OPT WORKSHOP
WINTER-SPRING 2020
Website: internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu
Phone: 773-702-7752
Email: international-affairs@uchicago.edu

Appointments: internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/directories

Walk-In Advising (no appointment necessary):
Monday – Thursday, 10:00am-1pm & 2-4pm
OVERVIEW OF OPT

- Off-campus work authorization for F-1 students.
- 12 months of OPT per degree level (BA, MA, PhD).
- OPT is a continuation of your F-1 status.
- Employment must be directly related to your field of study.
- No job offer needed to apply.
- 90 days of unemployment once approved start is reached.
TIMING

Post-Completion vs. Pre-completion

You are eligible to apply after 3 quarters of full-time enrollment

End date
1. USCIS will begin accepting OPT applications **90 days** before your I-20 end date
2. The latest date USCIS can *receipt* your OPT application is **60 days** after your end date. If your application is not *receipted* by this date, your application could be denied.
3. Your start date can begin after your end date and before end of your 60-day grace period
PROCESS OVERVIEW

1. Request OPT Recommendation (OIA)
2. Assemble/mail app to USCIS
3. USCIS mails receipt notice
4. USCIS processing (3 – 5 months)
5. USCIS issues EAD
✓ Instructions for completing I-765

✓ Access Verification of Completion Form

✓ Link to “Request for F-1 OPT Work Authorization” online form
STEP 1: REQUEST OPT RECOMMENDATION FROM OIA

Form I-765 (USCIS Form)
Verification of Completion Form
Request for F-1 OPT Work Authorization Online Form
STEP 2: ASSEMBLING YOUR APPLICATION

Two NEW Passport Photos
(meets the U.S. government photo standards)

Form I-765 (USCIS Form)

Check or Money Order ($410; payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”)

Copy of I-20 with OPT Recommendation (Page 2)
Don’t forget to sign page 1!
STEP 2: ASSEMBLING YOUR APPLICATION

- I-94 (Most Recent Entry)
- Copies (front/back) of all Previous EADs
- CPT Screenshot from SEVIS (from OIA)
- Copy of the Biographical Page of your Passport
“E-Notification of Application/Acceptance”
MAILING VIA USPS

Secure Mail:
☑ Delivery Confirmation
☑ Certified Mail
☑ Check Address if non-USPS Courier

WARNING:
Visit OIA if your OPT recommendation is more than 30 days old
Your application will typically be receipted within 2-5 weeks.

You can track your application using your receipt number.
WHILE OPT IS PENDING

You are not permitted to work until OPT is approved and start date is reached.

Volunteering may be acceptable if it is recreational in nature (not related to your field of study, meets Department of Labor's definition of volunteer work).
RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE ON OPT

Report employment/address changes (OPT Update Form or SEVP Student Portal)

Report changes to your status (ex: F-1 to H-1B)

Report ending OPT early

WARNING: Unemployment Time (90 days)
EMPLOYMENT WHILE ON OPT

Work must be:

✓ **Directly related** to your area of study
✓ Combined for at least **20 hours/week**
✓ Appropriate for your level of education
You are permitted to work for multiple employers – all must be directly related to your field of study!
SELF-EMPLOYMENT

You are permitted to start a business or be self-employed while on OPT.

You are responsible for documenting your self-employment (i.e., proving you have the required business licensure).

OPT must be approved before you begin working for yourself.
UNPAID INTERNSHIPS

Must be **vocational** in nature and related to field of study.

*Bona fide unpaid internship:* benefits the intern, not necessarily the company and no one is paid, the position is advertised as unpaid.

Record your participation.
RECORD KEEPING TIPS

- **Keep copies of all I-20s and EAD Cards**
  Students who apply for future immigration benefits in the US will likely be asked to provide evidence of all previous EADs and I-20s.

- **Record OPT employment information**
  OIA will continue to monitor students’ SEVIS records while on OPT, but it is the students’ responsibility to keep track of their employment records (i.e. job offer letter, formal job description or job posting, etc.)

- **Keep original EAD Card in a safe place**
  Lost or stolen EAD will need to be replaced at the student’s expense.
TRAVEL WHILE OPT IS PENDING

**Pre-end date**: travel as you normally would

**Post-end date**: Will need EAD card to re-enter the U.S.
TRAVEL AFTER OPT IS APPROVED

Your travel signature while on OPT is valid for 6 months!
F-2 Dependent Travel:

- Copies of F-1 documents (I-20, F-1 visa stamp, passport ID page, I-94, EAD)
- Valid I-20 with travel signature (travel signature valid for 6 months)
- Valid F-2 visa stamp
24-MONTH STEM OPT EXTENSION

- STEM qualified majors only – check CIP code list.
- A student can use the STEM extension based on their most recent or a previous STEM degree.
- A student may obtain up to two STEM extensions provided that the second STEM extension is for a higher qualifying degree.
- You must apply before initial 12-months of OPT ends.
- A job offer is required in order to apply:
  1. Directly related to your degree and field of study
  2. Full-time (i.e. at least 20 hours per week)
  3. E-Verified employer ([http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify](http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify))
  4. Paid commensurate to a US Citizen and your level of education
- USCIS requires the employer to provide a formal Training Plan (Form I-983)
F-1 students have a 60 day grace period after their OPT ends. You can use this time to:

1. **Leave the U.S.** (not eligible for re-entry in current F-1 status during grace period)
2. **Transfer SEVIS record** to a new school or change education levels at UChicago
3. **Change statuses**
Several potential statuses and solutions for full-time employment (H1-B, TN, L-1, O-1, E-3, etc.)

Unlike OPT, employer must sponsor (file petition).

When discussing sponsorship, work closely with your employer to identify options.


Work with experienced, legal professionals when submitting your petition.

The Student Services Team at OIA cannot legally advise on statuses outside of F-1 and J-1.
H-1B CAP-GAP

H-1B CAP-GAP Extension

CAP-Subject Employers only, Change of Status petitions only

- April 1st: H-1B Applications Accepted
- October 1st: H-1B status begins for approved petitions

OPT End-Date
OIA CONTACT & SERVICES
Email: international-affairs@uchicago.edu
Phone: +1 (773) 702-7752
Appointments: Schedule online through our Staff Directory

Location:
Press Building, 1427 East 60th Street, Second Floor, Suite 251

Hours:
Monday – Thursday: 9 AM – 4 PM, Friday: 10:30 AM – 4 PM

Walk-in Advising Hours:
Mon – Thurs: 10 AM – 1 PM and 2 PM – 4 PM
OPT Packet Review and Travel Signatures

South Lounge, Reynold’s Club

Wednesday, March 11 – 11:00am-1:00pm
Thursday, March 19 – 2:00pm-4:00pm

No appointment needed; please bring the necessary documents with you.

Students will be seen on a first-come, first-served basis.
QUESTIONS?