



Virtual OPT Workshop

RIT International Student Services

www.rit.edu/iss

Fall Semester 2020

What is OPT?

“temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student's major area of study.”

8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(10)(ii)

Full time work experience in your field of study!





CPT vs. OPT



Curricular Practical Training

- No charge
- 2-4 business days to process
- Must be registered for co-op
- Must have a co-op offer letter
- Cannot be used after coursework is completed
- Authorized by semester
- Authorized by ISS

Optional Practical Training

- \$410
- Average 12 week processing
- Coursework must be complete
- No job offer required
- Students are eligible for an initial 12 months of OPT per level of study
- Recommended by ISS
- Authorized by USCIS

Three Types of OPT:

1. *Pre-completion OPT*
2. *Post-completion OPT*
3. *24-month STEM* extensions of post-completion OPT for some degree holders*

***STEM fields:**
Science, Technology,
Engineering & Math



Eligibility for OPT

- ◆ Valid F-1 status for at least **one academic year** (two consecutive academic semesters) before OPT begins.
- ◆ Completed **all required coursework** for degree by OPT start date (except for thesis, dissertation, or equivalent requirement, such as a capstone project).
- ◆ **First time applying for OPT at this degree level.**
- ◆ Completed **no more than 364 days of full-time CPT** (Curricular Practical Training) for the same degree level.



When to Apply

#1 Determine your program completion date

- ◆ Undergraduate Students:

When will you have completed all of the requirements for your degree?

- ◆ Graduate Students:

When will you have completed all of the coursework for your degree excluding a thesis, dissertation, or equivalent?

This date will be listed in the *Program End Date* section of your I-20. If the date is incorrect, an ISS advisor will update your I-20.

Application Timeline

#2 Decide when to apply for OPT



- ◆ OPT applications may be submitted to USCIS **as early as (but no earlier than) 90 days** before a student's program completion date.
- ◆ USCIS may accept applications **up to 60 days after** a student's program completion date. However, students applying for OPT after their program completion date may not receive the full 12 months of OPT authorization.

Application Timeline

#3 Choose an OPT start date

Applicants must choose a start date when applying for OPT.
This date may be:

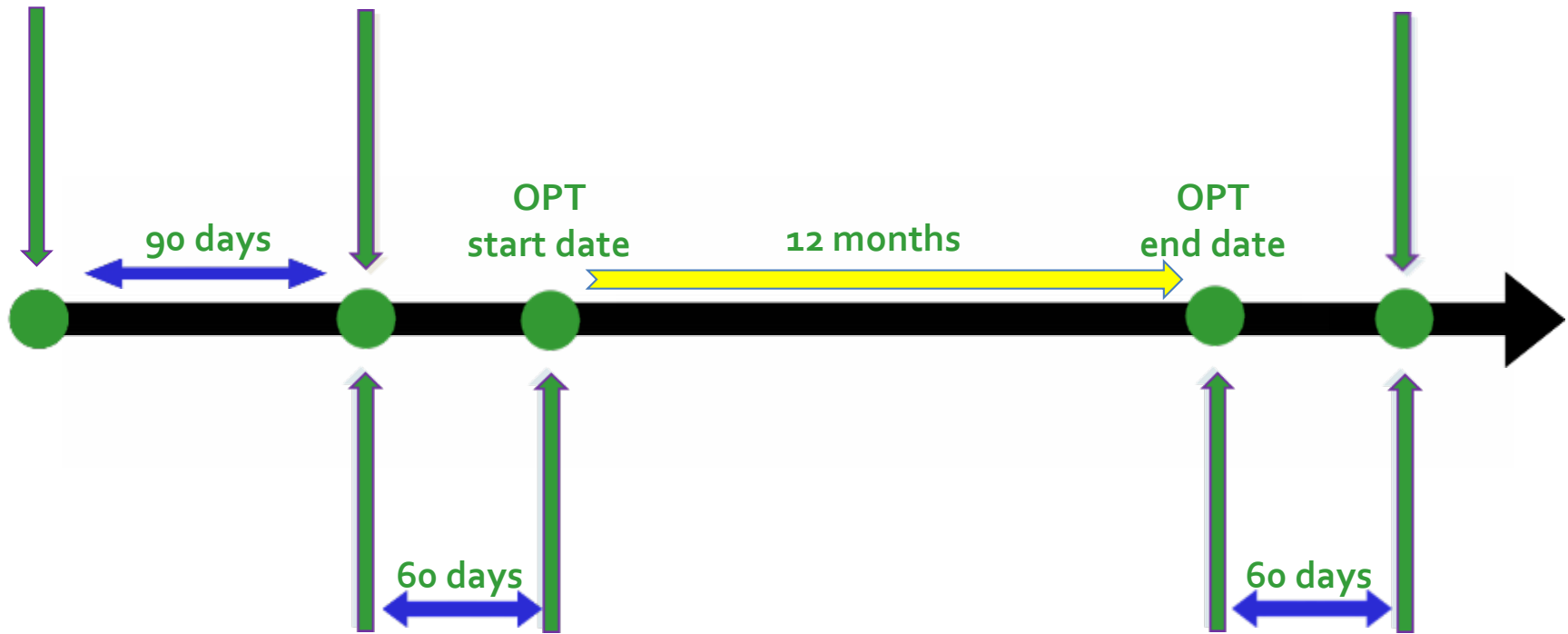
- ◆ *As early as one day after your course completion date*
- ◆ *As late as 60 days after your course completion date.*

