

International Students & Optional Practical Training



WILLIAM & MARY

CHARTERED 1693

Agenda

- Eligibility for OPT
- Application Process & Timeline
- OPT STEM Extension
- Reporting Requirements
- Unemployment Limits
- International Travel



Office of International Students, Scholars
& Programs (ISSP)

What is OPT?

F-1 work
authorization

Usually used
after
graduation

12 months
per degree
level

Paid or
Unpaid

Full-Time or
Part-Time

Work must
be related to
degree

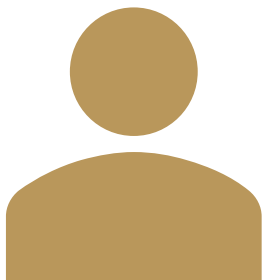
Work
anywhere in
the U.S.

Do not need
a job to apply

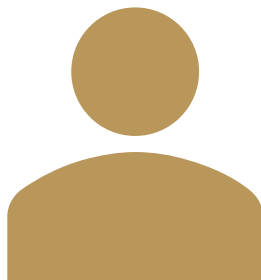
Multiple jobs

Who is Eligible?

F-1 Status for **2 semesters** before graduating



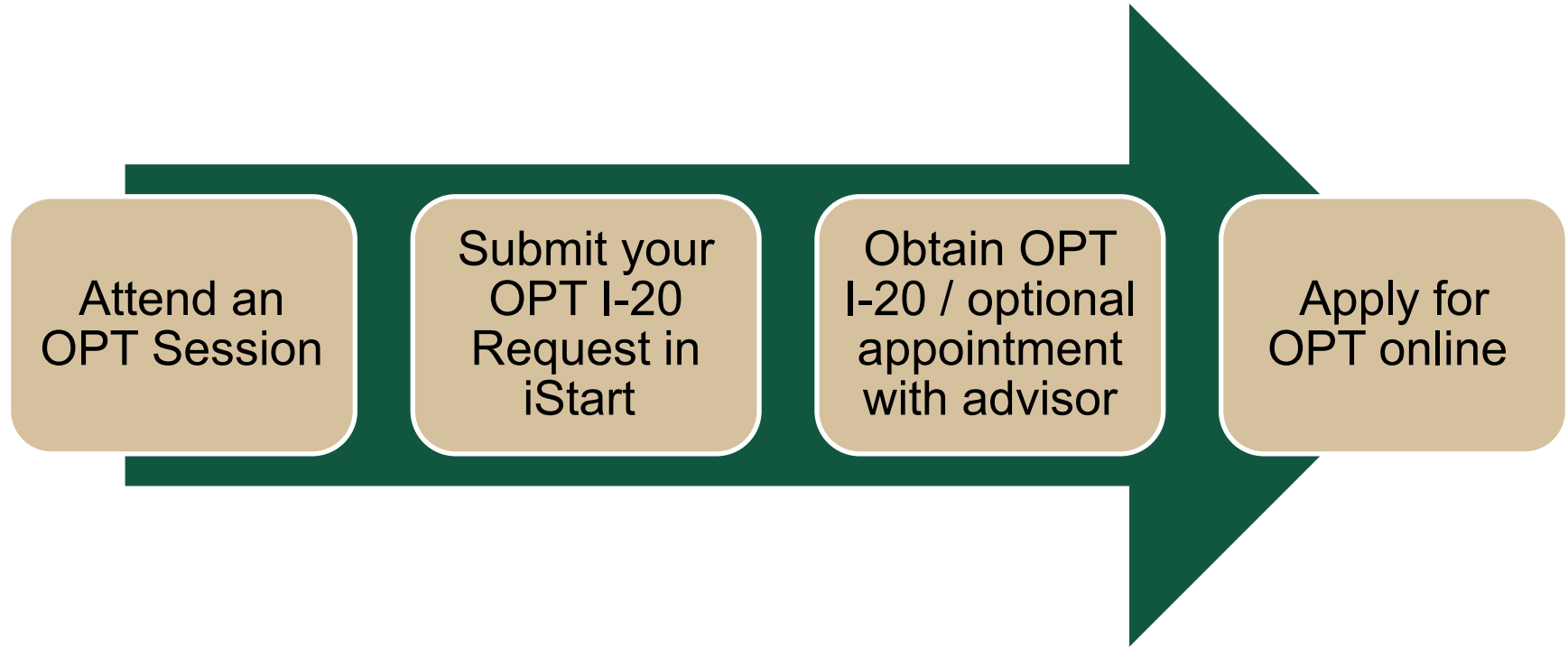
Inside the U.S.



