

DO NOT MAIL THIS WITH YOUR OPT APPLICATION



International Student Services Office
1100 E 14th St, PMB E-1, Ada, OK 74820
Phone: 580-559-5669 Fax: 580-559-5755

East Central University *OPT Application Checklist*

What is OPT?

- Optional practical training (OPT) is defined in the regulations as "temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student's major area of study." 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(10)(ii).

What is the OPT filing deadline?

- F-1 students may file for OPT within 90 of their program end date, and no later than 60 days afterwards. In addition, the application must be properly filed within 30 days of the date the student's DSO recommends OPT in SEVIS.

What is the application process?

- 1) Speak with the International Student Services Office to discuss your intention to pursue OPT. After this discussion, an OPT administration fee of \$100 will be placed on your ECU account. This fee will need to be paid and any past balance owed to the University will also need to be paid before you will be permitted to move forward with the OPT process.
- 2) Determine **EXACT** OPT requested start date (*must be within 60 days of your graduation date*). **OPT Date:** ___ / ___ / ___
 - *There is no right or wrong date - it's preferential based off your own expected plans after graduation.*
- 3) To receive your new OPT I-20, submit the following forms to the Int'l Director (can be submitted via e-mail intlstu@ecok.edu):
 - ECU's *OPT Student Agreement Statement (DO NOT SEND TO USCIS)*
 - ECU's Advisor Certification of Graduation Form (*DO NOT SEND TO USCIS*)
- 3) Save time and get your results faster by filing your entire OPT application online! <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>

Whether you file online or via snail mail, you'll be required to submit the following to USCIS:

- Copies of all issued I-20s (*just provide what you have*)
- Copy of any previous employment authorization documents (EAD) - both sides
- Copy of [I-94 arrival/departure record](#) (*google I-94 record to obtain*)
- Copy of Passport
- Copy of Visa
- Complete *USCIS Form I-765* (*or go to www.uscis.gov to obtain form*):
 - *Mailing Address Box:* Be sure to provide an address that your OPT card can be sent to
 - **Eligibility Category Box:** (**C**) (**3**) (**B**) *fill in on form as displayed here*
- MONEY ORDER for filing the I-765 [filing fee](#) payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security"
- Two identical immigration color style passport photographs: (*can be obtained at Walgreens*)
 - ✓ Must be 2" by 2"
 - ✓ In color with full face
 - ✓ White to off-white background
 - ✓ Printed on thin paper with a glossy finish
 - ✓ **Using a non-smearing pen or pencil, write on the back of BOTH photos your;**
 1. **first and last name**
 2. **date of birth**
 3. **I-94 number**
- New OPT I-20 (*obtain from director once you've completed step #2*)

Where can I get more information about OPT?

- Visit the following website at www.uscis.gov to track OPT application. For more information about OPT policies visit <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/practical-training/>. Once your OPT has been approved by USCIS, you'll be contacted by SEVP to create your [SEVP Portal](#) account. More information about the SEVP Portal can be found here <https://studyinginthestates.dhs.gov/sevp-portal-help/>. (*Note: Make sure the Int'l Office has your correct e-mail address on your SEVIS record.*)

Where do I mail my OPT documents?

- If you choose to file online, then it's as simple as uploading your documents to your USICS account. However, if you file via snail mail, check the [USCIS Direct Filing Address](#) webpage for the most current postal location.

How long will it take to process my application?

- Form I-765 processing times vary throughout the year, to find the latest estimate visit <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>. There is

nothing you can do to speed up the adjudication of your I-765 application. Therefore, the sooner you apply within the 90-day window, the better your chances are of getting the results around your program end date.

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East Central University Optional Practical Training

ACADEMIC ADVISOR Certification of Graduation Form

*****NOTE:** This form cannot be completed by the student, and must be completed the **academic advisor or another authorized university official (i.e., Admissions Office Degree Auditor)** who can verify the student's graduation status.

