporting documentation must be filed with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) within 30 days of the DSO’s recommendation.  
    Note: The Form I-765 is available on the USCIS website [http://www.uscis.gov/i-765](http://www.uscis.gov/i-765) and can be submitted electronically or by mail. The website provides instructions on both processes. |
| 4    | • Upon receipt of the I-765, USCIS issues a Receipt Notice (Form I-797), which contains the receipt number assigned to the case.  
    • Through an interface with USCIS, the status of the OPT request in SEVIS changes to Pending.  
    • If USCIS needs more information, the student will receive a Request For Evidence, which states what information is needed and the deadline for submitting it. The student must respond by the deadline, or the application will be denied.  
    • USCIS then makes a decision on the application:  
      o If the application is approved, USCIS issues an EAD, and the OPT Request status in SEVIS changes to Approved.  
      o If the Form I-765 is denied, the OPT Request status in SEVIS changes to |

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Users Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5    | • The student receives the EAD and can begin work once the authorized date arrives.  
      • When the student is hired, the student reports the employer information to the DSO.  
      **Note:** While on OPT, the student must report to the DSO within 10 days any changes in the student’s name or address, and employment information. |
| 6    | The DSO must update SEVIS within 21 days with the employment information and any name or address changes. |

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**Form I-765 Filing Deadlines Once DSO Requests OPT in SEVIS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 30</th>
<th>After Day 30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • DSO requests OPT in SEVIS  
  • 30-day countdown begins | • 30-day countdown ends  
  • USCIS must receive the application | • Applications received by USCIS after Day 30 will be denied |

**Note:** If the student does not file a Form I-765, the DSO should cancel the OPT request in SEVIS.

### Recommend Optional Practical Training

**Key Dates**

DSOs must be mindful of several key dates when entering OPT in SEVIS.
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Post-Completion OPT Planning Tool: An Excel spreadsheet that allows users to calculate the amount of OPT available for a student and generate suggested timelines for a student, based on the Program End Date and the desired OPT start date.

**Recommend OPT**

To recommend OPT:

1. Navigate to the Student Information page.
2. Click **OPT Request**. The **OPT Employment** page opens.

1 Year after Full-Time Studies Begin

- First date that F-1 OPT can be requested
- **Exception:** OPT can be requested earlier, if student will complete one academic year before OPT employment begins.

90 Days before Program End Date

- Earliest date that Form I-765 may arrive at USCIS for post-completion OPT

Program End Date

- Pre-Completion OPT must end no later than this date

60 days after Program End Date

- Last date to request post-completion OPT in SEVIS
- Filing deadline for USCIS to receive Form I-765
- Latest possible requested start date for post-completion OPT

14 Months after Program End Date

- Last possible end date for post-completion OPT

(ALT Text: Screenshot of **OPT Employment** page with arrow pointing to “New OPT Employment” link at the bottom left of the screen.)
3. Click New OPT Request. The *Add OPT Employment* page opens.

![Add OPT Employment Page](ALT Text: Screenshot of Add OPT Employment Page)

4. Enter information relevant to the OPT authorization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| * The student has met or will meet the one full academic year requirement by the employment start date. | • Click the checkbox to indicate the student has met the enrollment requirement.  
• This is a required field. |
| * OPT Type | • Select either:  
  - **Pre Completion**: All employment occurs before the Program End Date.  
  - **Post Completion**: All employment occurs after the Program End Date.  
  • This is a required field. |
| * Full-time/Part-time | • Select from the drop-down list:  
  - **Part-time**: Select if Pre-Completion OPT occurs when school is in session.  
  - **Full-time**: Select full-time if:  
    - Pre-Completion OPT occurs when school is not in session. |
### Field | Description
--- | ---
- | Employment is Post-Completion OPT.  
- | This is a required field.

**SEVIS will not allow overlapping segments of OPT. You must specify if the OPT is pre-completion vs. post-completion OPT and must be either full vs. part time.**

* | Start Date
--- | ---
- | The date that OPT authorization starts.  
- | This date cannot be before the student has completed one academic year of full-time study.  
**Format:** MM/DD/YYYY.  
**Post-Completion OPT:** Start Date must be on or after the Program End Date. It cannot be more than 60 days after the Program End Date.  
- | This is a required field.

* | End Date
--- | ---
- | The date the OPT authorization is to end.  
**Format:** MM/DD/YYYY  
  - **Pre-Completion OPT:** Cannot be after the Program End Date.  
  - **Post-Completion OPT:** Cannot enter a date more than 12 months after the Employment Start Date.  
- | This is a required field.

