Your OPT Application

It is your responsibility to understand all the details and requirements of your immigration status.

This PowerPoint presentation is designed to give you some information regarding the process of applying for Optional Practical Training (OPT). This powerpoint should be referenced in conjunction with the OPT Workshop I – The Overview.
Please consider the following when applying for OPT:

Any views or suggestions expressed or contained herein are not the official views of Kent State University or legal advice. This PowerPoint tutorial is an educational benefit provided to you by ISSS, but for more in-depth questions, we recommend consulting an immigration attorney.
Overview

• OPT Application – 2 Big Steps
• Pick a Start Date
• Collect Documents
• Request OPT I-20 from ISSS
• Review OPT I-20

• Submit OPT Application to USCIS
• After Submitting Your Application
• Your EAD Card & SEVP Portal
• Authorized Unemployment
• I Didn’t Graduate… Now What?
Eligibility Review

You are eligible for OPT if you have met the following conditions:

1. Maintained your F-1 status for at least 1 academic year (two academic semesters – Fall & Spring or Spring & Fall)
2. Are a degree seeking student (Not available for students in Language Training)
3. Completed **ALL** required coursework for your program
4. Completed fewer than 365 days of FULL TIME CPT

You do NOT need a job offer prior to submitting OPT application.
Application Timeline Overview

You have a **150 day window** to apply for OPT
As early as 90 days before your Program End Date/Graduation and up to 60 days after
Timeline for Each Semester

May/Spring Graduate

- 90 days before: February 20
- Program End Date/Graduation: May 20
- 60 days after: July 18

August/Summer Graduate

- 90 days before: May 23
- Program End Date/Graduation: August 20
- 60 days after: October 18

December/Fall Graduate

- 90 days before: September 22
- Program End Date/Graduation: December 20
- 60 days after: February 17

*College of Podiatric will have a different timeline

Your I-20 WILL be adjusted to reflect the program end date for the semester in which you graduate.
Graduate Students Only!

• You do not need to graduate in order to apply for OPT

• You can apply for OPT after completing required coursework
  • You can apply for OPT while on Dissertation/Thesis

• You should speak with an ISSS advisor for more information

• Be aware -- once your OPT is approved, you will only have until the expiration of your OPT period to remain in the United States
OPT Application – There are 2 Big Steps

1. You must first request a new I-20 with OPT recommendation from ISSS
   - Pick a Start Date
   - Collect Documents
   - Submit OPT I-20 Request
   - Review OPT I-20

2. You must submit your OPT application including your new OPT I-20 to USCIS
   - Submit Application to USCIS
   - Wait & Wait
   - Start Work
   - OPT REPORTING
Pick a Start Date

3/16/2022
Application Step 1 – Selecting a Start Date

- You will be asked to select a start date for your OPT
- You can pick ANY date in your 60-day grace period following your Graduation/Program End Date

### Start Date Ranges

<table>
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<th>Graduate Type</th>
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<td>August/Summer Graduate</td>
<td>August 21 – October 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>December/Fall Graduate</td>
<td>December 21 – February 17</td>
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Application Step 1 – Selecting a Start Date

- Once you select your OPT start date, it is very difficult to change and impossible to switch once you submit your application to USCIS.

- If USCIS cannot process your request by the start date, a later date may be issued.

- Waiting to submit your application later in your grace period may result in less than a full year of OPT.
Filing Options
2 Options for Submitting Application to USCIS

FILING ONLINE

Continue reviewing this tutorial if you choose to file online.

_We currently recommend this option as it has proven to be faster, and you receive your receipt immediately upon applying._

MAIL APPLICATION

Review the OPT Mail-in Application Tutorial before applying to USCIS. It is listed on the OPT Guide website under the OPT Online Application Tutorial.

**YOU MUST REQUEST YOUR I-20 BEFORE YOU SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION ONLINE**
Gathering Documents
Application Step 1 – Preparing Your Documents

In order to submit your OPT I-20 Request to ISSS you will need the following documents:

• Copy of Passport page
• Copy of most recent U.S. visa
• Copy of your most recent I-94
• 2 passport photos taken within last 30 days
• Copy of any previous EAD cards
Application Step 1 – Getting Your I-94

Use the link below to get your most recent I-94

https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home

Please note– Your travel history is not your I-94

We recommend keeping copies of all I-94s
Application Step 1 – Passport Photos

Passport Photos

• You need 2 photos that are identical
• Photos should be taken within the last 30 days

