

F-1 Post-Completion Optional Practical Training Workshop

Updated: 2018/10/25



International Student and Scholar Services
Office of International Affairs

Workshop Outline



1. What is Post-Completion OPT?
2. OPT Eligibility Requirements
3. Application Timeframe: When to Apply
4. Application Process
5. Job and Reporting Requirements on OPT
6. Travel and OPT
7. Ending OPT and F-1 Status



Post-Completion OPT Introduction



What is Post-Completion OPT?



What is Post-Completion OPT



- Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an optional employment benefit for F-1 students
- It allows you to stay in the US after completing degree requirements to look for work ('practical training')
- It extends your F-1 status (OPT is a benefit of F-1 status, not a different type of visa)
- It requires an application to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) that can take 3 months or longer to process



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EAD Card

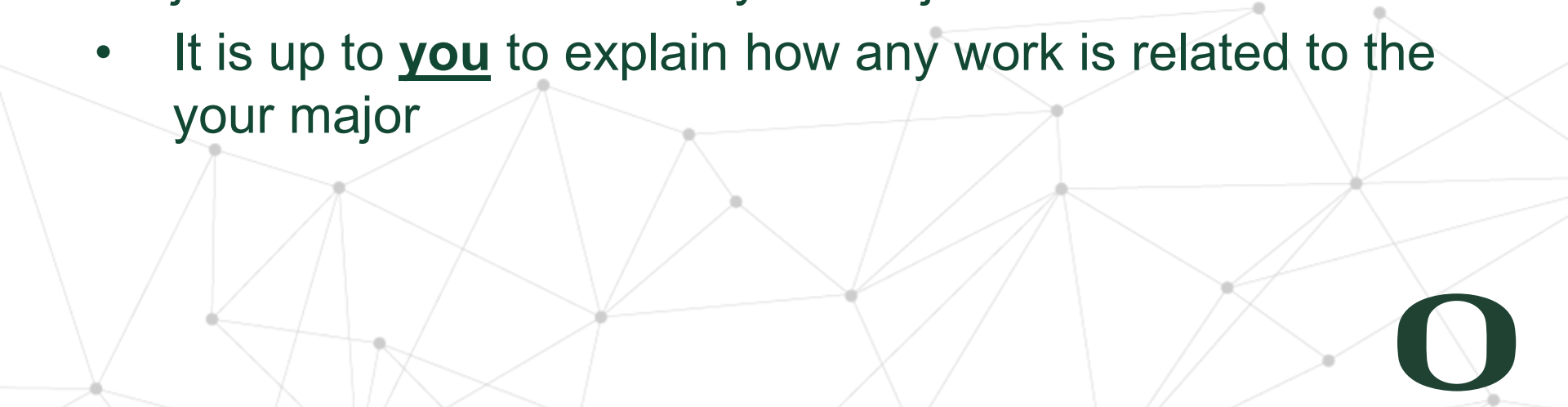


Once USCIS approves you for Optional Practical Training, you will receive an Employment Authorization ('EAD') card.

This card shows that you have been approved for OPT and the start and end dates of your OPT period.

Jobs Allowed under OPT



- OPT allows jobs (work / employment) related to your major field of study (not minors)
 - Jobs can be located anywhere in the US and for any company, as long as work is major-related
 - Paid jobs, internships, even self-employment and volunteer activity all count as OPT – as long as the main job duties are related to your major
 - It is up to you to explain how any work is related to the your major
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Work Hours and Job Changes



- During OPT, you can have multiple jobs and/or change between jobs, as long as each job is major-related
- However, you should work **full-time** (over 20 hours per week)
- You can meet this requirement through one job or a combination of jobs
 - **Example:** Judy has a part-time, paid job with Company A that averages 15 per week. She has an unpaid internship with Company B that averages 10 hours per week. Both jobs are related to her major. As a result, Judy is meeting the full-time requirement.

