1. What is OPT?
   a. Types of OPT
   b. Types of Employment
   c. 90 Days Unemployment Limit

2. Apply for OPT
   a. Eligibility
   b. Program Completion Date
   c. Determine Your OPT Start and End Date
   d. Your I-20 with OPT Recommendation
   e. When to Apply for Pre-Completion OPT
   f. When to Apply for Post-Completion OPT
   g. Typical Scenarios for Post-Completion OPT
   h. Deadlines

3. Prepare Your OPT Application
   a. Steps to Apply for OPT
   b. OPT Application Checklist
   c. OPT Request Form
   d. Form I-765
   e. Two 2” by 2” U.S. Passport Style Photos
   f. Pick Up Your OPT Application Materials

4. Mail Your OPT Application
   a. Prepare Your OPT Application for Mailing
   b. Mail Your OPT Application to USCIS
   c. Read the Mailing Instruction!

5. Follow Up and Approval
   a. Application Sent! What Now?
   b. Request for Evidence (RFE)

6. Maintaining F-1 Status While on Post-Completion OPT
   a. Maintaining F-1 Status
   b. Other Things to Know – Health Insurance and SSN
   c. Travel Outside the United States
Optional Practical Training

Overview
What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

- **Purpose:** Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a temporary employment authorization for International students in F-1 Student visa status. OPT provides an opportunity for students to apply the knowledge acquired from their academic program to a work experience directly related to their current major field of study.

- **Length:** 12 months at each higher education level. You may become eligible for another 12 months of OPT when you move to a higher education level in the U.S. Simply beginning another degree program does not automatically confer this eligibility.

- **Jobs:** While on OPT, students' jobs must be directly related to their current major(s), not minor.

- **How to obtain OPT:** Students must request OPT recommendation from the Center for Global Engagement (CGE). It takes CGE 10 business days to issue a new I-20 with the requested OPT start and end date. Students must apply for OPT by mailing this new I-20 with other supporting documentation to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The filing fee for OPT is currently $410. USCIS' processing time for each OPT application is 90 days/3 months.

  If approved, USCIS will issue an “Employment Authorization Document”, or EAD card to students.
Types of OPT

You can apply for OPT during your program of study, which is known as Pre-Completion OPT, or after you finish your program of study, known as Post-Completion OPT. You also must clearly indicate if you wish to apply for part-time or full-time authorization. Part-time authorization will allow you to work 20 hours or less per week, and full-time authorization will allow you to work for more than 20 hours per week.

Pre-Completion OPT (Work permission before program completion date):

- Vacation OPT (part-time or full-time): Takes place during summer or winter vacation.

- While School-in-Session OPT (part-time only): Takes place during Spring or Fall semester while you are studying full-time.
Types of OPT

Post-Completion OPT (Work permission after program completion date). Full-time only

- Take place within 60 days of the day you completed your program.
- Although you are working full-time without attending school at all, you are still considered in F-1 Student status. You must comply with the F-1 regulations and fulfill your reporting responsibilities while on Post-Completion OPT.
- Graduate students can apply for full-time Thesis OPT. Thesis OPT takes place while you are working on the culminating experience. You must have completed all of your course requirements except for the culminating experience.

Periods of OPT used before the completion of studies will be deducted from the total 12 month period available. If you apply for a period of Pre-Completion OPT and you then still have part of your 12 month total remaining, you must submit application and application fee again in order to apply for Post-Completion OPT.

- Two months of part-time OPT = One month of full-time OPT.
- Example: If you have been approved for 4 months of part-time While-School-in-Session OPT, you will have 10 month of full-time OPT remains.
As we mentioned in the “What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?” section, your job under OPT must be directly related to your current major(s), not minor. If the relationship between the job and your field of study is called into question by USCIS in the future, the burden of proof is on you to demonstrate that relationship.

The types of employment allowed during the OPT include:

- **Paid Employment.** Students may work part time (at least 20 hours per week when on post-completion OPT) or full time in a job related to their field of study.

- **Multiple employers.** Students may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the student’s degree program.

- **Short-term multiple employers (performing artists).** Students, such as musicians and other performing artists may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration. If requested by USCIS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing a list of all gigs.