Tips

• You can review the Department of State’s requirements for passport photos: Photo Requirements
• We recommend having your photo taken at a local CVS, Walgreens, Wal-Mart, etc.
Request OPT I-20 from ISSS
Application Step 1 – Request I-20 from ISSS

You **MUST** have a new I-20 from ISSS which specifically recommends you for OPT

- To get your I-20, submit the “OPT I-20 Request” Form
- This Form can be found in the Request Center in the ISSS Portal
- Please scan all documents into 1 pdf document
Application Step 1 – Request I-20 from ISSS

After you submit your OPT I-20 Request

- An ISSS advisor will look at your materials
- Allow up to 10 business days for processing your request
- An advisor will send an email to communicate:
  - If more information is required OR
  - When your new I-20 is ready for pick up
- Due to the coronavirus, SEVP has allowed temporary permission to email copies of I-20s. You will receive an email from an ISSS advisor with your I-20 for OPT, any CPT information, and your final instruction sheet.
Application Step 1 – Your OPT I-20

CHECK YOUR I-20 & SIGN

Once you pick up your I-20 from OGE, REVIEW the information for accuracy. On page 2 of the I-20 check the Employment Authorization Box.

- Type = “Post-Completion OPT”
- Full/Part Time = “Full Time”
- Status = “Requested”
- Start Date = Your Requested State Date
- End Date = 1 year after your requested start date

You are 100% responsible for your OPT application
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<th>Employment Authorizations</th>
<th>Full/Part-Time</th>
<th>Status</th>
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**Change of Status/Cap-Gap Extension**

**Authorized Drop Below Full Course of Study**

**Travel Endorsement**

This page when properly endorsed, may be used for reentry of the student to attend the same school after a temporary absence from the United States. Each certification signature is valid for one year.

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Submit OPT Application to USCIS

ONLINE APPLICATION
Application Step 2 – Filing Online

Please consider the following when completing your application:

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Application Step 2 – Filing Online

Common Mistakes to AVOID

• Not including NEW I-20 with OPT Recommendation
• Uploading wrong file types or titles
• Submitting your application with missing information or evidence

You are 100% responsible for your OPT application
Application Step 2 – Filing Online

Prepare Your Documents

The online application provides specific instructions for your documents that addresses file size, type, and name. Be sure to read them very carefully.

- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, or PNG
- No encrypted or password protected files
- Accepted file name characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum file size is 6MB per file

You are 100% responsible for your OPT application
Create Your USCIS Online Account

Visit https://www.uscis.gov/file-online

1) Select “How to Create a USCIS Online Account”

2) Select “Create an Account”
Create Your USCIS Online Account

Fill in your email

Sign Up

Your USCIS account is only for you. Do not create a shared account with family or friends. Individual accounts allow us to best serve you and protect your personal information.

You must provide your email address below if you are the one who is filing a form online, submitting an online request, or tracking a case.

Email

Email confirmation

Your email address is used to log in to your USCIS Account. All USCIS email communications will be sent to this address.

Sign Up

Already have an account?
Sign In

Legal

- Department of Homeland Security Consent
- DHS Privacy Notice
- Paper Reduction Act Burden Disclosure Notice
- Terms of Use
Check Your Email

You’ll get a token link from MyAccount@uscis.dhs.gov

Make sure you click on it within 24 hours.

To continue creating your USCIS Account, you must confirm your email address. To confirm your email address, please click on the link below, or copy and paste the entire link into your browser.

https://myaccount.uscis.gov/users/confirmation?

Please note that this confirmation link expires in 24 hours and may require your immediate attention if you wish to access your online account in the future.

If you require additional assistance logging into your account, please contact us at https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/contact-us.

PLEASE DO NOT REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE
Read Terms of Use

Scroll down to agree

Create a password
Choose Verify Method

Email is recommended

We do not recommend choosing SMS Text if:
• You plan to travel during OPT process or OPT
• OR if you only have a non-U.S. phone number
Finish Your Account Set Up
Select the Form I-765

Be sure to read through all materials before progressing through each part of the application.
Auto Save
Your application will auto save a draft as you go through.

The draft will delete if you don’t make an update within 30 days.

Paperwork Reduction Act
Be sure to read this section.
Post Completion OPT – (c)(3)(B)

Most students will select “No”

If you have previously applied for OPT, select “Yes”
Most students will select “No”

If you have an immigration attorney that is assisting you with your OPT application, select “Yes”
About You

Use name exactly as it appears on your Passport.