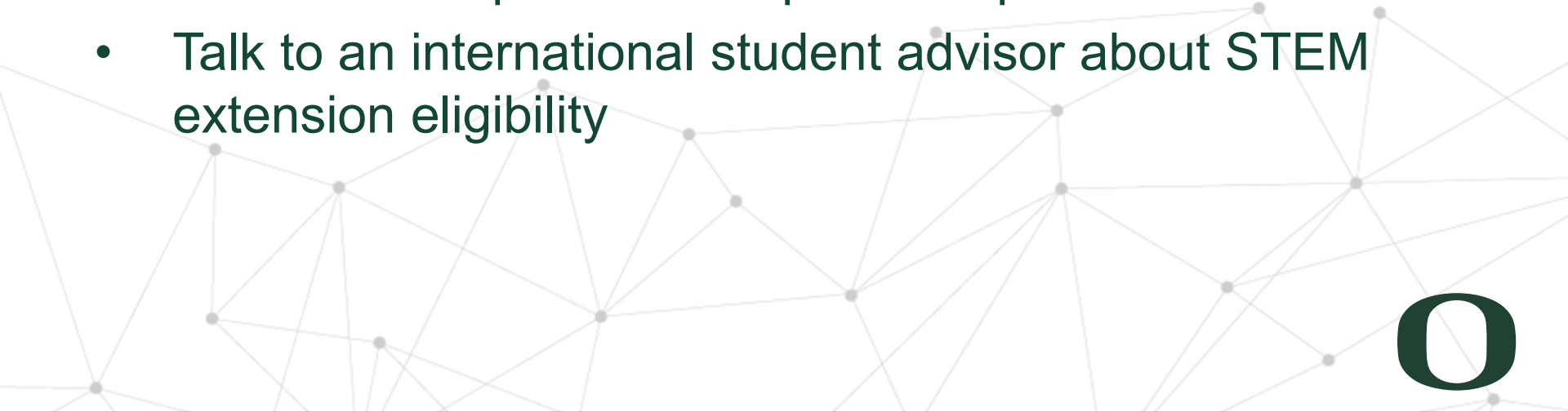
Maximum OPT Allowance



- OPT is limited to **12 months maximum** per degree level (bachelor's, master's, doctoral)
- An additional 12 months may be requested only if you later advance to a **higher degree level**
 - **Example 1:** John completes a BA degree and is approved for 12 months of Post-Completion OPT. Later, John enters a MA program. After the MA program is done, he is eligible for another 12 months of Post-Completion OPT.
 - **Example 2:** Jenny completes an MA degree and then does one year of OPT. Later, she applies for another MA degree. However, Jenny will not be able to get additional OPT after her second MA.

STEM Extension



- Some students who majored in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, or math) field may be eligible for a 24-month extension of Post-Completion OPT
 - Any student who qualifies for the STEM extension must first apply for Post-Completion OPT
 - The application for the extension must be made before the Post-Completion OPT period expires
 - Talk to an international student advisor about STEM extension eligibility
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OPT Eligibility Requirements



*Can I apply for Post-Completion
OPT?*



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OPT Eligibility



- You must be an F-1 student in good academic standing, making normal progress toward completing degree requirements (or you completed your degree within the previous sixty days)
- You must have been in valid F-1 student status for at least one academic year before starting OPT



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Impact of Prior CPT or OPT




Under current regulations, you cannot apply for post-completion OPT if:

1. You used 12 months or more of **full-time** (over 20 hours per week) curricular practical training
 - Part-time CPT does not affect your eligibility for optional practical training
 - Full-time CPT does not affect your eligibility for optional practical training unless you were authorized for 12 months or more of this benefit (extremely rare)
2. You were already authorized for 12 months of optional practical training at the same degree level

Application Timeframe



When can I apply for Post-Completion OPT?



