



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

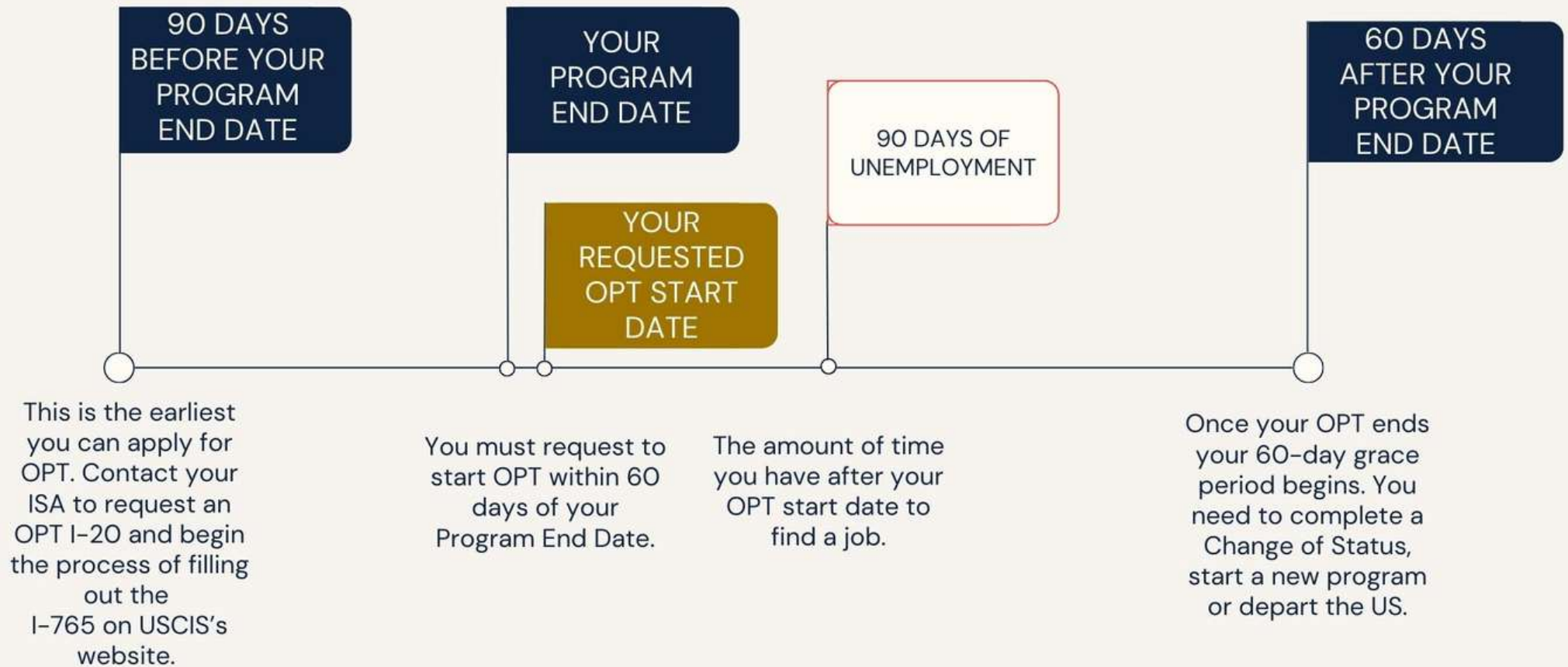
Cannot have already done OPT  
at your current degree level

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



# 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 YOU OPT INFORMATION

## After receiving your EAD card

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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

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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](http://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](http://calbaptist.edu/OPT)
- Contact the DSO for all OPT and STEM OPT students:
  - Courtney Watson
  - [cwatson@calbaptist.edu](mailto:cwatson@calbaptist.edu)