Be sure to include FULL GIVEN NAME (include middle name if it shows as part of your Given Name on your passport)

Most students will select “No”

If your name appears differently on your visa, SSN Card, or other legal documents, select “Yes”
Contact Info
If you don’t have a U.S. phone number, leave telephone number blank.

The U.S. mailing address you provide is where your EAD card will be sent. Please carefully consider which mailing address you will use.

Do NOT use the OGE mailing address.

Select appropriate answer
About You
Continued

Remember U.S. Date Formatting
Month/Day/Year
About You Continued

For questions about your most recent arrival into the U.S., refer to your I-94 and Travel History section on the I-94 website https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94

If you hold passports from more than 1 country, click “Add Country”

Select F-1 unless you have completed a Form I-539 Change of Status with USCIS since your last entry.
About You Continued

If you’ve had an EAD card before, include the USCIS number written on the card.

If you have a SSN, include your number after selecting “Yes”

If you do not have a SSN, we recommend selecting “Yes”
Evidence Section

Upload all required documents. Pay attention to type, size, and naming requirements.

We recommend that you consider using a high-quality scanner. Do not take pictures of your documents for your application.
Evidence Section

Upload your passport in this section.
Evidence Section

Upload proof of previously authorized CPT. If you had CPT at Kent State, you will receive a copy of the evidence along with your OPT I-20.

If you had CPT under a **different** SEVIS number, you will need to upload copies of the I-20s that authorized the CPT.

If you were previously authorized for OPT, upload a copy of the previous EAD card(s).
Evidence Section

Upload a copy of your NEW I-20 WITH OPT RECOMMENDATION

Be sure to PHYSICALLY SIGN and DATE Page 1 of your I-20.

This will require you to print your I-20, sign it, and re-scan it.
Evidence Section

Provide any additional information that might be necessary. Once you submit your application, you will also be able to upload any additional supporting evidence.

Most students will not have additional information.
Review Application

Be sure to carefully review your application. You will not be able to edit your application once you make your payment.
Alerts & Warnings

Address any errors you encounter
Application Summary

You will be able to see a summary of your application.
Agree to the statement
Applicant’s Declaration and Certification

You must read and agree to the certification below. If you knowingly and voluntarily falsify or conceal material facts in your application, we can deny your application and may deny any other immigration benefit(s). You may also face criminal prosecution and penalties prescribed by the law.

I have read and agree to the applicant’s statement.

Applicant’s signature

You must provide your digital signature below by typing your full legal name. We may deny your application if you do not completely fill out this application or fail to submit required documents. We will record the date of your signature with your application.
Pay & Submit Application

Please note that filing fees are subject to change. You will be prompted to pay the correct amount before submitting your application.

You will be redirected to pay.gov to enter your payment method.
**Confirmation**

You will receive confirmation your form was submitted.

Go to My Cases to see your case card and receipt notice.

All notices are posted to your account. Notices are also mailed to the mailing address on file.
After Submitting Your Application

... waiting
Understanding USCIS & Processing Times

The “Receipt Notice” is proof that you have a pending OPT application. A paper copy will be mailed to the mailing address you provided in your application.

**KEEP THIS DOCUMENT**

You can log back into USCIS to track the status of your application.

USCIS may take around 60 days to process your application from the date they received your application. However, processing times can be longer.

There is no process in place to have your application expedited.

After 90 days, you may call USCIS to check on your application. Be prepared to provide your receipt number. You may also email isss@kent.edu for assistance.
Understanding USCIS & Processing Times

TRAVELLING WITH PENDING OPT APPLICATION

BEFORE YOUR PROGRAM END DATE – When your OPT application is pending (meaning you have mailed your application but have not received your card), you may travel outside the U.S. and you may return BEFORE the program end date on your I-20.

AFTER YOUR PROGRAM END DATE – When your OPT application is pending (meaning you have mailed your application but have not received your card), and your program end date on your I-20 has occurred, we do NOT recommend that you travel outside the U.S.

For more Travel Recommendations consider Fragomen’s Tips for Students on OPT/H-1B

TRAVELLING AFTER YOU HAVE RECEIVED YOUR OPT CARD

After your OPT has been approved AND you have begun working you will need the following with you to re-enter the U.S.

• Valid Passport, Valid Visa, I-20 with travel signature (valid for 6 months on OPT), EAD Card, Offer Letter from Employer, Any recent pay stubs (optional)
Understanding USCIS & Processing Times

What happens if my application is still pending and I am approaching the end of my 60-day grace period?