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Completion of Studies Date



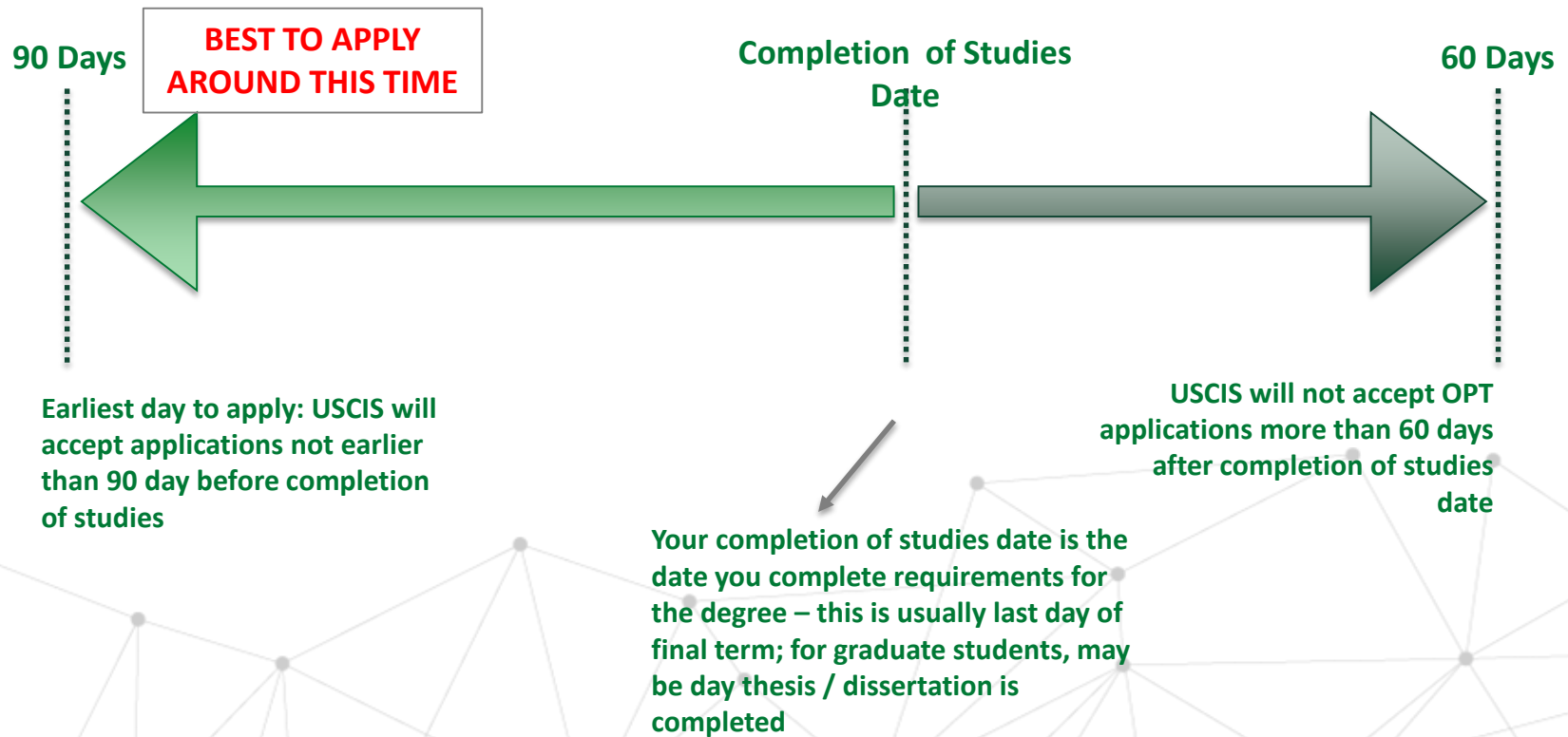
- Your application timeframe depends on your “completion of studies” date
- **Completion of studies date** => when all required work for the degree is completed (usually last day of final term of study)

OPT Application Window



- The OPT application is submitted to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
- USCIS will not accept an OPT application more than ninety (90) days before and sixty (60) days after your completion of studies date
- ***Applications submitted too early or too late will be rejected***
- ***Take into account the time it takes to prepare and mail the application to USCIS (at least 7-10 days)***

OPT Application Window



ISSS Recommendation



- **ISSS recommends that you apply for OPT early in your final term of study**
 - **Example:** Jeff is finishing at the end of the spring quarter. He starts his application process at the start of the term, about 3 months before he completes his program
- Reason to apply early: USCIS can take up to 90 days to process an OPT application (sometimes longer)



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Preparing the Application



What do I need to do to prepare the Post-Completion OPT application?