- **Work for hire.** This is also commonly referred to as 1099 employment where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than employment relationship. If requested by USCIS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.
Types of Employment

- **Self-employed business owner.** Students on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. In this situation, the student must work full-time. The student must be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to the student’s degree program.

- **Employment through an agency.** Students on Post-Completion OPT must be able to provide evidence showing they worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.

**Unpaid employment**

Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns, where this does not violate any labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week for students on Post-completion OPT. These students must be able to provide evidence from the employer that the student worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.

It is recommended that you maintain evidence for each job: the position held, duration of that position, the job title, contact information for the student’s supervisor or manager, and a description of the work. You must always report employment through the SEVP Portal at [http://sevp.ice.gov/opt](http://sevp.ice.gov/opt) or email celglobal@sfsu.edu.
90-Day Unemployment Limit
For Post-Completion OPT Only


“During Post-Completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial Post-Completion OPT authorization.”

You must work at least 20 hours per week in a qualifying position to be considered “Employed”. If you have a variable schedule, within a month, it should average out to at least 20 hours per week.
90-Day Unemployment Limit
For Post-Completion OPT Only

To avoid violating F-1 status, prior to reaching the 90-day unemployment limit, a student should take one of the following actions:

- Apply to continue his or her education by a change of level or transferring to another SEVP-certified school
- Depart the United States
- Take action to otherwise maintain legal status

If one of those actions is not taken, a student who has exceeded the period of unemployment is considered violated his or her status. The student must depart the U.S. immediately as there is no grace period will allow the student to legally remain in the U.S. once the he or she has reached the 90-day unemployment limit!

What happens if you do not report your employment?

- Your SEVIS record and I-20 will be terminated automatically by SEVIS after 90 days
- Your F-1 status and OPT authorization will end as soon as your SEVIS record is terminated
Apply for OPT
Eligibility

You must meet the following criteria in order to be eligible to apply for OPT:

- **Be in valid F-1 status**

- **Enrolled full-time.** Minimum 12 units for undergraduate students or 8 units for graduate students. You are also eligible to apply for OPT if you have approved Reduced Course Load (RCL).

- **Fulfilled one year full-time requirement.** You must have been enrolled full-time for at least one full academic year prior to submitting an OPT application. One year enrollment may be fulfilled at SF State, a previous university, or between multiple universities.

- You are physically maintaining F1 status and attending classes in the U.S. No studying abroad or taking online classes from abroad in your final semester at SF State.

- You have not completed more than 364 days of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT).

- You have not already been approved for 12 months of OPT at the current degree level.

- Job offer is not required.
Program Completion Date

The timing to apply for OPT is determined by your program completion date. The program completion date is NOT the date your graduation application is approved nor the date SF State grant your degree.

For OPT application purpose, the program completion date is the date Grades Available on SF State Gateway. See Registrar’s website for this date.

CGE will change the program end date on your I-20, and print a new I-20 with OPT recommendation to you. **You cannot work on-campus beyond your program end date on the I-20.**
Determine Your OPT start and end date

**Pre-Completion OPT:** You can pick any date to start OPT as long as you are eligible. Pre-Completion OPT must end on or before the program completion date.

**Post-Completion OPT:** Your requested start date must be within your 60 grace period after the program completion date. For example, if your program completion date is June 2, 2020, the earliest date you can request your OPT to start is June 3, 2020 and the last date is August 1, 2020. Post-Completion OPT will end 12 months (if you did not use any OPT time during your study) from the start date, or within 14 months of the program completion date.

As we mentioned in the OPT overview section, you will need to obtain an I-20 with OPT recommendation from CGE, then send the new I-20 and OPT application to USCIS. Please note it takes up to **10 business days** for CGE to issue you an I-20 with OPT recommendation, an at least **90 days/3 months** for USCIS to process your application and mail the EAD to you. **Plan ahead to avoid unnecessary stress!**

Once USCIS receives your OPT application, it is not possible to change the requested OPT start and end dates.
Your I-20 with OPT Recommendation

Once CGE determine you are eligible to apply for OPT, we will issue a new I-20 with your requested OPT start and end date.

