WHAT WILL I LEARN TODAY?

❑ **Frequently asked questions about OPT and eligibility**

❑ **General application information**

❑ **Reporting requirements while on OPT**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS OPT?

- <u>O</u>ptional <u>P</u>ractical <u>T</u>raining

- **Temporary employment authorization** for work directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study (per CIP code* listed on your I-20)

- **Benefit of the F-1 visa** when the F-1 visa holder has successfully completed a degree program at a United States institution

- **Work authorization approved by USCIS** for F-1 graduate to work in their field for 12 months (with an additional 24 months possible for graduates of STEM programs based on your I-20's CIP code*)

*CIP code = xx.xxxx next to your degree program on your I-20

AM I ELIGIBLE FOR OPT?

Have you…

❑ maintained your F-1 status?

❑ been enrolled full-time for at least one fall *and* one spring semester?

❑ applied for graduation?

❑ **Are you completing a Bachelors, Masters, or Doctorate degree?**

❑ **Do you have a valid, unexpired passport?**

AM I 100% SURE I WILL GRADUATE?

- Study hard and pass all your classes -- attend classes!

- Know your department's rules about required GPA for graduation

- Once you have applied for OPT authorization, it is almost impossible to cancel

- If you find out you will not graduate this semester, LET ISAO KNOW ASAP

  – It is better to apply later for OPT if you are struggling with grades

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

- You do not need to have a job offer to apply for OPT

- You can apply for OPT after each degree level (Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate)

- You are only eligible for OPT *once* at each degree level

  - If you've already done OPT at the Masters level, you cannot earn another year of OPT after a second Masters degree.

  - If you only used part of your OPT after a previous degree, you cannot use the rest of it after your next degree earned.

DOES CPT AFFECT OPT ELIGIBILITY?

- **PART-TIME** CPT does not affect your eligibility for OPT in any way

- **FULL-TIME** CPT *might* affect your eligibility for OPT

  - 12 full months (365 days) total of full-time CPT = **NOT** eligible for OPT

  - Less than 12 months total of full-time CPT = Still eligible for OPT!

WHEN CAN/SHOULD DOCTORAL CANDIDATES APPLY FOR OPT?

- Once you have completed your required coursework and comprehensive exams, you can apply for OPT

  - Only work that DIRECTLY impacts your ability to complete your dissertation research can be considered for <u>CPT</u> authorization.

  - This means that if you want to work in your field, but that work is not essential to completing your dissertation, you will need to apply for <u>OPT</u> work authorization.

  - You can continue to work toward your dissertation defense while working on OPT. It is best if you can defend your dissertation before the end of your 12-month OPT authorization period.

THE OPT APPLICATION

HOW DO I APPLY FOR OPT?

The 12-Month Post-Completion OPT application is an online application with USCIS. However, **do not submit** the application until you have done the following first:

1. Visit our website (**umkc.edu/isao**) to find the OPT Application Checklist

2. Prepare your application documents and submit to ISAO for review in Pathway

   – <mark>DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION TO   USCIS WITHOUT AN OPT-REQUESTED I-20 ISSUED BY ISAO</mark>

3. ISAO will:

   – REVIEW your application documents and recommend any changes

   – SHORTEN your I-20 end-date to **May 10th, 2024**. (For summer graduates the date will be **July 26th, 2024**.)

   – PREPARE your OPT-requested I-20

   – SEND AN EMAIL with the I-20 and an OPT application filing guide

4. Once you receive your OPT recommendation I-20, you can start the application online. READ the instructions in the email first.

5. **You should apply within 30 days after your OPT-Requested I-20 is issued.**   If you do not apply during that time, please request a new I-20 and we will be glad to send you one.

   If you apply with an I-20 that is older than 30 days from issue date, your OPT application will be denied.

WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE NEEDED?