To: Academic Advisor/Authorized Designee

From: International Student Advisor

Subject: **ACADEMIC ADVISOR CERTIFICATION OF GRADUATION FORM**

International students in F-1 visa status have an employment benefit known as Optional Practical Training (OPT). This benefit is designed to allow students to work in jobs related to their field of study and commensurate with their level of academic training. Students are eligible for OPT in specific circumstances:

- During annual vacation periods and when school is not in session if the student has been in good academic standing and intends to register the following term.
- While school is in session, provided the practical training does not exceed twenty (20) hours/week.
- After completion of all degree major requirements or in the last semester of program is expected to complete their studies and is eligible to graduate

Your role is to help the student and the Office of International Student Programs and Services verify the student's eligibility for OPT. This certification remains in the student's file and enables us to endorse supporting documents that the student will ultimately send to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

TO BE COMPLETED BY ACADEMIC ADVISOR/AUTHORIZED DESIGNEE ONLY:

(Applies to both undergraduate and graduate students)

This is to certify that _____ (_____) is currently enrolled at
(Student's Last, First Name) (ID#)

East Central University in pursuit of a _____ degree and is applying
(Major)

for OPT (check one of the following):

- During the annual vacation period or for part-time work while school is in session*
OR,
 After completion of all degree major requirements. The student has graduated or is expected to complete their studies and is eligible to graduate at the end of the (check one of the following)
 FALL SPRING SUMMER WINTER _____ semester.
(CHECK ONE ONLY) (Year)

Advisor Signature/Authorized Designee Printed Name Department /Office Date

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If you are unable to meet with your academic advisor, take this to the Admissions Degree Auditor, ADMN RM 111.



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East Central University *OPT Agreement Statement*

Definition of Optional Practical Training: “Temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major area of student.” [8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)]

For more information visit the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services website www.uscis.gov and the Immigration Customs Enforcement website <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/practical-training/> to download the *OPT Policy Guidance* PDF document.

- I. After USCIS receives your application they will send you a paper form Receipt Notice (8 ½ X 11 paper). On the notice will be your tracking Receipt Number, which you will be able to use track your application process and **CHANGE YOUR MAILING ADDRESS FOR DELIVERY OF YOUR OPT CARD**. The USCIS website is included on the receipt and is list above. Also the receipt will identify additional information that may be needed to process your application. Do NOT destroy this document.
- II. Employment must be in the student’s area of study. Work done for OPT must be “directly related to the student’s major area of study and commensurate with the student’s educational level.” [8CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(D)(1).
- III. Students cannot begin employment until the EAD is actually received, **AND** the start date on the card has been reached [8CFR 214.2 (f)(10)(ii)(A)].
- IV. **E-Verify Employers**
 - Working for an employer who participates in the USCIS E-Verify Program is NOT required while on post-completion OPT. (However, students who are eligible for 24-month STEM extension and who intend to apply for STEM are encouraged to do so, as E-verify participation by the employer is a requirement under the STEM extension.)
 - All OPT employment, including post-completion OPT, must be in a job that is related to the student’s degree program. For students who are NOT on a 24-month extension, this employment may include: multiple employers, short-term multiple employers (performing artists), work for hire, self-employed business owner, employment through an agency or consulting firm, paid employment, and unpaid employment. It is the responsibility of the student to adhere to the terms and conditions of F-1 status.
- V. **Unemployment**
 - Employment is required with 90 days of the beginning date on your EAD card (including STEM degrees). Students cannot accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment. The following types of employment are acceptable: volunteering more than 20 hours per week in your area of study as long as the volunteer job qualifies; working though an employment agency (must be working more than 20 hours per week, and regular employment. A student transitioning between jobs can accumulate 10 days, and it will not be counted toward the 90 day rule.
 - **What counts as time unemployed?**

Each day (including weekends) during the period when OPT authorization begins and ends that the student does not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment. The only exception is that periods of up to 10 days between the end of one job and the beginning of the next job are not included in the calculation of time spent unemployed. This 10 day exception also applies to the first 10 days from the start date on the student’s EAD.
- VI. **Multiple Employers**
 - A student may work for more than one employer and/or change employers during the period of authorized practical training provided that each position is directly related to the student’s field of study and commensurate with the student’s educational level. The employer address must be submitted within 10 days to be reported in SEVIS. If there is a change in employment, it must be reported within 10 days. Please send this information in writing or via email.
- VII. **SEVIS Status**
 - SEVIS records of students participating in OPT remain active with East Central University until the completion of their OPT. Therefore, it is required for students to notify the International Office of any changes of address. The student must report any change of address within 10 days. Email is the preferred method to report changes in address. Please email intlstu@ecok.edu.
- VIII. **Travel on while on OPT**
 - An F-1 student engaged in OPT *following* completion of studies who travels outside the U.S. temporarily can be readmitted to resume employment for the remainder of the period authorized on his or her EAD card, provided the student

