INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOP

POST-COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING
Optional practical training (OPT)

- What does OPT mean?
  - “Optional Practical Training is temporary employment for the purpose of practical training directly related to the student's major area of study”

- What does Post-Completion OPT mean?
  - OPT performed after the student's program end date

- An F-1 student may apply for post-completion OPT up to 90 days before the student's program end date and up to 60 days after his or her program end date.
Work Done for OPT

- Work done for OPT MUST be “directly related to the student's major area of study”. A statement that the student intends to engage in OPT in a position directly related to his/her field of study must be entered into their SEVIS record when requesting OPT.

- SEVP recommends that the student maintain evidence for each job documenting the position held, proof of the duration of that position, the job title, contact information from the student's supervisor or manager, and a description of the work.
Standard OPT

- Standard OPT may be authorized for a maximum aggregate period of 12 months per educational level. A student becomes eligible for another 12 months of practical training when he or she changes to a higher educational level.

- Although students may engage in both pre-completion and standard post-completion OPT, the maximum amount of time that can be granted for all standard OPT periods combined is 12 months per educational level.
For post-completion OPT, a student may NOT request a start date that is more than 60 days after their program end date.

A student may NOT begin OPT employment until the start date indicated on the EAD (Employment Authorization Document) issued by USCIS.

The student must also be in receipt of the EAD prior to the start of employment.
Unemployment while on OPT

A job offer is not a required element of the DSO's recommendation for standard OPT (it is a requirement for the STEM OPT extensions) or of USCIS's approval of a standard OPT EAD.

However, during post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment," and sets an aggregate limit on days of "unemployment" that can be accrued while on post-completion OPT.

- During standard post-completion OPT, a student may not be unemployed for an aggregate of more than 90 days.
- If a student receives a 24-month STEM OPT extension, the limit on unemployment is raised to an aggregate of no more than 150 days, applied to the entire period of standard post-completion and STEM OPT.
Unemployment Count in SEVIS

- SEVIS will count each day that an OPT student's SEVIS record lacks employer information and infer that the student was unemployed during those days. SEVIS will check the record daily and count every day there is a gap in employment.
- The unemployment count and other employment data in SEVIS can be used by USCIS in the course of an application for immigration benefits like OPT, change of status, etc., when determining if a student or former student maintained his or her F-1 status.
- The unemployment count may be used by SEVP to terminate a student's SEVIS record, either manually or automatically. SEVP is developing an auto-terminate function for records that exceed the regulatory unemployment limits.
The SEVP Portal is an important tool that lets F-1 students on Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) meet their legal reporting requirements.

The portal allows students the ability to report address, telephone and employer information to SEVP without relying upon their designated school official (DSO) to update their information.

Access to the SEVP portal is sent to students upon approval of their OPT application. Students should confirm with their DSO that their active email address is saved in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) when submitting their OPT request.
STEM Extension

- F-1 students approved for standard post-completion Optional Practical Training based on a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) field that appears on the DHS STEM-Designated Degree Program List may apply to USCIS for 24-month extension of post-completion OPT (for a total eligibility of up to 36 months).

Eligibility Requirements

- Job must be a paid job, for at least 20 hours per week.
- Employer must be enrolled in E-Verify and have an IRS Employer Identification Number (EIN); DHS says that there must be a "bona fide employer-employee" relationship, and that student may not be self-employed.
- The student and employer must complete a Form I-983 Training Plan, and the student must present the completed I-983 to the DSO before the DSO recommends STEM OPT in SEVIS.
- USCIS must receive the student's STEM OPT application package before the expiration of the student's current post-completion OPT, and no later than 60 days from the date the DSO recommended the benefit in SEVIS.
- The STEM OPT application package includes: Form I-765, I-765 filing fee, Form I-20 with the 24-month STEM OPT recommendation, and documentation of the qualifying STEM degree.
An F-1 student who travels outside the U.S. temporarily (i.e., less than 5 months) can be readmitted to resume employment for the remainder of the period authorized on his or her EAD card, provided:

- The student presents a Form I-20 endorsed by the DSO within the preceding 6 months
- The student presents an unexpired EAD, and
- The student is returning to resume employment
- The student presents a valid F-1 visa (unless exempt from the visa requirement)
Travel and Re-Entry

- Students approved for post-completion OPT continue to be in F-1 status.
- In order to reenter the United States after a temporary absence of 5 months or less, an F-1 student should have the following documents:
  - A valid passport (expiration date must be more than six months into the future)
  - A valid F-1 visa (unless exempt from visa requirements)
  - A Form I-20 properly endorsed for travel by the DSO
  - Letter of Employment
How to Apply for Work Authorization

- You will find requests for OPT, STEM Extension, and Travel Endorsement within your GPS Portal.
- You may submit your OPT or STEM Extension online or in hard copy. Instructions are in GPS.
- Be sure to read the cover page and instructions for each application thoroughly then complete the required signature documents and questionnaires.
- Don’t forget to click “Submit” when complete!