MINIMUM DOCUMENTS REQUIRED BY ISAO FOR REVIEW

- OPT Application Checklist

- ISAO OPT Fee - $100

- OPT Academic Advisor Recommendation Form

- You can submit anything else on the list for review if you wish

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS TO INCLUDE IN ONLINE APPLICATION

- Payment of $410 to U.S. Department of Homeland Security (will change to $470 April 1st, 2024).
  - You can pay via debit/credit or use a banking account
  - Payment is expected at submission

- Digital 2x2 passport-style photo

- Your I-94

- Color copies of your passport and F-1 visa(s)

- Previous I-20s ONLY IF they show prior CPT authorization

- Copies of the front and back of any/all previous EAD cards

HOW DO I CHOOSE MY START DATE?

- OPT start date = date your **employment authorization** will begin

- Must be between 1 and 60 days after your graduation date (Grace Period)

  - **Spring 2024** graduation date = **May 10th, 2024 (05/10/2024)**

    - Therefore, start date must be between **05/11/2024** and **07/10/2024**

  - **Summer 2024** graduation date is **July 26th, 2024 (07/26/2024)**

    - Therefore, start date must be between **07/27/2024 and 09/26/2024**

- Remember that it can take **3-5 months** for USCIS to process applications

  - (It may be a shorter or longer processing time depending on the influx of applications USCIS is processing)

WHEN CAN I APPLY FOR OPT?

- Apply for OPT during your graduating semester at UMKC

- Application must be **_received_** by USCIS:

As early as 90 days before graduation	As late as 60 days after graduation
Spring 2024 = February 10, 2024 We will return OPT I-20s starting February 12th Summer 2024 = April 27th, 2024 We will return OPT I-20s starting April 29th	Spring 2024 = July 6th, 2024 Summer 2024 = September 22nd, 2024

- **You do NOT need to wait for a job offer to apply**

- **Do NOT submit your application to USCIS until you have received an OPT-Requested I-20 from ISAO**

- Remember that it can take **3-5 months** for USCIS to process applications

CAN I EXPEDITE MY APPLICATION?

ISAO = 2 WEEKS

- No, we do not accept expedite requests

- ISAO will process your application in the order it was received

- Submitting an incomplete application will delay processing

- CHECK YOUR EMAIL in case we are missing any required materials for your application

- Repeatedly calling/emailing our office for status updates delays processing time for ALL applicants

USCIS = 3-5 MONTHS

USCIS may consider an expedite request, but only if it meets one of the following criteria:

- Severe financial loss to a company or person, provided that the need for urgent action is not the result of the petitioner's or applicant's failure to:

  - File the benefit request or the expedite request in a reasonable time frame, OR

  - Respond to any requests for additional evidence in a reasonably timely manner;

- Urgent humanitarian reasons;

- Compelling U.S. government interests (such as urgent cases for the Department of Defense or DHS, or other public safety or national security interests); OR

- Clear USCIS error.

- **New "Premium Processing" offered at $1,500 extra**

  ($1,685.00 starting 02/26)

  - We suggest students wait for regular processing at this time.

HAS USCIS RECEIVED MY OPT APPLICATION?

- Once the online I-765 application is submitted, you should receive a two-part verification of the receipt
  - an immediate notice that it was uploaded and received
  - your receipt number within 24 hours

- The I-797 Receipt Notice from USCIS
  - This notice includes a **Receipt Number** which you can use to request updates with USCIS:
  - https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do or Google "USCIS Case Status"

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE!!!

❖ DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR ONLINE APPLICATION BEFORE RECEIVING THE OPT I-20 FROM OUR OFFICE. To do so will result in an **automatic denial** by USCIS.

❖ Do not email/call our office asking for updates on your OPT application unless it has been pending (I-797 Receipt Notice received) MORE THAN 90 DAYS

❖ If it has been more than 72 hours and you have not received an I-797 Receipt Notice online, you should contact USCIS or visit the USCIS Kansas City Field Office for an update – check to see if your application was removed from your account or charged to your card.

OPT RULES & REGULATIONS

HOORAY! I HAVE MY EAD CARD!