If you are completing your program and are applying for Post-Completion OPT, we will also change the Program End Date of your I-20 to your program completion date. This means:

- Only apply for Post-Completion OPT if you are 100% sure that you graduating. Once the Program End Date on the I-20 has been changed you are expected to complete your program before this date. You cannot request I-20 extension once the Program End Date has passed.
- If you requested an I-20 with OPT recommendation and later found out you cannot complete your program on time, you must contact CGE immediately!
- You will still be using this I-20 for travel while you are on Post-Completion OPT even though the Program End Date has passed already.
When to Apply for Post-Completion OPT

For Post-Completion OPT, we recommend you to submit your application to USCIS up to 90 days before your program completion date. You may also submit application during the 60-day grace period after the program completion date.

You must be physically in the U.S. while applying for OPT. If you leave the U.S. during the 60-day grace period without submitting the OPT application to USCIS, you lose your opportunity to apply for OPT.
For Post-Completion OPT, we recommend you to submit your application to USCIS up to 90 days before your program completion date:

- **Prepare your OPT application**
- **Apply 90 days before program completion date**
- **OPT start date must be within 60 days of the program completion date**
- 
  - One year of full-time requirement meet
  - Program completion date
  - 60 days
  - OPT will end 12 months from the start date, or within 14 months of the program completion date
## Important OPT Dates for Students Completing Certificates in Spring 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2, 2020</td>
<td>Certificate Program completion date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 31, 2020</td>
<td>USCIS deadline to receive OPT application</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Submission period for OPT request to CGE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 24, 2020</td>
<td>First day to submit request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 13, 2020</td>
<td>Last day to submit request</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Submission period for OPT application to USCIS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 4, 2020</td>
<td>First day to submit application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 31, 2020</td>
<td>USCIS deadline to receive OPT application</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Requested OPT start date must begin between:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 3, 2020</td>
<td>First possible day to start OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1, 2020</td>
<td>Last possible day to start OPT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mailing application to USCIS**

Applications must be mailed within 30 days of the new OPT-endorsed I-20 being issued and/or be delivered to USCIS by July 31, 2020.
Typical Scenarios for Post-Completion OPT

Scenario 1:
Student with a job offer submits OPT application early
On March 4, Mohammed mails his application for Post-Completion OPT to USCIS. He is completing his program on June 2 and chooses June 30 as the OPT start date because he has a job offer beginning that day.

He receives the EAD on June 11. His employer is pleased to see proof of the work permission early even though he cannot start working until June 30, as noted on the EAD.

Mohammed decides to go home for 2 weeks to celebrate his program completion.
Typical Scenarios for Post-Completion OPT

Scenario 2:

Student with no job offer submits his OPT application rather late

Wei doesn’t have a job offer or time to search for one until after he finishes school. He chooses the latest date possible to start his Post-Completion OPT – August 1 – which is the 60th day after his program completion date: June 2. He knows that he will be legal to stay in the U.S. as long as he has submitted the OPT application on time. Wei finally mails his OPT application on July 16.

On August 1, Wei still hasn’t received his EAD, so he can’t work. He receives his EAD on September 30 and it expires the following year on August 1 (14 months from June 2).

Wei has lost 2 months of his 12 month OPT because his application was approved after the latest available OPT start date.
Deadlines

USCIS takes deadline very, very seriously. Any applications received after the deadline will be denied without the possibility for appeal.

- Deadline will be sent to you. Please do not wait until the last minute.
- USCIS must receive your application within 60 days after your program completion date.
- USCIS must receive your application no later than 30 days after your I-20 with OPT recommendation issue date – this means you should mail your application to USCIS quickly!
- Once your submit your OPT application to the USCIS, the OPT dates cannot be changed. Please be thoughtful when choosing the dates. If you wish to withdraw your OPT application please contact CGE. The application fee will not be refunded to you.

- Apply for Pre-Completion OPT at least 90 days before the date you wish to start work
- Apply for Post-Completion OPT at least 90 days before you complete your program.
Prepare Your OPT Application
Steps to Apply for OPT

**Step 1: Understand OPT and how it works**
All applicants are required to review this OPT information workshop to complete the necessary forms and put together the application.