**SEVIS will not allow overlapping segments of OPT.**

**Student Remarks**
Enter or update remarks regarding the student’s planned employment. Use this field to convey important information you think the student or government officials need to know. For example: student will pursue training related to studies.  
This field is limited to 1,000 characters.  
**Note:** Comments entered here overwrite any existing remarks that print in the Remarks field on Page 1 of the Form I-20. USCIS has noted they want to see

**Employment Remarks**
- Enter any applicable remarks about the student’s employment. This field is limited to 250 characters.  
- These remarks do not print on the Form I-20.

5. Review the information. Click either **Save** or **Cancel**.
• **Save:** Submits the OPT request.
   A message indicates that the update was successful.

![Update Successful](image)

(ALT Text: Screenshot of *Update Successful* page.)

Click either **Print I-20** or **Return Employment List**:

- **Print I-20:** Prints the Form I-20 with the OPT recommendation.
  
  **Note:** Sign the Form I-20 and give the printed Form I-20 to the student. The student must sign the Form I-20 and submit it to USCIS with the application for work authorization.

- **Return Employment List:** Returns the user to the *OPT Employment* page.
  The newly added OPT employment will be on the list.

![OPT Employment](image)

(ALT Text: Screenshot of *OPT Employment* page with requested OPT employment added.)

- **Cancel:** Cancels the action and returns user to the *OPT Employment* page.

6. Review the information on the *OPT Employment* page. To make changes to the existing OPT request, click **Edit**.
Note: To recommend an additional period of OPT, click New OPT Request and repeat Steps 4 and 5.

The start and end dates for segments of OPT cannot overlap.

Click either Print I-20 or Return:
- Print I-20: Prints the Form I-20.
- Return: Returns the user to the Student Information page.

Edit OPT Request

OPT information can be edited depending on the status of the OPT request:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Status</th>
<th>Editable Fields</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Requested</td>
<td>• Full-time/Part-time&lt;br&gt; • Fulfillment of 1-year requirement&lt;br&gt; • Employment Remarks&lt;br&gt; • Student Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pending</td>
<td>• Full-time/Part-time&lt;br&gt; • Fulfillment of 1-year requirement&lt;br&gt; • Employment Remarks&lt;br&gt; • Student Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>• Employer Name&lt;br&gt; • Employer Address&lt;br&gt; • Explanation for relationship to course work&lt;br&gt; • Employment Remarks&lt;br&gt; • Student Remarks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To edit an OPT request:
1. Click OPT Request on the Student Information page. The OPT Employment page opens.
2. Click **Edit** to the right of the OPT segment to be edited. The *Edit OPT Employment* page opens.

(ALT Text: *Screen shot of Edit OPT Employment page.*)
3. Make any necessary edits:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| * The student has met or will meet the one full academic year requirement by the employment start date. | • Click the checkbox to indicate the student has met the enrollment requirement.  
• This is a required field. |
| * Full Time/Part Time | • Select from the drop-down list:  
  o **Part Time**: Select if Pre-Completion OPT occurs when school is in session.  
  o **Full Time**: Select full-time if:  
    ▪ Pre-Completion OPT occurs when school is not in session.  
    ▪ Employment is Post-Completion OPT.  
• This is a required field. |
| Student Remarks | Enter or update remarks regarding the student.  
**Note:** Comments entered here overwrite any existing remarks that print in the Remarks field on page one of the Form I-20. |
| Employment Remarks | Enter any applicable remarks about the student’s employment. |

4. Click either **Save** or **Cancel**:
   • **Save**: Updates this employment request in the student’s record. An **Update Successful** message indicates if the edit was successful. Click one of the following:
     o Click **Print I-20** to print the Form I-20.  
       ▪ Sign page one of the Form I-20, and give the printed Form I-20 to the student.  
       ▪ Student must also sign page one of the Form I-20 and submit it to USCIS with the application for work authorization.  
     o Click **Return to Employment List** to return to the **OPT Employment** page.  
   • **Cancel**: Returns the user to the **OPT Employment** page without updating the employment segment.

**Cancel/Withdraw OPT Request**

An OPT request can be canceled in SEVIS **ONLY** if the OPT Request is in Requested status.
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OPT Request Status in SEVIS = Requested

- P/DSO can cancel OPT in SEVIS.
- OPT Request status changes to Canceled.
- Do not cancel OPT request if the student has mailed the Form I-765 to USCIS.

OPT Request Status in SEVIS = Pending

- P/DSO cannot cancel OPT in SEVIS.
- Student must write USCIS to withdraw the Form I-765.
- After processing by USCIS, OPT request status in SEVIS changes to Withdrawn.

Note: Any request in Requested status longer than 180 days is automatically canceled by SEVIS.

Cancel OPT Request

To cancel an OPT request:

1. Navigate to the Student Information page.
2. Click **OPT Request** from the Student Information page. The OPT Employment page opens.