Application Timeline

EARLIEST
DATE TO
APPLY FOR
OPT

PROGRAM
COMPLETION
DATE

STUDENTS MUST
DEPART THE U.S.,
TRANSFER TO ANOTHER
SCHOOL, OR CHANGE VISA
STATUS BY THIS DATE



Requested OPT start date must fall within the 60-day grace period

Grace period: Students may remain in the U.S. but may not continue to work

Calculate *Your* OPT Dates – 4 Steps

#1 When are you going to graduate, or when will your coursework be complete?

_____ (x)

#2 What is the date 60 days after this date?

_____ (x+ 60 days)

#3 When can you start OPT?

_____ (choose date between questions answered in #1 and #2)

#4 When should you start applying for OPT?

_____ (90 days prior to answer in question #1)

Calculate *Your* OPT Dates - 4 Steps

#1 When are you going to graduate, or when will your coursework be complete?

Dec 16th, 2020

#2 What is the date 60 days after this date?

Feb 14th, 2021 (*x+ 60 days*)

#3 When can you start OPT?

Dec 17th, 2020 – Feb 14th, 2021

#4 When should you start applying for OPT?

Sept 17th, 2020 (*90 days prior to question #1*)

Application Process

- ◆ Submit the OPT I-20 Request form to iss@rit.edu
 - ◆ Please make sure the entire form is completed and signed
- ◆ Once an ISS advisor processes your OPT I-20, you will receive a scan copy and we will mail the original to the address you have requested on the form.
- ◆ You will need to print, sign and include this signed OPT I-20 in your packet to USCIS with the rest of the documents outlined here:
<http://www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/iss/optional-practical-training>

Application Process

- ◆ Approximately three weeks after your application is received by USCIS, a receipt will arrive to the mailing address you used on the I-765 form.
- ◆ Applicants will receive their EAD (Employment Authorization Document) in approximately 90 days from the “Received Date” on the Receipt notice from USCIS.
- ◆ If you need to change your address while your OPT application is processing, please use the form provided by USCIS at the following link
 - ◆ <https://www.uscis.gov/ar-11>

Application Materials

*See complete instructions on the ISS website:
www.rit.edu/iss/optional-practical-training*

- ◆ I-765 form
- ◆ G-1145 form
- ◆ Application fee (Check or Money Order)
- ◆ Copy of new I-20 with recommendation for OPT
- ◆ Copies of all previous I-20s
- ◆ Copy of electronic Form I-94 print-out. You can access and print your electronic Form I-94 at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html>
- ◆ Copy of passport picture page
- ◆ Copy of passport visa page
- ◆ Two passport photos taken within the last six months – (please write your name and I-94 number on the back of the photos)



When can I start working?

- ◆ You must have received your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) in hand and the start date indicated on the card must be reached.
- ◆ USCIS Case Status Online
<https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>
Students are encouraged to use the “Sign up for an account” feature. There is an option for students to include their email address and request email updates.

Types of OPT Employment

- ◆ **Paid employment:** A student may work full time or part time (at least 20 hours per week).
- ◆ **Multiple employers:** A student may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the degree program.
- ◆ **Short-term multiple employers:** Often photographers and other types of artists work for multiple short term employers . These student should maintain a list of all employers and the dates of their employment.
- ◆ **Work for hire:** Students must be prepared to provide evidence showing the length of the contract and the name and address of the contracting company. Please note this type of employment is NOT allowed on STEM.

Types of Employment

- ◆ **Self-employed business owner:** Students on OPT may start a business, but the work must be full time. The student must have the proper business licenses and the business must be directly related to the student's degree program. Please note this type of employment is NOT allowed on STEM.
- ◆ **Unpaid employment:** Students may work as interns or volunteers as long as they work at least 20 hours per week. Please note this type of employment is NOT allowed on STEM.

Unemployment During OPT

- ◆ Students on OPT have a total of **90 days** (including weekends and holidays) of allowed unemployment during the 12-months of OPT.
- ◆ Students with an OPT STEM extension have an **additional 60 days** of allowed unemployment during the 36-month total OPT period.