**Step 2: Prepare and submit OPT materials to CGE**
Submit your completed application to CGE for an I-20 with OPT recommendation.

**Step 3: Mail your application**
An F-1 International Student Advisor will review your application materials and issue a new I-20 for your OPT application.

You will need to pick up your new I-20 and all the application materials at the CGE front desk once we contact you (within 10 business days, excluding weekends and holidays), and then mail them to the USCIS.

Please sign the photocopies of your new I-20 with OPT recommendation (do not send the original I-20) before you mail your application!
OPT Application Checklist

Submit the following documents to CGE:

- A blank envelope (at least 9 inches by 11 inches) – the envelope must be big enough to fit all your OPT application materials.
- OPT Application Cover Sheet (Fillable PDF, 1 page, 125KB)
- **TYPED**, completed and signed Optional Practical Training (OPT) Request Form (Fillable PDF, 2 pages, 259KB)
- **TYPED**, completed and signed Form I-765 (Fillable PDF, 1 page, 610KB)
- Original or photocopy of your most current I-20
- Photocopy of the identification page(s) in your passport (must include name, current expiration date, and photo)
- I-94 admissions verification printout from [http://www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94). If you entered the U.S. prior to April 30, 2013, provide a front and back copy of the I-94 card stapled to inside of your passport.

Additional documents, if applicable:

- Photocopies of any SF State I-20 which shows Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorization
- Photocopies of your previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
This is a fillable PDF. **You must TYPE this form.**

Complete the “Applicant Information” section and sign it.
The “Academic Information” section must be completed and signed by the CGE Advisor or Eduardo Cerpa, Program Coordinator for PLS Certificate students.
Read the “Applicant Requirements and Responsibilities” on the 2nd page of the OPT Request Form carefully and sign in the signature box.
Form I-765

Go to USCIS’ I-765 page and download the most current Form I-765. USCIS does update Form I-765 frequently and you should use the most current form.

If you are applying for OPT for the very first time, check the box for “Initial permission to accept employment”.

✓ I-765 is a fillable PDF. Do not fill it out by hand.
Item # 5: U.S. Mailing Address
The address you put here is where the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card will be mailed.

- This address needs to be valid for at least 3 months, the length of time it may take to process your OPT application.
- If you think you might move in the months after you mail your application, use a reliable friend or family member’s address to receive your EAD.
- The address you put here should be in California. If you wish to use an address outside the California, visit [http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses](http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses) for the appropriate USCIS lockbox to send your OPT application.
- You may change your mailing address after you receive a Form I-797C, Notice of Action, a receipt notice with your case number, from USCIS.
Form I-765

Item # 13.a: Social Security Number (SSN)
If you have never worked in the U.S., you may not yet have a SSN. You should check “No” if you have never received a SSN.

Item # 13.b: Provide your SSN

Starting October 2017, you may obtain EAD and SSN simultaneously. See USCIS announcement regarding this new service.

If you wish to apply for a SSN, check “Yes” for item 14 and 15, and complete 16.a – 17.b. as instructed

(Image might differ from new I-765 version)
Form I-765

Item # 21.a: Form I-94 Number
On this item, you will use your current I-94 number. This is an 11-digit number found on the top left corner of your I-94 card. If you entered the U.S. after April 30, 2013, you can also obtain this number at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/

Item # 22: Date of Last Entry into the U.S. or about (mm/dd/yyyy)
This is the date of your most recent entry into the U.S. This entry date can be found on the admission stamp on your passport or on your electronic I-94 form.

Item # 23: Place of Last Entry into the U.S.
This is the name of the city where you landed in the U.S. This information is also can be found on the admission stamp on your passport (usually as a code like “SFR” for San Francisco). If you drove across from Canada or Mexico, write the name and the city where you entered.
Item #24: Immigration Status at Your Last Arrival
This is the status you had upon entering the U.S. For example, you may have last entered with a H-4 dependent visa and changed status to F-1.