(ALT Text: Screenshot of OPT Employment page.)
3. Click **Cancel Request** next to the segment of OPT you want to cancel. A **Confirm Cancelation of Request** page opens.

   ![Confirm Cancelation of Request](ALT Text: Screenshot of Confirm Cancelation of Request page.)

4. Click either **Yes** or **No**:
   - **Yes**: Cancels the OPT request. An **Update Successful** message verifies that the update was successful. Click either **Return to Employment List** or **Print I-20**:
     - Click **Print I-20** to print the Form I-20.
     - Click **Return to Employment List** to return to the **OPT Employment** page; and then click either **Return** or **Print I-20**:
       - Click **Print I-20** to print the Form I-20.
       - Click **Return** to return to the **Student Information** page.
       - **Note**: The student’s OPT status in the Student Requests section updates to Canceled.
   - **No**: Returns the user to the **OPT Employment** page without canceling the OPT request.

### Withdraw OPT Request

Once an OPT request status changes to Pending, the student must write USCIS to withdraw the OPT application. The request must:

- Be sent to the USCIS Service Center processing the application. The address is on the USCIS-issued Receipt Notice sent to the student.
- Include the receipt number USCIS assigned the case when it was filed.

### Report OPT Participation

While on OPT, a student is required to report the following to their DSO:

- Change in student’s legal name.
- Change in student’s address while on OPT.
• Changes in employment or interruption of employment.

DSOs update SEVIS to reflect the changes.

8 CFR 214.2(f)(12)(ii)(E)
SEVP OPT Policy Guidance

DSOs are expected to add, edit, or delete employer information in a timely manner.

Post-completion OPT and Unemployment

While students are not required to have an employer when OPT is requested in SEVIS, students authorized for post-completion OPT are expected to be employed. A student on post-completion OPT can be unemployed for a total of 90 days.

A student whose record lacks employer information is considered unemployed.

- SEVIS will auto-terminate students who accrue 90 consecutive days of unemployment. SEVIS will allow for student and P/DSO reporting deadlines before terminating the record. This functionality is currently disabled.
- SEVP officials can manually terminate a student who accrues 90 total days of unemployment.

P/DSOs must enter employer information into SEVIS.

8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(E)
SEVP Policy OPT Guidance

OPT-Related SEVIS Alerts and Lists

The following Alert List and Student Lists in SEVIS help DSOs monitor and manage students on OPT:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alert/List</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students who have Approved OPT without Current Employer Information</td>
<td>This Alert List shows:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• SEVIS ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Surname/Primary Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Given Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• OPT Type (Post-completion or STEM OPT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• OPT Actual Start Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• OPT Actual End Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Latest OPT employment end date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Number of days since the last employment date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Requested, Pending, or Approved Optional Practical Training</td>
<td>This Student List shows:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(OPT)</td>
<td>• Active indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• SEVIS ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Visa Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Surname/Primary Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Given Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• DSO Recommended Start and End Dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• USCIS Approved OPT Start and End Dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• OPT Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Request Status and Receipt Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Terminated for Exceeding the Maximum Number of Days of Unemployment</td>
<td>This Student List shows:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• SEVIS ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Class of Admission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Surname/Primary Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Given Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Termination Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• OPT Type</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**View OPT Employment Information**

DSOs can view a student’s OPT information on the following pages, which are accessed through the *Student Information* page:
• **Request/Authorization Details** page that lists only current authorizations.

• **Employment Information** page that lists all employment authorizations linked to the SEVIS ID.

Refer to the Practical Training Indicators and Dates topic for details on:

- How the practical training indicator displays
- How SEVIS derives the three sets of dates associates with practical training

### H-1B Cap-Gap Extension of OPT

SEVIS will automatically extend post-completion OPT if:

- On or after April 1, an employer files an eligible H-1B petition to change the student’s status.
- The requested start date for the H-1B is October 1.
- The student’s OPT ends on or after April 1.

### Correcting OPT Data: Correction Requests and Data Fixes

If OPT information in SEVIS does not reflect applications filed with or decisions made by USCIS, DSOs can ask to have the record corrected. There are two ways to correct data in a student record.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>What Can be Fixed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Correction Request** | This option is used to request changes (using SEVIS) for the following:  
  - Status of OPT Request  
  - Employment Start Date  
  - Employment End Date |
| **Help Ticket (Data Fix)** | This option is used for more complicated data fixes and requires DSOs to call the SEVIS Help Desk (1-800-892-4829). Types of OPT-related data fixes include:  
  - Adding retroactive OPT to a record  
  - Changing the OPT request status for an OPT request that is already in Approved status  
  - Any data fix that cannot be submitted in a correction request |
Icon Guide

See the SEVIS Help Icons on the SEVIS Help Hub for a quick-reference of the icons used in this user guide.