Traveling Abroad During OPT

- ◆ *ISS does not recommend leaving the U.S. while your OPT application is pending.* The only exception is before your graduation and you will return before the program end date on your I-20. It is important to carry an Enrollment Verification Form from the Registrar's Office in this situation.
- ◆ **Carry the following when traveling on OPT after it has been approved:**
 - OPT card (EAD)
 - Employment letter (in order to return!)
 - Valid F-1 visa
 - Valid passport
 - All I-20s, and the OPT I-20 must have been signed within the past 6 months



OPT Reporting Requirements

Students on OPT are required to report the following information within 10 days of any change during their OPT period. Failure to update this information will result in the termination of your SEVIS record, loss of valid F-1 status, and loss of OPT:

1. Employment Information

- Name of Employer
- Employer's address and telephone number

2. Your current address

3. Legal name change

You will report this information on your SEVP Portal

SEVP Portal

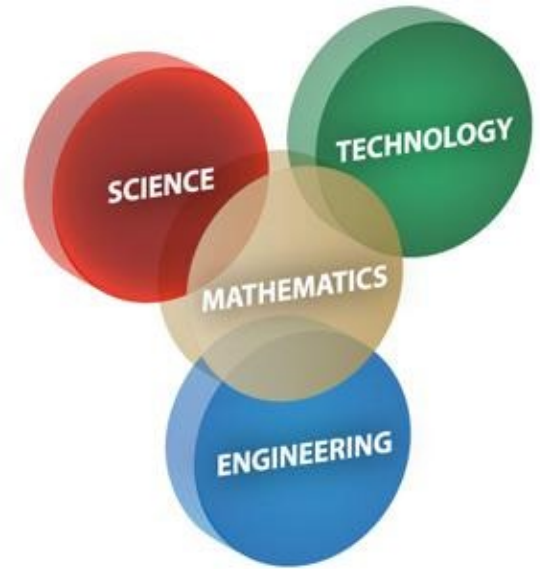
You will receive an email with instructions on creating a portal account. This email will come from do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov. If you do not see the email, check your spam or junk mail folder. If you still do not see it, contact your designated school official (DSO) to have the email sent again.

The SEVP Portal will allow you to:

- View details about your post-completion or STEM OPT.
- Report changes to your address, telephone and employer information.
- View and update data on all your employers in one place.
- Any data updates you make in the portal will be sent directly to the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. (Therefore, you will not have to report those changes through RIT once you have entered them in the SEVP Portal).
- It will not allow you to add any new STEM employment.

OPT – STEM Extension

Students with a Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees in certain **STEM** (**S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering, **M**athematics) fields may be eligible for a **24-month extension** of post-completion OPT, for a total of 36 months of OPT authorization.



- ◆ Each major at RIT has a **CIP Code**. It is listed on the I-20
- ◆ Link to **STEM Field CIP Codes**
<http://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2014/stem-list.pdf>

Eligibility for OPT STEM Extension

- ◆ Maintaining valid F-1 status and pursuing authorized OPT employment in field of study
- ◆ Completed a Bachelor's degree or completed required course-work in a Master's or Doctoral degree in a USCIS-designated STEM field
- ◆ Employed by an eligible employer enrolled in the DHS E-Verify database

E-Verify

- ◆ An Internet-based system operated by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services(USCIS) in partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA).
- ◆ Free to employers and available in all 50 states.
<http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify/about-program/e-verify-employers-search-tool>
- ◆ Provides a link to federal databases to help employers determine employment eligibility of new hires and the validity of their Social Security numbers.



When to Apply

- ◆ You may apply up to 90 days (3 months) before your regular OPT period expires.
- ◆ Your application must be received by USCIS before your regular OPT period expires.
- ◆ Students with a timely-filed, pending 24-month OPT STEM Extension application may continue working beyond their OPT end date without receiving a new EAD card.
- ◆ Information about how to apply can be found on the ISS website.

STEM OPT and Travel

- ◆ While OPT STEM application is pending, avoid traveling after your first EAD card expires.
 - ◆ Do not travel until the new STEM Extension EAD card is received
- ◆ Travel with the same documents required for travel during the first year of OPT:
 - STEM OPT card (EAD)
 - Employment letter (in order to return!)
 - Valid F-1 visa
 - Valid passport
 - All I-20s, and the STEM OPT I-20 must have been signed within the past 6 months



What is an H-1B?

- ◆ H-1Bs are work permits requiring Labor Certification. (On OPT, you are still in F-1 student status).
- ◆ H-1Bs become available at the earliest on October 1 and can be applied for as early as April 1.
- ◆ Higher Education Institutions are cap-exempt.
- ◆ A company must file on your behalf. There are USCIS and attorney fees.
- ◆ H-1Bs are geographic and employer specific.
- ◆ Cap-Gap extensions: If you had an H-1B receipt or approval notice, ISS could request an extension of your OPT until September 30



Please visit

www.rit.edu/iss/optional-practical-training