Item #25: Current Immigration Status
Type “F-1 Student”.
Item # 27: Eligibility Category
Use the following codes depending on the type of OPT you are requesting:

(c)(3)(A) Pre-Completion OPT
(c)(3)(B) Post-Completion OPT

If you entered (c)(3)(A) or (c)(3)(B) on item #27, enter all previously used SEVIS receipt numbers and any previously authorized CPT or OPT and the academic level in which it was authorized in Part 6, Additional Information.

Applicant’s Signature
Sign your name in BLACK ink (Not blue). Your signature must fit between the lines. If your signature touches the signature box, your application will be returned to you. Be conservative and use a signature smaller than your normal handwriting.
Two 2” by 2” U.S. Passport Style Photos

- The photos you are required to use for the OPT application **MUST** meet the specifications of U.S. passport style photos.
- The photos must be taken within 30 days of the date you sign the I-765 application.
- Write your name and I-94 number lightly on the back of each photo in case they get separated from your application.

To see a full description of these specifications, go to the U.S. Department of State web site at [http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/photos.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/photos.html).

- Most places that take passport photos are already familiar with the specifications.
Two 2” by 2” U.S. Passport Style Photos

 Helpful Tips

✓ Your photo should show your full face, front view, eyes open.
✓ Make sure the photo shows your full head from top of hair to bottom of chin; height of head should measure 1 inch to 1-3/8 inches (25 mm to 35 mm).
✓ Your head should be centered head within frame.
✓ Make sure eye height is between 1-1/8 inches to 1-3/8 inches (28 mm and 35 mm) from bottom of photo.
✓ The background should be plain white or off-white.
✓ There should be no distracting shadows on the face or in the background.
✓ Make sure you have a natural expression.
Pick Up Your OPT Application Materials

- After you submit the completed OPT application materials to CGE, your request will be reviewed by an F-1 International Student Advisor. Once CGE determined you are eligible for OPT, a new I-20 with OPT recommendation will be issued within 10 business days (excluding weekends and holidays).

- You must come back to CGE and pick up your new I-20 and the rest of the OPT application materials at CGE front desk within 10 business days (excluding weekends and holidays) from the day you submitted the OPT application materials.

- If your new I-20 and the rest of the OPT application materials are ready for pick up in less than 10 business days, CGE will e-mail you a pick up notification.

The Pick-up notification from CGE will only be sent to your SF State e-mail account. The notification will **NOT** be sent to your Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo, QQ, 163 or any other none SF State e-mail accounts.
Mail Your OPT Application
Prepare Your OPT Application for Mailing

Step 1: Prepare your OPT application

☐ Form I-765

☐ Photos: Two U.S. passport-style photographs. Write your full name and I-94 number gently at back of your photos and place the photos in a small envelope.

☐ Filing Fee $410: Fee can be paid by personal check. Make check payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”. Your photos and the personal check should be paper clipped on top of the Form I-765.

☐ Photocopies of the I-20: Make photocopies of your new I-20 and sign it in BLUE ink. Sign under the “Student Attestation” section at the bottom of page 1.

☐ I-94: Print from http://www.cbp.gov/i94 or attach photocopies of both the front and back sides of your I-94 card.

☐ Photocopy of your passport: The photocopy must include name, current expiration date, and your photo.

Additional Documents (if applicable)

☐ Photocopies of the I-20(s) with Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorization.


☐ G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance: If you would like to receive a receipt notification of your application electronically either via email or text, complete this form.
## Mail Your OPT Application to USCIS

### STEP 2: Mail Your OPT Application

If your address is **IN** California, mail the above documents to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For U.S. Postal Service:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USCIS, PO Box 21281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(CGE recommends that you send your application by <strong>Priority Mail</strong> - additional fee will apply)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private Courier (FedEx, DHL or UPS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USCIS, Attn: NFB AOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S, Suite 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your address is **OUTSIDE** California, visit [http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses](http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses) for the appropriate USCIS lockbox to send your OPT application.

**NOTE:** USCIS must receive your application no later than 30 days after your I-20 with OPT recommendation issue date – this means you should mail your application to USCIS quickly!
A “OPT Application Mailing Instructions” will be placed on top of your OPT materials.