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Before Starting



- Before starting the application process, remember that Post-Completion OPT is an **optional** benefit – you are not required to apply
- However, if you do not apply for OPT, you must depart US within 60 days after completing your degree, or get a new I-20 to start new academic program
 - If you complete your program and leave the US without applying for OPT first, your OPT benefit is abandoned – you cannot come back to US later to apply for OPT

Job Offer Not Needed to Apply



- A job offer is not needed to apply for OPT – only the intention to look for practical training (work) related to your major
- However, you must find and start a job within 90 days after OPT begins (discussed later)
- Consult with UO Career Center or school career centers, advisors, colleagues to search for job opportunities – start your job search and planning early

Collect Immigration Records



Before you apply, gather these records:

- Any previously-issued I-20s (even if from different schools) or DS-2019s (if you were previously in J-1 status)
- Your record of previous CPT or OPT authorizations (even if for different programs / different schools)
- Any previously-issued Employment Authorization (EAD) cards

As a part of the application, you will be asked to provide a complete history of your F-1 (or J-1) history and copies of any EAD cards you may have received in the past

Choose Your Start / End Dates

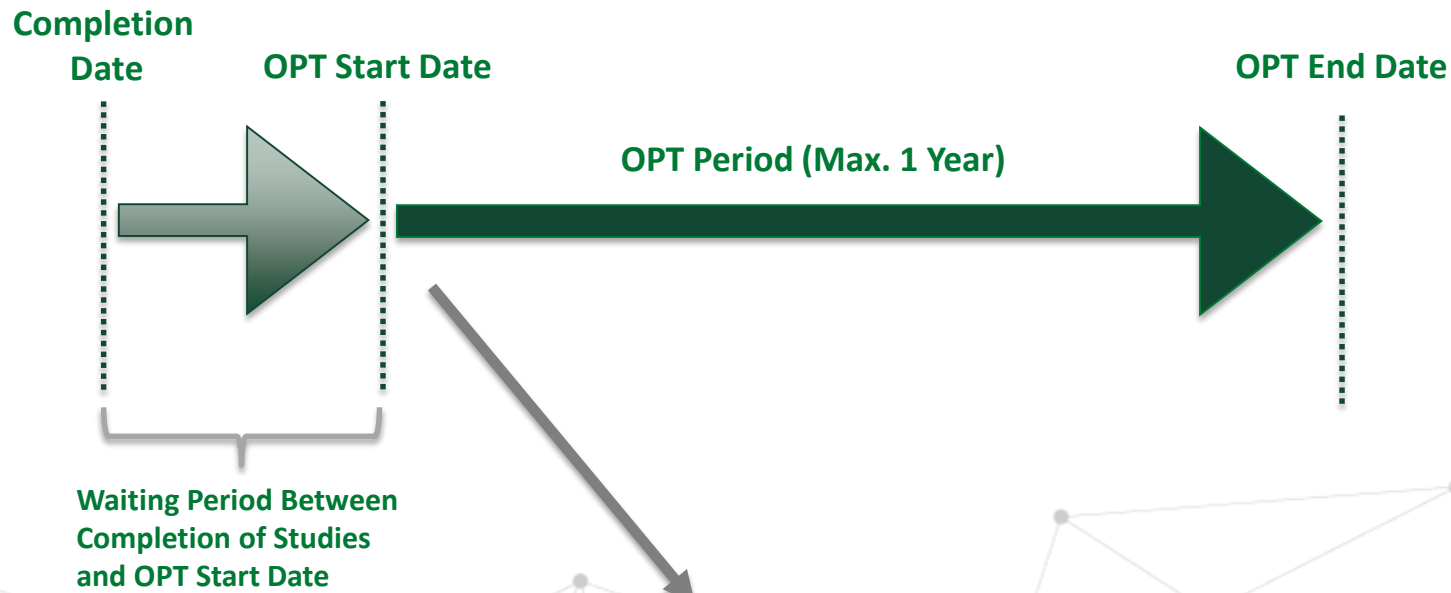
- When starting the application process, you must decide on a **preferred OPT start and end dates**
- **Your preferred start / end dates are what you are asking for – not what you may be approved for**
- The preferred OPT start date must be between one but no more than sixty (60) days after completion of studies
 - **Example:** Megan finishes her degree on June 15. Her preferred start date must be between June 16 (1 day after completing) but no later than August 14 (60 days after completing)
- Preferred end date is usually one year after start date

Start Date – How to Choose

- You can choose your own preferred start date, as long as it is not more than 60 days after completion of studies date
 - **Earlier start date** = ability to start work earlier
 - **Later start date** = provides more time to find a job
- Once a start date is chosen, *it cannot be changed*
- USCIS usually approves the preferred start date, as long as it has enough time to process the application (application can take 3+ months to process); otherwise, it may assign a later start date
 - **Example:** Megan applies for OPT asking for a start date of July 15. However, she doesn't submit her application until June 1. Because USCIS takes almost three months to approve her application, they give her an actual start date of September 1.