To begin working, you must:

1. Have your EAD card IN-HAND

2. AND it must be ON or AFTER the START DATE printed on the card

Remember that you are still an F-1 student!

- **You are still required to report any/all changes to your address, name, visa status, etc.**

- **You will no longer be enrolled in classes, so you will no longer have UMKC health insurance**

Once you have your EAD Card:

Upload a copy (front and back) in Pathway using the Secure Document Upload tool.

We will issue a new updated I-20 showing you have been approved for OPT.

WHAT IS THE SEVP PORTAL?

- This is where you will update your OPT employment

- You MUST report any/all employment updates DIRECTLY in the SEVP Portal

- Failure to report employment could cause delays or denials for future OPT/STEM or H-1B applications

- F-1 visa regulations require that you report all of your OPT employment

SEVP PORTAL:
https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/

Sign In

Attention: Only students who have OPT approved may use the SEVP Portal. You must create an account and set a password before using this log in page. Go to Portal Help for more information.

Email

Password

Login   Reset Password

WHEN WILL I HAVE ACCESS TO THE SEVP PORTAL?

- You will have access starting on or soon after your first day of OPT authorization as printed on your EAD card

- You will receive an email from do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov to your UMKC email account

- The link in this email will expire in **14** days

    – Check your junk mail if you don't see the email

    – Email ISAO at isao@umkc.edu if your link has expired and you need a new one sent to you – we will ask SEVP to send a new one.

An official website of the United States government

SEVP Portal | Student and Exchange Visitor Program Portal

Register

SEVIS ID

Submit

WHAT DO I UPDATE IN THE PORTAL?

- Mailing/local/physical address in the U.S.

- Telephone number

- Employer information: name, address, dates, job titles, supervisors

- View and edit/update your current and past OPT employers

  - To show the end of employment for an employer, put the last day worked as the end date. DO NOT delete employers in your record. Reach out our office and explain why you want to have the employer deleted.

MORE SEVP PORTAL INFORMATION

- The SEVP Portal is FREE; SEVP will never ask for money in an email.

- do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov is the ONLY email address SEVP will use to contact you regarding your portal account.

- The portal login page is different from the account setup page! Once you have your account set up, please be sure you log in on the main SEVP Portal page.

- Updates made in the SEVP Portal will NOT update your UMKC Pathway record
  - This means you should update your **address** in both Pathway and the SEVP Portal.
  - Any employment updates made by ISAO will take 2-3 business days to reflect in your SEVP Portal.

- [Portal Email Notices to Students | Study in the States (dhs.gov)](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov) for more information

EMPLOYER FORM – 12-MONTH POST COMPLETION OPT

- Remember – you are **required to report all employment** to our office.
  - You can find the Employer Form for 12-Month Post-Completion OPT :
    - International Students Affairs Office
      - Current Students
        - Employment
          - Optional Practical Training
            - Reporting requirements
              - https://www.umkc.edu/isao/docs/employer-form-post-completion-opt.pdf

12-Month Post-Completion OPT Employer Form

- Must be completed
  - Current address, even if you have not moved.
  - EIN number for employer
- Must be signed
- Upload using the Secure Document Upload tool

- Fill out each time you change jobs, or something changes about your job.

EMPLOYER FORM: 12-MONTH POST-COMPLETION OPT

Please select ONE:

○ I have added my new employer information into the SEVP Portal. I am submitting this form to fulfill my OPT reporting requirements.

☐ I also ended my previous employment with _____ on _____

○ I have updated my current OPT employer's information (address, email, supervisor's name, etc.) in the SEVP Portal. I am submitting this form to fulfill my OPT reporting requirements.