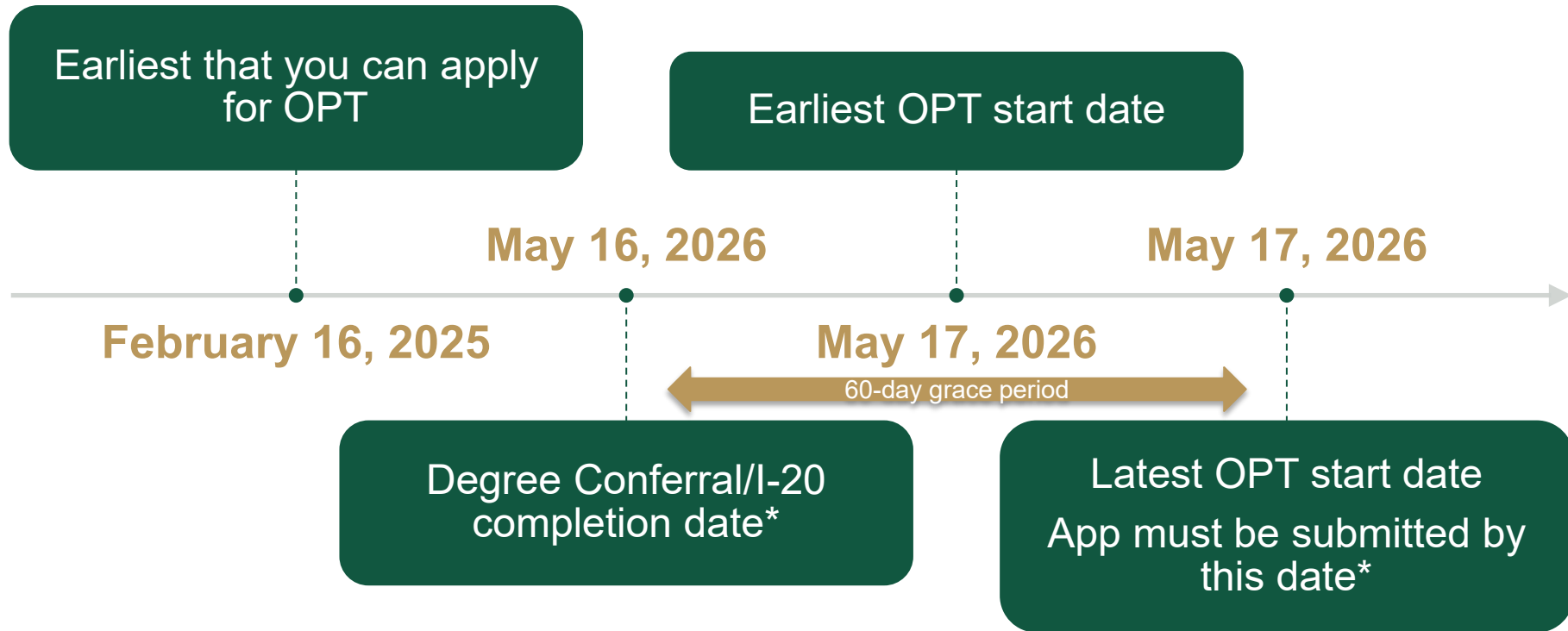
Did not use **12 months** of Full-Time CPT