Preferred Start Date



Preferred OPT Start date cannot be more than sixty (60) days after Completion of Studies date

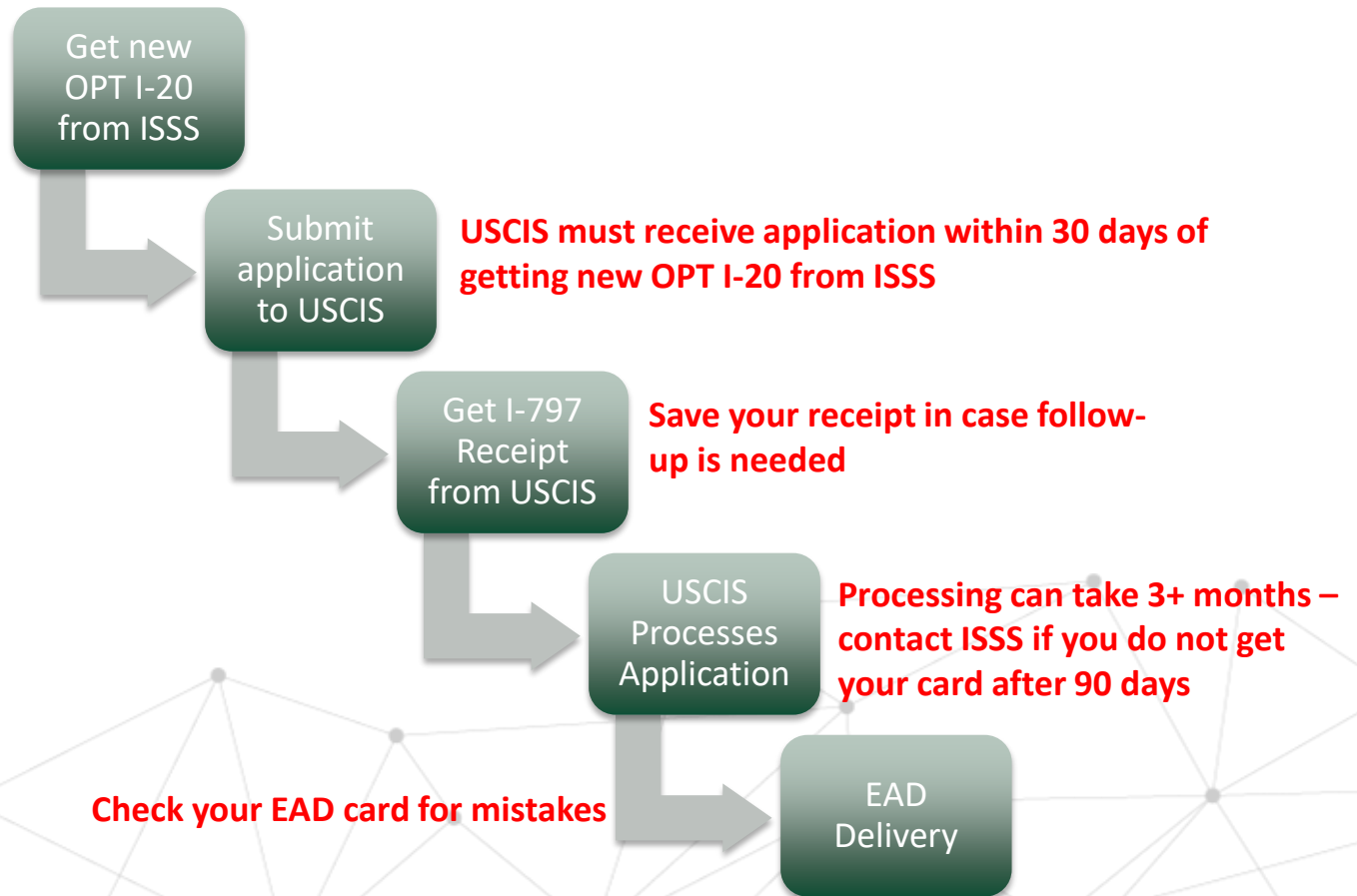
Ready to Apply?



