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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 Statuses

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

Status	Status Meaning
Requested	DSO requested OPT in SEVIS on behalf of the student, but USCIS has not yet received the Application for Employment Authorization (Form I-765).
Pending	USCIS has received the Form I-765.
Approved	USCIS has approved the Form I-765.
Denied	USCIS has denied the Form I-765.
Canceled	DSO has canceled the OPT request in SEVIS.
Withdrawn	USCIS approved the student's request to withdraw the Form I-765.

OPT Eligibility

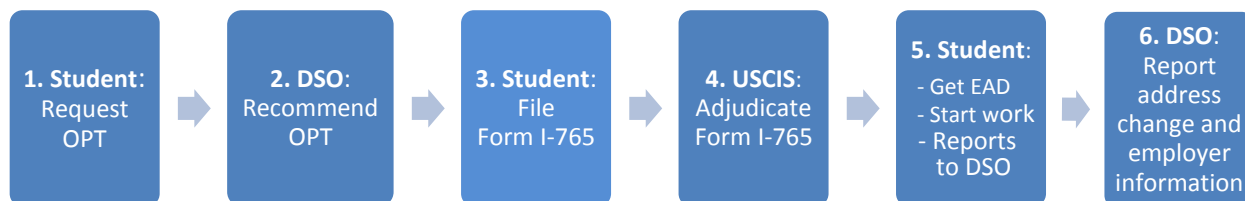
A student is eligible for OPT if:

- 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



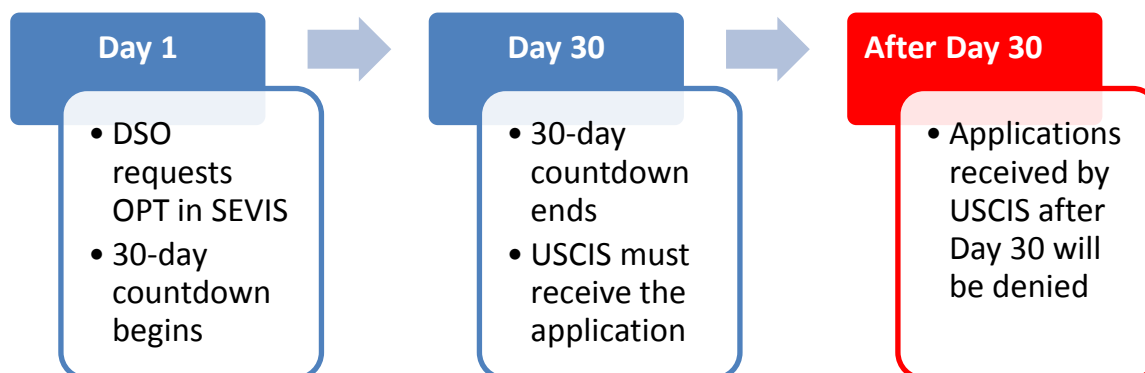
The OPT application process involves many players and several steps:

Step	Users Actions
1	Student follows school processes to submit an OPT request to the DSO.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">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	<p>Required paperwork:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">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 and can be submitted electronically or by mail. The website provides instructions on both processes.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">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:<ul style="list-style-type: none">If the application is approved, USCIS issues an EAD, and the OPT Request status in SEVIS changes to Approved.If the Form I-765 is denied, the OPT Request status in SEVIS changes to



Step	Users Actions
	Denied.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">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. <p>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.</p>
6	The DSO must update SEVIS within 21 days with the employment information and any name or address changes.

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



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.



1 Year after Full-Time Studies Begin	90 Days before Program End Date	Program End Date	60 days after Program End Date	14 Months after Program End date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earliest date that Form I-765 may arrive at USCIS for post-completion OPT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-Completion OPT must end no later than this date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Last possible end date for post-completion OPT



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.

The screenshot displays the SEVIS system interface. At the top, the SEVIS logo and 'Student & Exchange Visitor Information System' are visible. The user is logged in as Helene Robertson. The main content area shows student details for 'Testy, Test' (F-1 Student) with a status of 'ACTIVE'. Below this, a table lists personal and contact information. A yellow warning box is present, stating: 'Prior to recommending Optional Practical Training (OPT), you must ensure that the training complies with the rules governing OPT. You must also ensure that the student is aware of his/her obligation to report changes in employment information (to include periods of unemployment) and changes in his/her address. The school must continue to maintain records on the student for the full period of OPT. The details of these rules can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 8, Sections 214.2(f)(10) to (f)(13). The CFR has been amended and the sections relevant to OPT are available at www.ice.gov/sevis (the SEVP Website).' Below the warning box, the 'OPT Employment' section features a prominent blue 'New OPT Request' button. At the bottom, there are 'Return' and 'Print I-20' links.

