



International Student
and Scholar Services

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

for F-1 students

WHAT IS OPT?

Government-authorized work experience for eligible F-1 students

12 months of off-campus employment

Two types: Pre-Completion and Post-Completion OPT



THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF OPT FOR F-1 STUDENTS



Pre-Completion:

Before graduation
(rarely recommended)

*Pause your
studies to work
for up to one year*



Post-Completion:

After graduation

*Most common option
CBU recommended*

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

You must have been a full-time, in-person F-1 status for at least one academic year

Cannot have previously worked full-time CPT for 12 months

Cannot have already done OPT at your current degree level

F-1 students get one opportunity for OPT at each degree level (Bachelor's Master's Doctorate)

OPT APPLICATION TIMELINE

1. **90 Days before your Program End Date** is the earliest you can apply for OPT. Start preparing your I-765 (OPT application) documents.
2. Fill out your **I-765**. You can submit it if you like, or wait and review it with other OPT applicants at one of the optional I-765 Workshops.
3. In **Terra Dotta** submit a request to have a **new I-20 with Initial OPT** requested issued to you
4. Submit your I-765, along with all required documents, to **USCIS**
5. **Track your case** with USCIS receipt number

OPT TIMELINE



This is the earliest you can apply for OPT. Contact your ISA to request an OPT I-20 and begin the process of filling out the I-765 on USCIS's website.

You must request to start OPT within 60 days of your Program End Date.

The amount of time you have after your OPT start date to find a job.

Once your OPT ends your 60-day grace period begins. You need to complete a Change of Status, start a new program or depart the US.

TAKING CLASSES AND OPT



Pre-completion OPT

No classes can be taken while on pre-completion OPT

Post-Completion OPT

Yes, if the classes are only part-time, recreational, or non-degree-seeking courses. Students cannot take classes in pursuit of a new degree while on OPT.

WHILE YOU WAIT ON YOUR OPT APPROVAL



Be in the United States

You must be inside the United States to apply for OPT, and travel while OPT is pending is not recommended.

Start Looking for Jobs Related to Your Degree

All jobs while on OPT must be directly-related to your degree and field of study. You can begin looking for/applying for jobs before beginning OPT period. We recommend utilizing the CBU Career Center and FrogHire.ai to search for OPT-friendly jobs.



OPT EMPLOYMENT REGULATIONS

All employment while on OPT must be directly related to your degree and subject of study

You cannot begin working on OPT:

- 1) Before you receive your EAD Card and**
- 2) Until the start date on your EAD Card**

You can accept job offers while your OPT is pending, but should not begin any orientation/training until your OPT start date

MAINTAINING & UPDATING YOUR OPT INFORMATION

After receiving your EAD card

Update employment info via
SEVP Portal.

You will receive an email from
USCIS containing information of
how to access this portal.



**Update your
employment info in
Terra Dotta**

This guarantees you have the
most accurate I-20 with your
employment information on it.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL WHILE ON OPT

Travel while OPT is pending is not recommended.

Travel outside of the US is permitted *after* OPT approval. Consult DSO for guidance.

EAD card, I-20 with travel signature, F-1 visa, and passport will be required for reentry.



Reminder: You must be inside the United States to apply for OPT.

STEM OPT EXTENSION

If your degree is STEM-designated and employer is E-Verified you can apply for a two-year extension of your Initial OPT

Read more about STEM OPT Extensions and the application process online at
calbaptist.edu/STEMOPT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long does it take to get approved (or denied)?

USCIS can take anywhere from 2 weeks to 3 months.

What if it takes longer than 3 months for USCIS to review my case?

You can remain in the US as long as you have a pending case/application with USCIS.

What if the Program End Date on my I-20 is not accurate?

Your DSO will change this in SEVIS, and issue you a new I-20 with an updated Program End Date when it's time for you to apply for OPT.

Can my OPT start date be before I have a job?

Yes. Your OPT start date can be any time within the 60-day window post-graduation.

WHAT IS NEXT?

1

Start filling out your I-765

2

Request an Initial OPT I-20 in Terra Dotta

3

Submit your I-765 to USCIS when you have all the required documentation and track its status with USCIS

HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

- Review the content posted on our website:
calbaptist.edu/OPT
- Contact the DSO for all OPT and STEM OPT students:
 - Courtney Watson
 - cwatson@calbaptist.edu