1. Download and prepare **F-1 Post-Completion OPT Application packet**
2. Complete the **F-1 Optional Practical Training Information Form** (last page of packet)
3. Prepare USCIS **Form I-765** following packet instructions
 - Go to <http://www.ucis.gov/i-765> to download Form I-765
4. Prepare **all other required OPT application packet materials**
5. Call 541-346-3206 to make a 30-minute OPT advising appointment with an international student advisor – bring all required documents with you
 - At your appointment you will get a new OPT I-20 and then you will be able to start the application packet



Application Processing Steps



EAD Card



Your EAD card is evidence that you have been approved for Post-Completion Optional Practical Training. It takes about 3+ months for the EAD to be mailed to you.

When starting any employment, you must be able to show the card to your employer, and that the start date on the card has been reached. **You cannot work before, or after, the start ('Valid From') and end ('Card Expires') dates.**

Reporting Requirements and Other Matters During OPT




What do I have to do once my Post-Completion OPT starts?



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OPT Job Requirements



- Once you have your EAD card, you can accept jobs related to your major
 - Remember:
 - You can combine jobs or change between jobs as long as each job is related to your major
 - You should work, on average, on a **full-time** basis (over 20 hours per week) – either through one job or multiple jobs
 - Jobs can include paid employment, internships, self-employment (independent 'gigs'), major-related volunteer activity
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90-Day Unemployment Rule



Extremely important. Under this rule, once your OPT starts (from the EAD start date), you are given **90 days of unemployment**. This means you have a maximum of 90 days during your OPT where you have no job, internship, etc. If you go beyond 90 days of unemployment, you may lose your OPT benefit.

- **Violating the 90-day unemployment rule may lead to denial of future immigration benefits, such as H-1B work visas or permanent residency.**
- **FAILURE TO REPORT YOUR EMPLOYMENT MAY LEAD TO AUTOMATIC TERMINATION OF YOUR OPT AND SEVIS RECORD.**

Report Job / Address Information



- To avoid having days counted as “unemployment,” report your job information within **10 days** of any change
- Go to <http://iss.uoregon.edu/opt-update-form> to log into our iConnect system – fill out the **OPT Update Form** to submit your job information
- You must also report **address changes** within 10 days – use the same OPT Update Form
- **Don't forget to update!**

Social Security Number (SSN)



- If you did not apply for a Social Security Number (SSN) before or during your OPT application process, you can apply for a SSN once you get your EAD card
- Go to <http://iss.uoregon.edu/forms> to download our Social Security Information Packet.

Health Insurance – Plan Ahead!

Important! The UO does not provide health insurance once you have completed your studies, even if you are on OPT

- Talk to your employer about obtaining health insurance
- Buy your own health insurance through a private insurance company that specializes in serving international students and scholars
 - Go to <http://iss.uoregon.edu/forms> for our Health Insurance Guide, or talk to an international student advisor
- Do not ignore the need for health insurance during your OPT period!



Travel and OPT



*Can I travel outside of the US
during Post-Completion OPT?*



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International Travel



- Plan carefully when traveling outside the US while applying for OPT and after your OPT starts
- **Remember that during your OPT period, you are still considered an F-1 UO international student**
- Take extra care if your current F-1 visa has or will expire



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Travel Situations

	While Studying	After Studies, While Waiting for OPT to Start	After OPT Begins
Student status	Program expiration date is in the future – student is still working toward degree objective	Program expiration date has passed, but OPT application is still in process	Program expiration date has passed, and OPT has started
Documents to carry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passport valid six months into future • Valid F-1 visa • I-20 signed within last year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passport valid six months into future • Valid F-1 visa • I-20 signed within last six months on date of return • I-797 receipt notice from USCIS showing that you have applied for OPT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passport valid six months into future • Valid F-1 visa • I-20 signed within last six months on date of return • EAD card from USCIS • Strongly recommended: proof of employment, job offer, etc.