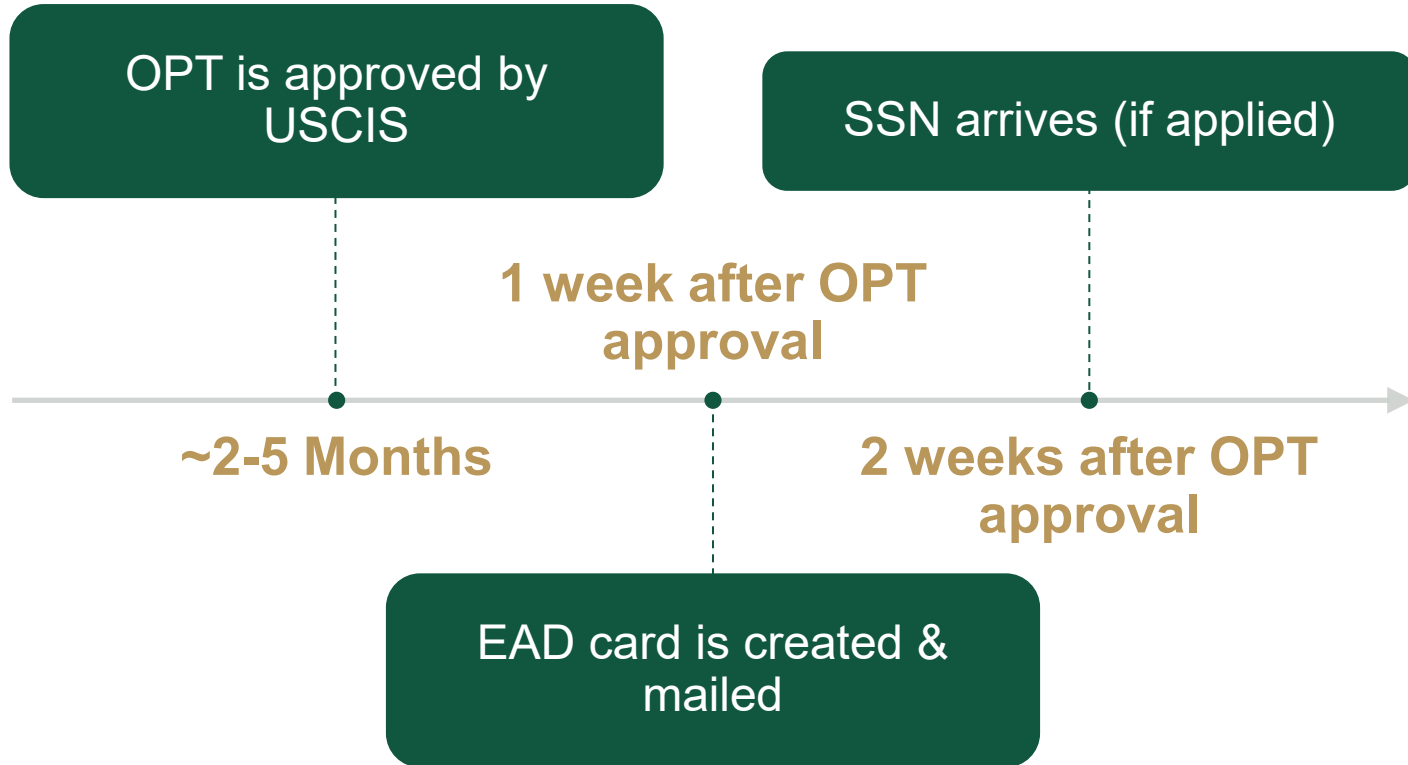
OPT Application Process



OPT Application Timeline



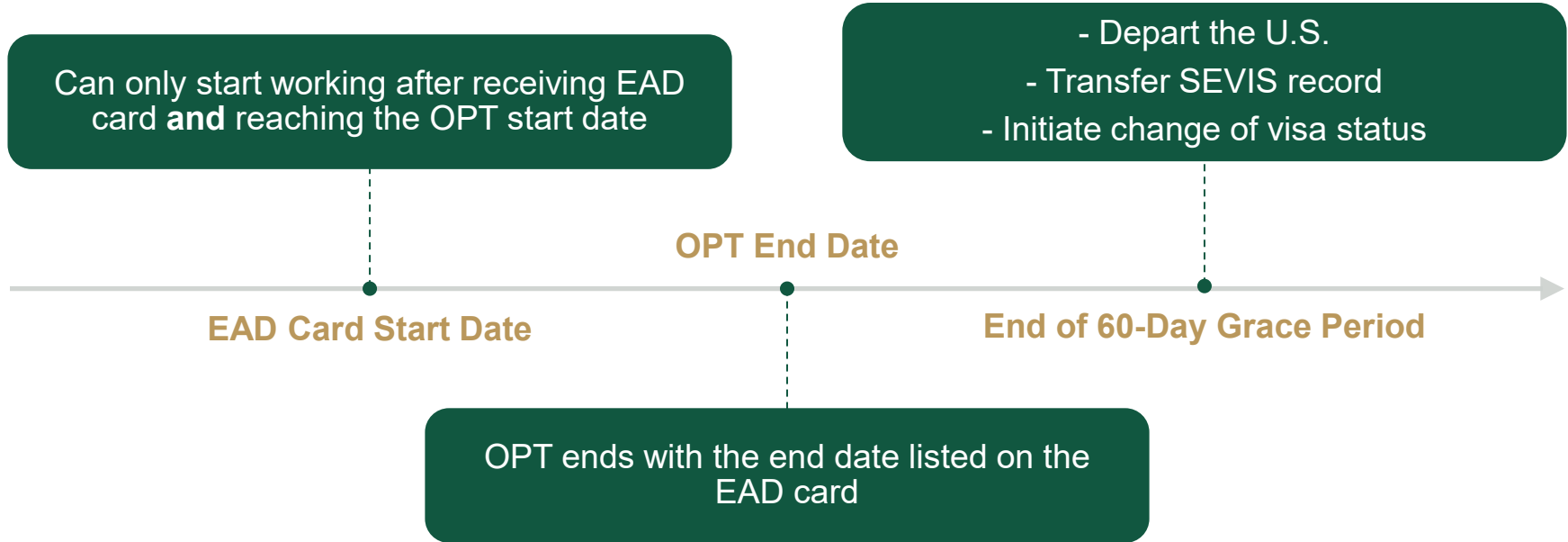
OPT Application Timeline



Case Processing Time

- Current listed wait time is 4.5 months
- Check wait times at <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>
 - Form I-765
 - Based on a request by a qualified F-1 academic student
- Expedited processing is available for an additional fee (\$1685)
- Shortens processing time to 30 business days (about 6 weeks)
- [USCIS Request for Premium Processing](#)

How Long Can I Work?



Earliest OPT Start/End Date: *May 17, 2026 – May 16, 2027*

Latest OPT Start/End date: *July 15, 2026 – July 14, 2027*

Preparing OPT Application

OPT Packet (Checklist & Tips)

- List of required documents
- Instructions on applying for OPT online and paying the application fee
 - **\$470** (online application)
 - **\$520** (paper application)

Optional Practical Training Application Checklist

OPT is a work authorization granted to F-1 students for employment in their field of study (their major). Most students use it for post-graduation employment.

Learn About OPT

- Attend an [OPT Session](#) for the current semester, or watch a session recording.
- [Schedule an appointment](#) with an ISSP advisor (optional). Ask application questions during your appointment.

Prepare Your Documents

To make the process of submitting your online application easy, please have the **electronic files** for these documents ready before you begin.

Acceptable file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF or TIFF.

- OPT I-20. Request this in [iStart](#), using the *OPT I-20 Request* form. Your OPT dates will be listed on page 2 of your I-20. Print, sign and scan your OPT I-20. **Your OPT application will be denied without this!**