You have legal permission to remain in the U.S. past your 60-day grace period while your application is pending.

For your records, keep a copy of your application materials, keep a copy of your tracking information on your application, and keep track of your I-797 Receipt Notification. These items will help prove that you have a pending application should anyone ask for it.
Your EAD Card & SEVP Portal
Your EAD Card

Employment Authorization Document (EAD)

This will be mailed to the address on your I-765

The EAD card is your proof of work authorization.

1. Be sure to check the start date as it is listed on your card. This is your official OPT start date.

2. You may **NOT** begin working until you have received your card **AND** the start date has arrived or passed.

3. You may interview, accept a position, and complete any paperwork before your start date, but you may not actually report to work or training until you have the EAD card.

**DO NOT START WORKING UNTIL YOU HAVE YOUR EAD CARD AND THE START DATE HAS OCCURRED.**
Your SEVP Portal

1. You will also receive an email from “do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov” within 1-5 days of the OPT start date.

2. You MUST register your SEVP Student Portal account within 14 days of receiving this email, or your link will expire.

3. Once you begin working, you must update your portal with the information requested.
   - Your address and phone number
   - Employer Information
   - Part time (20 hours a week or less) vs. Full time (21 hours a week or more)

4. If anything changes, you must update your portal within 10 days of the change.
Maintaining Your Status

To maintain your status on OPT, you must meet the following criteria:

1. You must be working, interning, or volunteering in a position that is directly related to your major.

2. You must be reporting to that position for at least 21 hours a week. You may work more than 21 hours a week, there is no maximum number of hours that you may work.

3. You may have more than 1 position. All positions MUST be directly related to your major. You must still be meeting the 21 hours a week threshold when all hours are combined for all positions.

4. If you never report this information in your portal, SEVP never knows you have been maintaining your status.
SEVP Portal Help

1. **SEVP Portal User Guide** – how to set up portal account, how to login, how to enter biographic information, how to enter employer information while on OPT and STEM OPT.

2. **SEVP Portal Videos** – how to create portal account, how to update biographic information, how to update employer information

3. **SEVP Portal Reference Sheet** – Who can use the SEVP Portal, how does it work, how to create portal account, what to report

4. **Determining a Direct Relationship Between Employment and a Student’s Major Area of Study** – Examples on page 4.
90 Days of Authorized Unemployment
90 Days of Authorized Unemployment

What is it?

You are allotted 90 days during your OPT period in which you do NOT have to be employed.

You can use these days to job search past the start date on your EAD card.

You can these days in between jobs (if you need to or want to change jobs while on OPT)

How do I calculate it?

Authorized Unemployment days are any days in which you are not employed.

Your OPT period starts on the day listed on your EAD card. If you are not working on that day, you have used 1 day of 90 authorized unemployment days.

Once you are hired and working somewhere, weekends and vacation time given to you by the employer are not counted.
90 Days of Authorized Unemployment

What happens if I use it all?

If you use all 90 days of authorized employment, you must maintain your OPT status for the remainder of your OPT period.

If you are unable to find a job or opportunity AND have used all of your authorized unemployment days your F-1 status ends.

• There are a few exceptions, please speak with ISSS for more information

Who tracks it?

SEVP tracks your days based on the information you provide in your SEVP student portal account.

YOU should track your employment very closely.

ISSS does not track your days.
90 Days of Authorized Unemployment

1. We do not recommend using all 90 days at the beginning of your OPT.
2. It is important to note the absolute latest you MUST start working after your OPT begins.

Example: OPT Start Date is 5/21/2021
- Start Date = 5/21/2021
- 90 Days Later = 8/18/2021
- Must start working by 8/18/2021
- There is no 60-day grace period beyond 8/18

Example: OPT Start Date is 7/18/2021
- Start Date = 7/18/2021
- 90 Days Later = 10/16/2021
- Must start working by 10/16/2021
- There is no 60-day grace period beyond 10/16
I Didn’t Graduate… Now What?
I didn’t Graduate…. Now What?

Contact ISSS immediately
You may come to the next walk-in advising OR email isss@kent.edu

If your application was approved by USCIS AND you received your EAD card, you can begin OPT part-time (20 hours a week or less) until you complete courses for graduation.

If your application is still pending, you need to contact USCIS and withdraw your application. You can re-apply 90 days before your new program end date.
Thank You.
www.kent.edu