Read the instructions carefully.

Make sure your I-765 and photocopies of your new I-20 are SIGNED before you mail your application fee and OPT application to USCIS.
Follow Up and Approval
As long as USCIS has received your application no later than 30 days after the OPT I-20 has been issued, your F-1 student status remains valid while you are waiting for the approval even if there is a gap between your completion date and the start date of the OPT. During this “gap,” you can remain in the U.S. or travel abroad and re-enter in F-1 status.

USCIS will mail Form I-797C Notice of Action to you after they received your OPT application. This is the proof that your application is being processed and your application fee has been received by USCIS. You will need it to inquire about the status of your OPT application and for travel outside the U.S.

Your receipt number (usually starts from or “YSC”) is printed on this I-797C. You can check the status of your OPT application by entering your receipt number under “Check your case status” at http://www.uscis.gov/.

The Received Date on the Notice of Action: This is the date when the USCIS begins processing your application. It may not be the actual date they received your application but it is when your case was entered into the system.

The Notice Date on the Notice of Action: This is the date the Notice of Action is issued.

If you do not get your Notice of Action within 6 weeks after mailing your application, call USCIS National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283.
If there is a problem with your application, USCIS will send you a notice by mail called the “Request for Evidence (RFE).”

In most cases, the USCIS will not call you at the telephone number you put on the Form I-765.

We strongly advise you to contact a F1 adviser at CGE if you receive an RFE. An RFE does not mean that your application has been rejected. It simply means that you need to provide the missing documents before your EAD can be issued.

USCIS give applicant 30 days to respond to RFE. Your OPT application will be denied if you fail to provide missing documents within 30 days of RFE issue date.

Getting an RFE will delay the processing of your OPT application usually by 4 weeks. For this reason, you should read the “OPT application mailing instructions” when you pick up the OPT materials at CGE, and send the COMPLETED application package to USCIS.

Helpful Tips

- The standard processing time for OPT application is 90 days/3 months
- Spring/Summer tends to be peak period
Employment Authorization Document (EAD)

USCIS will send you an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) upon approval.

If you receive the EAD before your start date has arrived, you cannot work until the start date noted on the EAD. You cannot start working until you have received the EAD and your start date is current.

If you do not receive your EAD within 90 days of your “Received Date” on Form I-797C Notice of Action, call USCIS National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283.
Maintaining F-1 Status While on Post-Completion OPT
Maintaining F-1 Status
For Post-Completion OPT Only

Although you are not attending school and working part-time or full-time, you are still in F-1 status while you are on Post-Completion OPT. You are required to maintain your F-1 status in order to legally working in the US.

To maintain F-1 status you must:

- Stay employed. You must work at least 20 hours per week to be considered maintaining F-1 status. Your employment under OPT must directly related to your current major(s), not minor.

- Report your address change at your online Student Center at SF State. CGE will report your address change to U.S. Immigration.

- Request travel signature on the 2nd page of your I-20 before you leave the US. If you are working fulltime and can not submit your travel signature in person, please mail the “F1 Document Request Form” with your most current I-20 to CGE. We will process your request and mail the I-20 back to you. You will also need a valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport in order to return to the U.S. Your travel signature can not be more than 6 months old. See the following “Travel Outside the United States” section for details.
Maintaining F-1 Status
For Post-Completion OPT Only

➢ Report your employment information through the “SEVP Portal” at https://sevp.ice.gov/opt

  o Send an image of your EAD to celglobal@sfsu.edu
  o You can have multiple employments. The form will allow you to provide up to two employment information. If you have more than two employment or have various gigs, write the additional information in the “Comments” area
  o If you changed job please complete the form again

➢ You are not required to provide your salary information nor employment contract to CGE

➢ Report your employment as soon as you found a job – if you do not report your employment or forgot to do so, your SEVIS record will be terminated in 90 days!
Maintaining F-1 Status
For Post-Completion OPT Only

- You can only take recreational/avocational classes (Yoga or Wine tasting classes…etc) while on Post-Completion OPT. You cannot enroll in any academic degree nor certificate programs while on Post-Completion OPT. If you plan to obtain a higher degree and your academic program will start before your OPT end date, you must request your SEVIS record to be transferred to your new school. Your OPT will end on the date SF State transfer your SEVIS record out.