- [I-94 record](#) ("Get Most Recent I-94"). If you last traveled to the US by land, this will be in your passport instead, and you should scan a copy **front** and **back**, even if blank. You do not need to upload your travel history.
- Copy of passport identity page(s) showing your biographical info and expiration, valid 6 months in future.
- Copy of 1 color passport style photo, sized 2 inches by 2 inches. Review [photo requirements](#).

ISSP OPT Request Form



- Home
- Admission
- F-1 Practical Training**
- F-1 Student Services
- H-1B Employee Services
- Immigration Check-In
- Insurance and Finances
- International Office
- Pre-Arrival
- Scholarships
- Special Programs

F-1 Practical Training

Tasks



OPT I-20 Request



CPT-Curricular Practical Training



OPT STEM Extension I-20 Request



OPT Employment Update



OPT STEM Updates and Evaluations

The OPT I-20

REMARKS

OPT recommended for employment in the field of study.

SCHOOL ATTESTATION

I certify under penalty of perjury that all information provided above was entered before I signed this form and is true and correct. I executed this form in the United States after review and evaluation in the United States by me or other officials of the school of the student's application, transcripts, or other records of courses taken and proof of financial responsibility, which were received at the school prior to the execution of this form. The school has determined that the above named student's qualifications meet all standards for admission to the school and the student will be required to pursue a full program of study as defined by 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6). I am a designated school official of the above named school and am authorized to issue this form.