_____	_____	_____
SURNAME	FIRST NAME(S)	UMKC ID #

Your Current U.S. Address: _____

EMPLOYER INFORMATION:

_____	_____
COMPANY NAME	COMPANY WEBSITE

_____	_____	____	_____
STREET NUMBER AND NAME	CITY	STATE	ZIP CODE

_____	_____	_____
SUPERVISOR'S SURNAME	SUPERVISOR'S FIRST NAME(S)	SUPERVISOR'S TITLE

_____	_____
SUPERVISOR'S EMAIL	SUPERVISOR'S PHONE NUMBER

Please state your employer's EIN or FEIN number (This is NOT the E-Verify number): _____

Please state your job title: _____ Please confirm your start date: _____

Explain how this employment is related to your course of study (please attach a separate page if needed):

[   ]

PLEASE READ:

✓ I certify that the above information is true and correct and that by electronically signing this form that I have read and acknowledged all of the information on these forms.
✓ I certify that I understand the rules and regulations of my F-1 visa as well as Post-Completion OPT .
✓ I understand the unemployment limits and regulations of my visa: 90 days for OPT.
✓ I understand that termination due to exceeding unemployment days or not reporting to my DSO within 10 days of any change in employment is solely my responsibility as the F-1 visa holder.
✓ **I understand I must validate my employment and US address with ISAO every 6 months.**
✓ I understand my job must be directly related to my field of study and that I must work more than 20 hours per week.
✓ I understand that any change in my mailing/residential address, phone number, employer, interruption in employment, termination of employment, or any other change in employment MUST be reported to ISAO and the SEVP Portal within 10 days of the change.
✓ I understand that any change in my name, visa status, transfer to another school, or change in degree level MUST be reported to ISAO within 10 days of the change.

ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE: _____ **DATE:** _____

07/2022

EMPLOYMENT REPORTING

- Upload your EAD card using our Secure Document Upload tool when you receive the card.

- You have **10 days** from your first day of work to report your employment

- Put the information in your SEVP portal, but also upload the completed Employer Form using Pathway's Secure Document Upload tool

  – Once we receive the form, we will update your information on our side of the portal and generate an updated I-20 showing your employment

    - If you cannot put the correct data in your SEVP portal, put what you are able to add and we will be glad to put correct data from the Employer Form that you upload to our office (start date of the employment for instance).

OPT/STEM: VALIDATION REPORT FORM

ALL OPT and STEM OPT students are required to submit this form to ISAO EVERY 6 MONTHS for the duration of your OPT authorization period.

Please log in to your SEVP Portal for your specific validation report deadlines.

SELECT THE REASON FOR SUBMISSION OF THIS FORM BY CHOOSING ONE (1) OF THE FOLLOWING:

- **POST-COMPLETION OPT:**
  - ○ 6 months after the start date listed on your EAD card
  - ○ At the end of your Post-Completion OPT (12 months)
- **STEM OPT:**
  - ○ 6 months after the start date listed on your EAD card
  - ○ 12 months after the start date listed on your EAD card. Must submit with I-983 that includes first self-evaluation
  - ○ 18 months after the start date listed on your EAD card
  - ○ At the end of your STEM OPT (24 months). Must submit with I-983 that includes final self-evaluation

FULL NAME:		UMKC ID#:	

PLEASE READ:

✓ I certify that the below information is true and correct and that by electronically signing this form that I have read and acknowledged all of the information below.

✓ I certify that my job is directly related to my major field of study and that I am working more than 20 hours per week.

✓ I understand that any change in my mailing/residential address, phone number, employer, interruption in employment, termination of employment, or any other change in employment MUST be reported to ISAO or the SEVP Portal **within 10 days of the change.**

✓ I understand that any change in my name, visa status, transfer to another school, or change in degree level MUST be reported to ISAO within 10 days of the change

✓ I understand that termination due to exceeding unemployment days or not reporting within 10 days of any change in employment is solely my responsibility as the F-1 visa holder.

✓ I understand the unemployment limits and regulations of my visa: 90 days for OPT or an additional 60 days for the 24-month STEM extension.

✓ If I am currently on 24-month STEM OPT, I understand that it is my responsibility to complete the self-evaluations on the I-983 and submit a copy to ISAO at the 12-month and 24-month mark in my OPT authorization period.

✓ I understand that I must report/confirm my employment every 6 months of my post-completion or STEM OPT.

