



# Post Completion OPT Information

Howard University

## Off Campus Employment -OPT

- To be eligible a student must be in good academic standing.
- Have been registered and in valid F-1 status with a Howard I-20.
- Student must have completed all course work, including comprehensive exams.
- Employment must be related to the student's field of study

# Off Campus Employment -OPT

If you are an F-1 student who wants to apply for OPT, you must:

- Request that your designated school official (DSO) at your academic institution recommend the OPT.
- Your DSO will make the recommendation by endorsing your Form I-20 and making the appropriate notation in SEVIS
- Properly file [Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#) with USCIS, accompanied by the required fee and the supporting documentation



# STEPS TO APPLY

1. Complete the Howard application form and return it to the OIS. The application can be picked up in our office or we can email it to you.
2. Wait until you receive an I-20 from OIS with the recommended OPT dates.
3. Once you have received the I-20, you can apply online via the USCIS website.
4. You will need to complete the form I-765, upload all of the requested documents and pay the application fee.

## What needs to be included with your I-765 application

1. Copy of your passport
2. Copy of your visa
3. I-94 record
4. Copies of all previous I-20's
5. Copies of any previously issued EAD cards
6. Two photographs that meet USCIS specifications
7. Application fee. Always check USCIS website Fee Calculator.

## 90, 60, 30 Day Rules

- You are eligible to apply for OPT up to 90 days before your completion date, not before.
- You have a 60-day grace period to apply for OPT or begin your employment.
- You have 30 days from the date that we issue the I-20 and recommend OPT to submit your application to USCIS.
- You are allowed 90 days of unemployment once your OPT has been approved.

# Do Not

Do not begin working until you have received your EAD card.

We do not recommend that you travel outside of the US until you receive your EAD card.

Do not submit your OPT application online without an updated I-20 with the OPT recommendation.

# OPT VS. STEM OPT

## OPT

- OPT is one year. Once you have completed your OPT, you have another 60-day grace period to either adjust your status or leave the US. You can pursue another degree or change your immigration status. Many employers will be willing to sponsor you for an H-1B visa.

## STEM OPT

- If you are in an approved STEM related field, you can apply for an additional two years of employment. You must do this before the completion date of your current OPT and **unlike regular OPT you must have a job offer. You will need to reach out to the OIS to apply.**



# Employment Requirements

**While on OPT, students are required to be employed and working at least 20 hours per week in a job (or multiple jobs) directly related to students' field of study/major. From the date of your start date on your EAD card, your unemployment count starts if you are unemployed.**

**During the initial post-completion OPT period, students can have up to 90 days of unemployment. The unemployment begins on the start date listed on students' EAD card. USCIS/SEVP keeps track of your unemployment days based on the employment information reported in your SEVIS record. If students accrue more than 90 days of unemployment or fail to provide OPT employment updates, USCIS/SEVP will terminate your record.**

# Types of Employment

## *Paid or unpaid training*

You may engage in paid employment that is directly related to your major field of study.

You may also serve as a volunteer, unpaid intern, researcher, community service worker, etc., where this does not violate any labor laws. We would advise that you obtain evidence from your volunteer organization that you performed services for more than 20 hours per week.

## *Multiple employers*

You may work for more than one employer. For active OPT, all jobs combined must total 20 hours per week or more.

## *Short-term multiple employers*

If you hold a job as a musician and other performing artist, you may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). You should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration. If requested by DHS, you should be prepared to provide evidence showing a list of all gigs.

## *Independent Contractor*

You may be engaged in work for hire (commonly referred to as working as a 1099 independent contractor), performing a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. If requested by DHS, you must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.

## *Self-employed business owner*

You may start a business and be self-employed. In this situation, you must be able to prove that you have the proper business licenses and that you are actively engaged in a business related to your degree program.

## *Employment through an agency*

If you are employed through an agency, you must be able to provide evidence showing that you are working an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.

# During OPT

## **Do**

**Send us a copy of your EAD card when you receive it.**

**Report all your employment through SEVP portal yourself or by submitting employment reporting form to DSO**

**Report any updates on your employment through SEVP portal yourself or by submitting employment reporting form to DSO**

**Report any updates on your personal information through SEVP portal yourself or by submitting employment reporting form to DSO**

## **Do NOT**

**Start/take classes even on a part time, non-degree basis that may later be used to satisfy the requirements of another program without permission from DSO**

**Travel while OPT application is Pending and you have completed your program.**

# Travel While on OPT Application is Pending

## Travel before Program end date

Student can travel same as the way student used to travel with valid documents below.

- (1) a valid Form I-20, signed on page 2 by DSO advisor (the signature must not be more than 12 months old at the time of reentry to the U.S.)
- (2) an unexpired passport
- (3) an unexpired F-1 visa in the passport. If your F-1 visa is expired at the time of your reentry to the U.S. you must apply for a new F-1 visa to reenter the U.S.
- (4) Receipt Notice from the USCIS (if applicable)

The above also applies to your F-2 dependents.

## Travel after your I-20 program end date while OPT application is pending

**International Travel while OPT application is pending is not recommended.**

Student must re-enter the country with F-1 status.

Entering with other status will automatically terminate the OPT application.

# Travel While OPT is Approved

**Once your OPT is approved and your EAD card is issued, you are authorized to leave and re-enter the U.S. only to start or resume employment.**

**If you need to travel while your OPT is approved, ensure you have the following documents with you:**

- **A passport that is valid for at least six months beyond your planned re-entry date.**
- **A valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport.**
- **An I-20 form with a valid travel signature (no older than six months) and your employment information listed on page 3. While presenting the most recent I-20 to border or visa officers, it's a good idea to carry all of them with you.**
- **Your EAD card.**
- **Proof of employment in the U.S., such as a letter from your employer or recent pay stubs.**

**If you need to apply for a new F-1 visa, make sure to have your EAD card and evidence of employment in the U.S., in addition to the typical documents required for a visa application.**