X _____ DATE ISSUED _____ PLACE ISSUED _____

SIGNATURE OF: _____

STUDENT ATTESTATION

I have read and agreed to comply with the terms and conditions of my admission and those of any extension of stay. I certify that all information provided on this form refers specifically to me and is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I certify that I seek to enter or remain in the United States temporarily, and solely for the purpose of pursuing a full program of study at the school named above. I also authorize the named school to release any information from my records needed by DHS pursuant to 8 CFR 214.3(g) to determine my nonimmigrant status. **Parent or guardian, and student, must sign if student is under 18.**

X _____

SIGNATURE OF: _____ DATE _____

NAME OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN _____ SIGNATURE _____ ADDRESS (city/state or province/country) _____ DATE _____

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status
OMB NO. 1653-0038

SEVIS ID: (F-1) NAME:

EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATIONS

TYPE	FULL/PART-TIME	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
POST-COMPLETION OPT	FULL TIME	REQUESTED	15 JULY 2021	14 JULY 2022

CHANGE OF STATUS/CAP-GAP EXTENSION

AUTHORIZED REDUCED COURSE LOAD

CURRENT SESSION DATES

CURRENT SESSION START DATE CURRENT SESSION END DATE
27 JANUARY 2021 25 MAY 2021

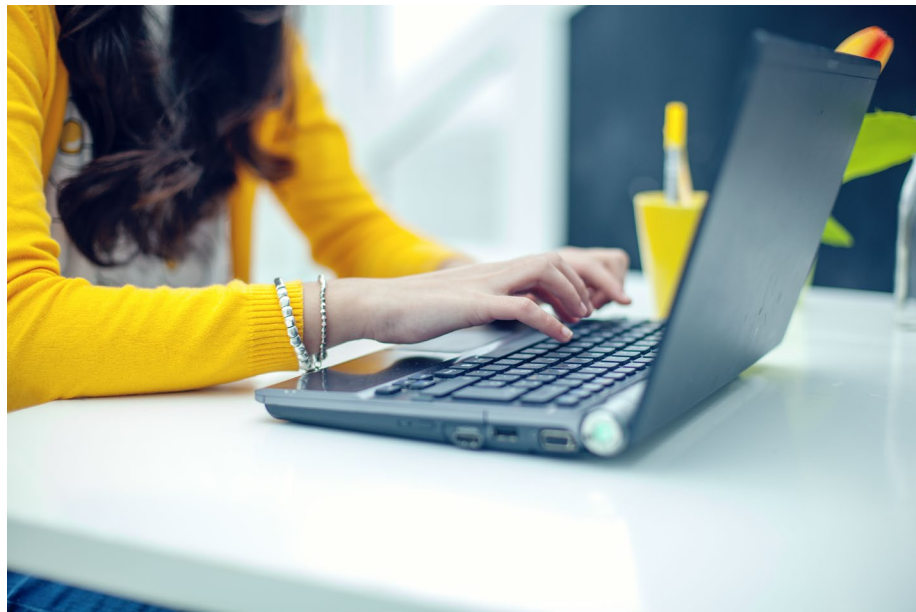
TRAVEL ENDORSEMENT

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

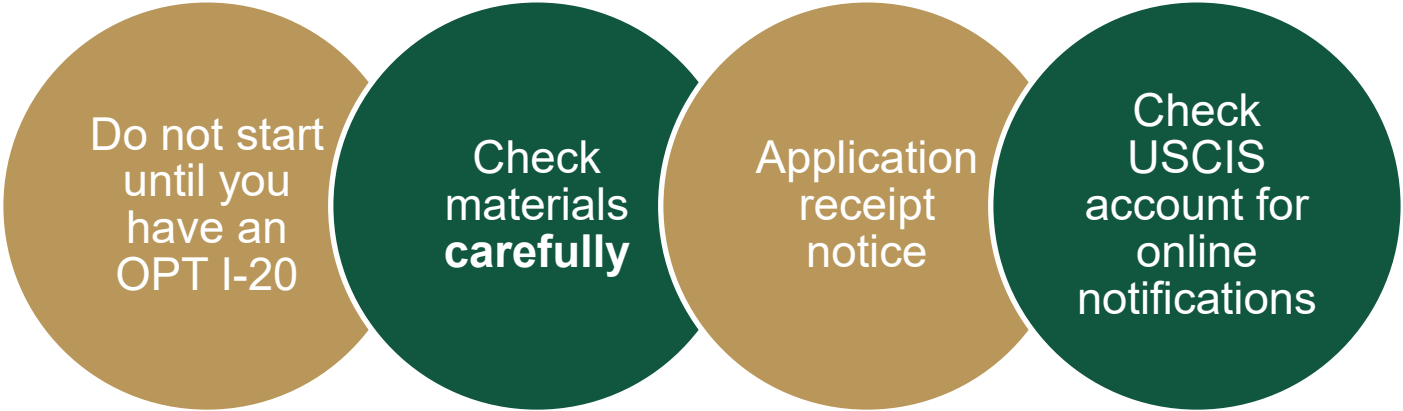
Designated School Official	TITLE	SIGNATURE	DATE ISSUED	PLACE ISSUED
_____	_____	X	_____	_____
_____	_____	X	_____	_____
_____	_____	X	_____	_____
_____	_____	X	_____	_____