(**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.

(ALT Text: Screenshot of *Add OPT Employment* Page)

4. Enter information relevant to the OPT authorization.

Field	Description
* The student has met or will meet the one full academic year requirement by the employment start date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Click the checkbox to indicate the student has met the enrollment requirement.This is a required field.
* OPT Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Select either:<ul style="list-style-type: none">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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Select from the drop-down list:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Part-time: Select if Pre-Completion OPT occurs when school is in session.Full-time: Select full-time if:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pre-Completion OPT occurs when school is not in session.



Field		Description
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The date that OPT authorization starts.• This date cannot be before the student has completed one academic year of full-time study. <p>Format: MM/DD/YYYY.</p> <p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is a required field.	
* End Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The date the OPT authorization is to end. <p>Format: MM/DD/YYYY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is a required field.	
	SEVIS will not allow overlapping segments of OPT.	
Student Remarks	<p>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.</p> <p>This field is limited to 1,000 characters.</p> <p>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</p>	
Employment Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

Submitted change(s) require adjudication. Please print I-20 and send it with the appropriate documentation to the Service Center.

[Return to Employment List](#) [Print I-20](#)

(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.

F-1 Student
Testy, Test

SEVP School for Advanced SEVIS Studies - SEVP School for
Advanced SEVIS Studies
Start Date: 04/24/2012 End Date: 04/24/2016

Status: ACTIVE
SEVIS ID: N0004705861

Prior to recommending Optional Practical Training (OPT), you must ensure that the training complies with the rules governing OPT. You must also ensure that the student is aware of his/her obligation to report changes in employment information (to include periods of unemployment) and changes in his/her address. The school must continue to maintain records on the student for the full period of OPT. The details of these rules can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 8, Sections 214.2(f)(10) to (f)(13). The CFR has been amended and the sections relevant to OPT are available at www.ice.gov/sevis (the SEVP Website).

OPT Employment

New OPT Request

PRE-COMPLETION - PART TIME	Status	Receipt Number	View	Edit	Cancel Request
	REQUESTED				

OPT AUTHORIZATION DATES

OPT Dates	Start	End
DSO Recommended	10/15/2015	02/28/2016
USCIS Approved		
Actual		

Employers

No employers found
To add an employer, click on the button Add above

Add Employer

Return

Print I-20

(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:

Request Status	Editable Fields
Requested	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full-time/Part-time• Fulfillment of 1-year requirement• Employment Remarks• Student Remarks
Pending	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full-time/Part-time• Fulfillment of 1-year requirement• Employment Remarks• Student Remarks
Approved	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employer Name• Employer Address• Explanation for relationship to course work• Employment Remarks• Student Remarks

To edit an OPT request:

1. Click **OPT Request** on the *Student Information* page. The *OPT Employment* page opens.



F-1 Student
Testy, Test

SEVP School for Advanced SEVIS Studies - SEVP School for Advanced SEVIS Studies
Start Date: 04/24/2012 End Date: 04/24/2016

Status: **ACTIVE**
SEVIS ID: N0004705861

Prior to recommending Optional Practical Training (OPT), you must ensure that the training complies with the rules governing OPT. You must also ensure that the student is aware of his/her obligation to report changes in employment information (to include periods of unemployment) and changes in his/her address. The school must continue to maintain records on the student for the full period of OPT. The details of these rules can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 8, Sections 214.2(f) (10) to (f)(13). The CFR has been amended and the sections relevant to OPT are available at www.ice.gov/sevis (the SEVP Website).

OPT Employment

[New OPT Request](#)

PRE-COMPLETION - PART TIME	Status REQUESTED	Receipt Number	View	Edit	Cancel Request
OPT AUTHORIZATION DATES		Employers			
OPT Dates	Start	End			
DSO Recommended	10/15/2015	02/28/2016			
USCIS Approved					
Actual					

[Add Employer](#)

No employers found
To add an employer, click on the button Add above

[Return](#) [Print I-20](#)

(ALT Text: OPT Employment page listing the existing OPT request with the Edit link.)