✓ **I CONFIRM THAT I AM STILL/CURRENTLY EMPLOYED BY _____ AS STATED IN MY SEVP PORTAL ACCOUNT AND THAT ALL INFORMATION IN MY PORTAL IS UP TO DATE.**

✓ I confirm that I am still residing at _____ and that I have updated my LOCAL address in Pathway as well as in my SEVP Portal account.

ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

03/2020

VALIDATION REPORT FORM

This is required from students to confirm their data: current address and employer.

Students should complete this form at every six-month anniversary of their OPT EAD card dates and upload it using the Secure Document Upload tool.

Students cannot upload this form to SEVP themselves. They must upload the completed form to our office.

WHAT WORK QUALIFIES AS OPT?

- Employment MUST be directly related to your field of study (per CIP code)

- You MUST work at least **20** hours per week ("full time")

  - Working below 20 hrs/wk is counted toward unemployment

- You can work for multiple employers – as many employers as you wish but you must report your employment for each employer even if you work a few hours a week for an employer

- Internships or other unpaid work CAN count as OPT

  - The work still needs to be related to your earned degree

  - You still need to submit the Employer form

  - You should request a "job offer" letter for your own records

WHAT ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT?

- F-1 students on OPT are given 90 days of unemployment

- The unemployment clock starts on the start date printed on your EAD card

- SEVP has automatically terminated students in the past if their record showed more than 90 days of unemployment

- Exceeding 90 days of unemployment could affect future STEM or H-1B applications

- Non-paid internships or volunteer positions in your degree program are considered employment and are treated as such

CAN I TRAVEL?

STATUS	TRAVEL?	TRAVEL RISK LEVEL	WHAT YOU NEED
• **Applied for OPT** • **OPT app is PENDING** • **Still a student** **(I-20 end date has not yet passed)**	**OK**	**Very Low**—You should plan to re-enter the US at least a couple of weeks before the end date on your I-20.	Travel Endorsed I-20 Valid passport Valid visa
• **Applied for OPT** • **Application is PENDING** • **No longer a student** **(I-20 end date has passed)**	**NO**. Do not leave unless it is an emergency.	**HIGH**—If you leave the US while an application is pending, USCIS may see that as abandonment and cancel your application.	Travel Endorsed I-20 Valid passport Valid visa **I-797 Receipt Notice** **Letter of Support from ISAO**
• **OPT is APPROVED** • **You have your EAD card** • **You do NOT have a job offer**	**NO**, unless you are still a student (meaning your I-20 end date has not yet passed).	**HIGH**—If you decide to travel, you should take proof that you are actively looking for a position (i.e. proof that you submitted resumes, upcoming interviews, etc.). *Even if you have this proof you may be denied re-entry.*	Travel Endorsed I-20 Valid passport Valid visa **EAD card** **Proof that you are actively looking for a job**
• **OPT is APPROVED** • **You have your EAD card** • **You have a job offer** **but the job has NOT started**	**PROBABLY OK**	**Moderate to Low**—If you decide to travel, make sure that you take a job offer letter on official letterhead which should include your expected start date.	Travel Endorsed I-20 Valid passport Valid visa **EAD card** **Job offer letter**
• **OPT is APPROVED** • **You have your EAD card** • **You have begun work**	**OK**	**Very Low**—If you decide to travel, request a letter from your employer indicating that they approve your travel and listing the date they expect you back.	Travel Endorsed I-20 Valid passport Valid visa **EAD card** **Letter from employer**

FREQUENT QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS ON ISAO'S WEBSITE

- What is the current USCIS processing time estimate for my I-765?

- What types of unique employment situations are accepted on OPT/STEM?

- What do I do if I've lost my EAD card?

- What about health insurance?

- What do I do if I receive a Request for Evidence (RFE) from USCIS?

- Am I eligible for a STEM extension? (and STEM OPT application info)

    https://info.umkc.edu/ISAO/current-students/opt/

QUESTIONS?