OPT Appointment with ISSP

- An OPT appointment is **optional** and usually not necessary
- Schedule appointment online
- Review OPT Packet & online application before your appointment
- Ask questions!



Online Application Tips



Do not start
until you
have an
OPT I-20

Check
materials
carefully

Application
receipt
notice

Check
USCIS
account for
online
notifications

Common Reasons for Denials

1. Not including an **OPT I-20** in the application
2. Applying more than **30 days** after ISSP processed the OPT I-20 in SEVIS
3. Using a credit/debit card that doesn't work or an international credit/debit card
4. Not enough money in bank account

ISSP is here to help, but what you submit is ultimately your responsibility

OPT STEM Extension

Adds 24
months to
current OPT

Certain
STEM majors
only

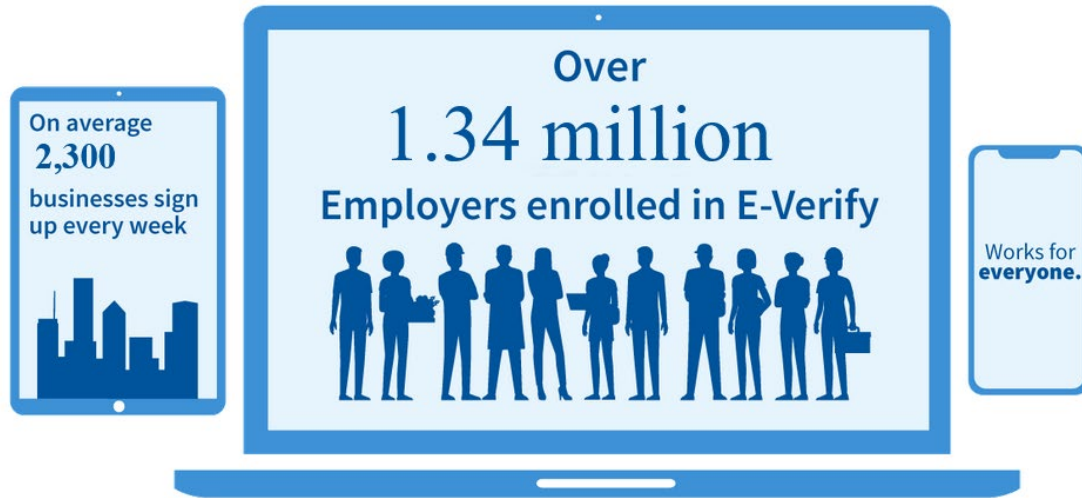
Apply while
working on
OPT

Previously
earned STEM
degree



STEM Science, Technology,
Engineering, Mathematics

E-Verify Employer



OPT Regulations

Additional OPT Information to Know



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Unemployment Limits