2. Click **Edit** to the right of the OPT segment to be edited. The *Edit OPT Employment* page opens.

F-1 Student
Testy, Test

SEVP School for Advanced SEVIS Studies - SEVP School for Advanced SEVIS Studies
Start Date: 04/24/2012 End Date: 04/24/2016

Status: **ACTIVE**
SEVIS ID: N0004705861

Edit OPT Employment

SEVP School for Advanced SEVIS Studies
Test Testy

*Denotes required field.

Employment Information

☒ The student has met or will meet the one full academic year requirement by the employment start date. *

Full Time / Part Time *

☐ Full Time: more than 20 hours/week

☒ Part Time: 20 or less hours/week

Student Remarks

Max 1000 characters (1000 remaining)

Employment Remarks

Max 250 characters (250 remaining)

[Save](#) [Cancel](#)

(ALT Text: Screenshot of Edit OPT Employment page.)



3. Make any necessary edits:

Field	Description
* The student has met or will meet the one full academic year requirement by the employment start date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Click the checkbox to indicate the student has met the enrollment requirement.This is a required field.
* Full Time/Part Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Select from the drop-down list:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Part Time: Select if Pre-Completion OPT occurs when school is in session.Full Time: Select full-time if:<ul style="list-style-type: none">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:
 - 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.
 - 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.



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.

SEVIS Student & Exchange Visitor Information System

Helene Robertson Profile Logout

ROLES: DSO, RO, PDSO

Get Plug-Ins FQTE-RESIN-2

Main Listing of Schools Listing of Programs Help Message Board Change Password

Enter SEVIS ID

F-1 Student
Testy, Test

SEVP School for Advanced SEVIS Studies - SEVP School for Advanced SEVIS Studies

Status: **ACTIVE**
SEVIS ID: N0004705861

Start Date: 04/24/2012 End Date: 04/24/2016

Prior to recommending Optional Practical Training (OPT), you must ensure that the training complies with the rules governing OPT. You must also ensure that the student is aware of his/her obligation to report changes in employment information (to include periods of unemployment) and changes in his/her address. The school must continue to maintain records on the student for the full period of OPT. The details of these rules can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 8, Sections 214.2(f) (10) to (f)(13). The CFR has been amended and the sections relevant to OPT are available at www.ice.gov/sevis (the SEVP Website).

OPT Employment

New OPT Request

PRE-COMPLETION - FULL TIME	Status	Receipt Number	View	Edit	Cancel Request
	REQUESTED				

OPT AUTHORIZATION DATES

OPT Dates	Start	End
DSO Recommended	10/15/2015	02/28/2016
USCIS Approved		
Actual		

Employers

No employers found

To add an employer, click on the button Add above

Add Employer

Return Print I-20

(ALT Text: Screenshot of *OPT Employment* page.)



3. Click **Cancel Request** next to the segment of OPT you want to cancel. A *Confirm Cancellation of Request* page opens.

Confirm Cancellation of Request

If the application and supporting documentation for this request have already been sent to the Service Center, do not cancel this request in SEVIS. Please contact the Service Center directly to have the application withdrawn. Do you want to continue?

(ALT Text: Screenshot of *Confirm Cancellation 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:



Alert/List	Description
Students who have Approved OPT without Current Employer Information	<p>This Alert List shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SEVIS ID• Surname/Primary Name• Given Name• OPT Type (Post-completion or STEM OPT)• OPT Actual Start Date• OPT Actual End Date• Latest OPT employment end date• Number of days since the last employment date
Students with Requested, Pending, or Approved Optional Practical Training (OPT)	<p>This Student List shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active indicator• SEVIS ID• Visa Type• Surname/Primary Name• Given Name• DSO Recommended Start and End Dates• USCIS Approved OPT Start and End Dates• OPT Type• Request Status and Receipt Number
Students Terminated for Exceeding the Maximum Number of Days of Unemployment	<p>This Student List shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SEVIS ID• Class of Admission• Surname/Primary Name• Given Name• Termination Date• OPT Type

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.

Method	What Can be Fixed
Correction Request	This option is used to request changes (using SEVIS) for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.