Ending OPT



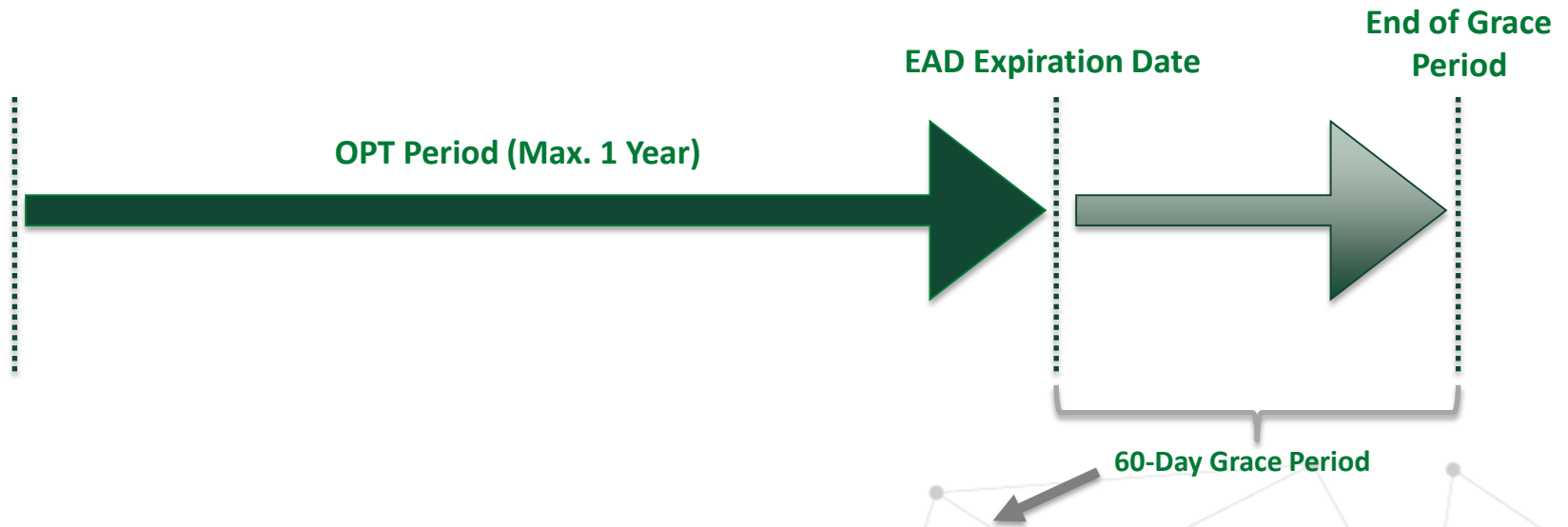
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Ending OPT



- Post-Completion OPT ends if:
 - You decide to stop OPT early to return home
 - You decide to stop OPT early to go back to school for a new degree program
 - Your immigration status changes, e.g., to H-1B work visa
 - You exceed the 90-day unemployment limit
 - You reach the end date on your EAD card
- Once your EAD card expires, you must stop employment
 - You still have a 60-day “grace period” to prepare to leave the US or apply for a new I-20 to go back to school
 - Contact ISSS if you have an employer sponsoring you for an H-1B; you may be eligible for a ‘cap-gap’ extension of your OPT

End of OPT



*After your EAD expires, there is a sixty (60) day 'grace period' to prepare for departure from US, or pursue other options such as getting a new I-20 to return to full-time studies. **You are not allowed to be employed during the grace period.***

Keep Records Safe



- Even after your OPT ends, keep your previous I-20s, EAD cards, and other F-1 documents in your personal records
- You may need to show these documents at a later time if you continue to study, work, or live in the US

Questions?



International Student and Scholar Services

300W Oregon Hall (3rd Floor)

Email: intl@uoregon.edu

Phone: (541) 346-3206

Drop-in: Mondays – Thursdays, 2pm – 4pm
Fridays, 10am – 12pm

OPT applications require a thirty-minute advising appointment