See [OPT & Unemployment](#) webpage for more information

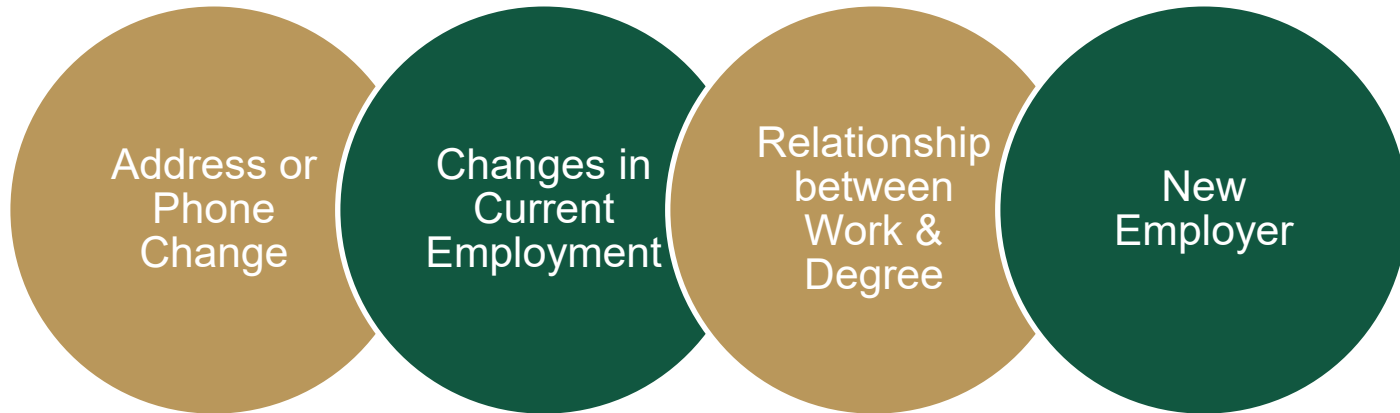
- Cannot have more than **90 days of unemployment** while on OPT
- What counts as employment on OPT?
 - Working at least 20 hours/week and related to degree
 - Volunteering
 - Unpaid internships
 - Multiple employers
 - Employment agency

Unemployment Limits



Reporting Requirements

See [OPT Reporting](#) webpage for more information



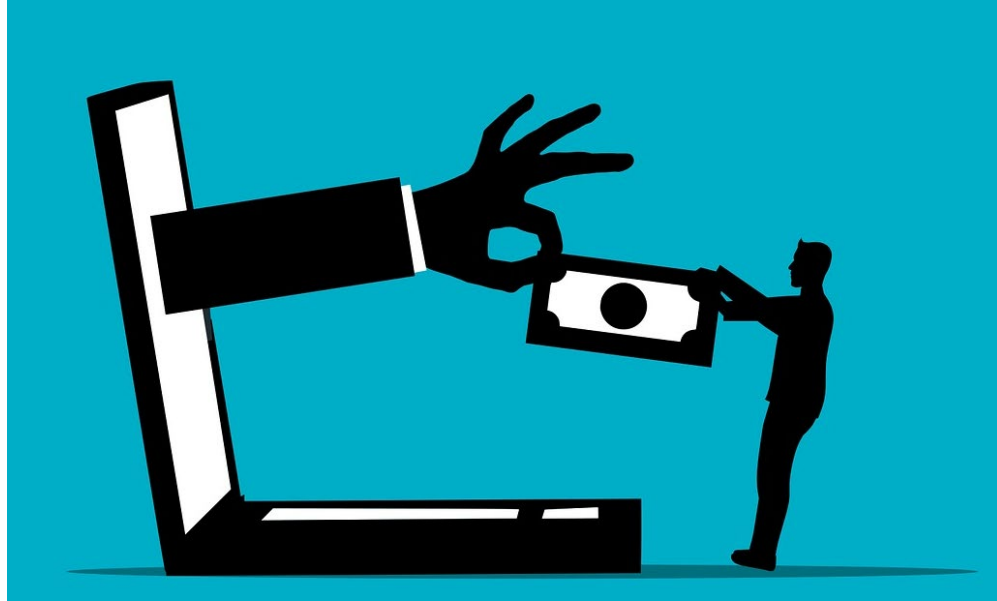
Travel on OPT

- Unexpired Passport
- Valid F-1 Visa
- OPT/EAD Card
- I-20 with Travel Signature within 6 months



See Traveling Abroad on OPT webpage for more information

Be Aware of Immigration Scams



See [ISSP website](#) for more information

Final Reminders

Apply for OPT once

Save a copy of your application

Monitor status of your application on [Case Status Online](#)

SSN will arrive 2 weeks after EAD card

Keep EAD card for your records

Resources



- [ISSP Optional Practical Training webpage](#)
- [OPT Packet](#)
- [STEM OPT Extension](#)
- [OPT & Unemployment](#)