presents the following: [8 CFR 214.2(f)(13)(ii)] (1)1. The student presents a Form I-20 endorsed by the DSO within the preceding 12 months (2) the student presents an unexpired EAD, and (3) the student is returning to resume employment (student must travel with documentation from their current or prospective employer). The best general guidance is that a student who has both an EAD for post-completion OPT *and* a job should not experience difficulty reentering the U.S. If either of these two conditions is missing, then the student is assuming risk. Students approved for OPT following completion of studies continue to be in F-1 status. They are therefore subject not only to the requirements that they have a valid I-20 endorsed for travel and an EAD, but to the requirement that they have a valid F-1 visa to re-enter the U.S., unless they are exempt from the visa requirement.

- If the student's OPT has been approved and the student departs **before** getting a job, the student's OPT ends and the student cannot reenter unless you have a written job offer.

IX. STEM

- STEM degrees can submit application for the 24-month extension up to 90 days before the ending date (application must be received by USCIS before the ending date) on their current EAD card if: 1) They are employed by an e-verify company; 2) the company confirms in writing that they will notify the DSO in the event that the student is no longer employed with the company. The student must contact the Designated School Official in the International Office to coordinate filing the 24-month extension request. If a STEM student receives a 24-month extension, the limit on unemployment is raised to an aggregate of no more than 120 days, applied to the entire 29-month period on which the student is on post-completion OPT. Students approved for the 24-month extension must contact the International Office at East Central University every six months to confirm address and employment information.

X. Grace Period After OPT Ends

- Following OPT, the student has **60 days** to do one of the following: 1) Begin a new degree program; 2) transfer their SEVIS record to a new school to begin a new degree program; 3) leave the country. SEVIS will automatically terminate a student's SEVIS record at the end of the 60 days. If the student contacts the International Office on day 61 to transfer a record or request to begin a new program, the student will either need to go home and re-enter on a new SEVIS record (which requires paying the SEVIS fee again), or apply for reinstatement, which currently costs \$320. *Note: reinstatement is not guaranteed.*
- **Transfer of SEVIS Record**
 - Authorization to engage in optional practical training employment is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level [CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(B)]. A student may continue on OPT if the transfer release date is future dated for the last day of OPT approval

XI. Reporting Requirements and the SEVP Portal

F-1 students who are on OPT or STEM are still required to report changes to their contact information and current employer within 10 days of the change. The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) provides students with a self-help tool, referred to as the [SEVP Portal](#), that allows students on OPT and STEM the option to update the following information on their own and without relying on the school's DSO to update the below information for them:

- Physical home address, mailing address, telephone numbers, and employer information (not available for STEM Students)

Once the student's OPT request has been approved and the OPT start date has been reached, SEVP will send the student an account creation link to the e-mail listed on their SEVIS record. Therefore, you should always make sure that your DSO has your current e-mail address listed in SEVIS. If you do not receive the link and/or you are locked out of your account, contact the ISS Office.

To view tutorial videos and to learn more about the SEVP Portal visit the [Study in the States](#) website. If the ISS Office is unable to resolve issues with your SEVP Portal account, then you should contact the [SEVP Response Center](#).

XII. How long will it take to process my application?

- Once the Form I-765 has been accepted, it will be checked for completeness, including submission of the required documents. If the form is not completely filled out or it is filed without the required documents then a basis for eligibility will not be established, and USCIS may deny the application. If you have not received a decision within 90 days of receipt by USCIS, there is nothing that can be done to speed up the process. Therefore, all the more reason to apply as early as possible.

I have read and understand this information.

Signature _____ Date: _____

→ Determine EXACT OPT requested start date (must be within 60 days of your graduation date). OPT Date: ____/____/____.
There is no right or wrong date - it's preferential based off your own expected plans after graduation.