- You will have 60-day grace period after your OPT end date. You must leave the U.S. or transfer to another school to continue your F-1 status within the grace period.
Other Things to Know – Health Insurance and SSN
For Post-Completion OPT Only

- You should have health insurance while you are in the U.S.. If your employer does not provide health benefits, or you are in the process of looking for jobs, please make sure you still have insurance coverage.

- You may purchase the SF State sponsored health insurance plan to cover your OPT period, but you must purchase the insurance **within 30 days after** your current insurance coverage end date. For example, if your current insurance end on August 10, you must purchase insurance with Relation by September 10. See Health Insurance Requirements.

- Starting October 2017, you can apply for a Social Security Number (SSN) while applying for EAD (same application). Your SSN card should arrive within 7 business days after receiving the EAD. See Apply for your Social Security Number While Applying for Your Work Permit (PDF, 401 KB) for more details.
### Travel Outside the United States

#### For Post-Completion OPT Only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before Completing Your Program and Before Getting Your EAD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✚ A valid passport</td>
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<td>✚ A valid F-1 visa stamp</td>
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<tr>
<td>✚ Your OPT with a valid travel endorsement signed on page 2 by an advisor at CGE. The travel endorsement is valid for 6 months while on PCPT.</td>
<td>✚ Your I-20 with OPT recommendation with a valid travel endorsement signed on page 2 by an advisor at CGE. The travel endorsement is valid for 6 months while on PCPT.</td>
<td>✚ The EAD (Employment Authorization Document).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✚ Form I-797C Notice of Action</td>
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<td>✚ Evidence of financial support for the PCPT period is strongly recommended (such as a bank statement or letter from sponsor or employer).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>✚ If you have employment, a job offer letter from the employer is strongly recommended.</td>
<td>✚ A job offer letter is required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Travel Outside the United States

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- Your I-20 with OPT recommendation will show that your OPT is in “Requested” status. Once you received the Form I-797C Notice of Action, the system will update the status from “Requested” to “Pending”. If you wish to travel outside the U.S. while your OPT application is pending, you must submit a travel signature request to CGE and the F-1 International Student Advisor will print an updated I-20 with your OPT showing “Pending” status.

- If your OPT is approved/EAD received and you wish to travel outside the U.S., you must submit a travel signature request to CGE and the F-1 International Student Advisor will print an updated I-20 with your OPT showing “Approved” status. Make sure to report your employment information at SEVP Portal before requesting a travel signature from CGE so the new I-20 will have your employment information on it.
Travel Outside the United States

For Post-Completion OPT Only

WARNING!

Don’t leave the U.S. until you have an I-20 showing your OPT request is in “Pending” or “Approved” status on the 2nd page.

- There is a higher risk associated with travel and return while your OPT is pending after the program completion date. If there are any problems with your application, you may not be able to respond to USCIS in a timely manner, which could delay processing of your EAD or denial.
- If your OPT application is not received or denied while outside the U.S., you will not be able to re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status and will not be able to reapply for OPT.
- Don’t leave the U.S. for long periods of time during the OPT year. A few weeks of vacation is reasonable, but if you are gone for several months, you may encounter difficulty in re-entering. Remember, unemployment is limited to 90 days.
- Be careful about trying to re-enter the U.S. close to the expiration date of your OPT. You may not be allowed to re-enter as an F-1 student.
Travel Outside the United States

For Post-Completion OPT Only

- Students who need to apply for a new visa should consult CGE prior to travel to discuss the visa application process and possible risks.
- Don’t attempt to re-enter the U.S. in a status other than F-1 unless you are willing to give up your OPT permanently.
- Be prepared to tell the U.S. immigration officer at the U.S. port of entry about your plans while on OPT. They may want to know what have you done to find a job? What kind of job do you plan to look for? What will you do after the OPT is expired? How will you support yourself while you are job-seeking?
This is the end of the workshop.

Good luck and we wish you all the best!