



Post-Completion Optional Practical Training F-1 Status

What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

OPT (short for Optional Practical Training) is a type of employment opportunity which allows F-1 students to obtain work experience in areas related to their academic major. A total of 12 months of OPT is available per education level (e.g. Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate). This is full time and may occur anywhere in the United States. In order to be on OPT, you need to obtain an Employment Authorization Document (EAD card). While on Optional Practical Training, individuals are still considered F-1 students at Lewis University, even though they may be working elsewhere in the United States.

Am I Eligible for OPT?

- You have a valid F1 visa.
- You have been enrolled in a full course of study for one academic year.
- You have not exceeded 12 months of full-time CPT.
- You have not exceeded 24 months of Pre-completion OPT.
- You do not need a job offer to apply for OPT.
- The employment must be directly related to your program of study and must be appropriate for someone having your level for education.

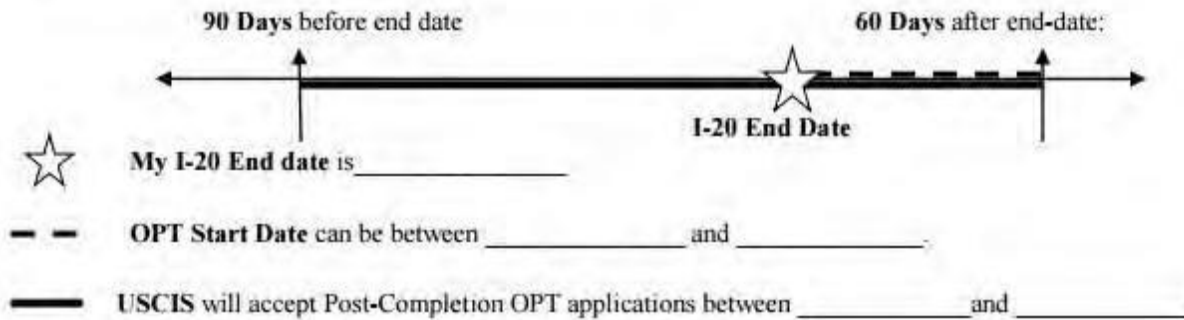
Types of Employment

- Multiple employers: You may work for more than one employer, but all jobs must be related to your field.
- Work for hire: Commonly referred to as 1099 or Independent Contractor Employment; keep evidence of the duration of contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.
- Self-employed business owner: You can start a business or be self-employed while on OPT. You should be able to prove that you have the proper business licenses and that it is related to your degree program.
- Employment through an agency or consulting firm is also allowed.
- Unpaid Employment: You may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, where this practice does not violate any labor laws.

When can I apply for OPT?

OPT application: Apply 90 days before graduation date and 60 days after. See timing chart below:

Post-Completion OPT Timing Chart



How to apply for OPT?

IMPORTANT! Do not apply to USCIS until you receive the OPT recommendation I-20 from the International Student and Global Scholar Services Office. This I-20 must be included in your application to USCIS.

You can choose to apply online (recommended) or apply through physical mail.

Before receiving the i20 for OPT from our office, you must submit the required documents to ISGSS@LEWISU.EDU in a PDF file first for review:

1. Academic advisor recommendation form (see page 4 of this application form)
2. [Form i-765](#) (if you are applying online, please send a snapshot of your application found on the last part of the online application)
3. Copy(s) of your previous i20 with CPT or OPT authorization (only if you did CPT/OPT before)
4. Copy of your passport & visa
5. Copy of your most recent i-94
6. 2 passport style photos (not older than 30 days)
7. EAD Card (only if you have an EAD card before)
8. Cashier's check of \$410.00 (not needed for online application)
9. Form G-1145 - optional if you want to request an electronic notification when USCIS accepts your application (not needed for online application)
10. Confirm your preferred OPT start date (anytime between your graduation date to 60 days after)

Check the STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE in applying for OPT online here: [OPT Online Application Guide](#).

***If you choose to apply through physical mail, please inform us and send an email to ISGSS@LEWISU.EDU.**

What do I need to do after submitting my OPT application?

1. Wait for your OPT approval notice and EAD card. This may take 30-45 days.
2. After receiving your EAD card, email ISGSS@LEWISU.EDU:
 - a. Fill out the [OPT employer form](#)
 - b. Submit a copy of your EAD card
 - c. Submit a copy of your OPT offer letter.
 - d. Our office will issue an updated i20 with approved OPT and employer information in 1-2 business days for receiving your approval email.

***Please remember that you are still an F-1 Student even though you are doing OPT. If you do not report to our office within 90 days after your OPT is approved, your status will be terminated. If you cannot find a job within 90 days after your approved OPT, you are able to stay in the US only for 60 days.**

Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Portal

This is an important tool that lets students on OPT and STEM OPT meet their legal reporting requirements. Students can use the SEVP portal to report these changes, or they can ask the school's Designated School Official to report it for them.

SEVP is not SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System). Students cannot access SEVIS. Only students with approved OPT or STEM OPT can create a SEVP portal. Once your OPT is approved, you will receive an email notice that includes a link to the SEVP portal registrations. If you have not received the portal link within 1-2 months after your approved OPT, please email ISGSS@LEWISU.EDU for a reset link.

What can I do after my 12-month OPT period?

If you are eligible for a STEM extension, email ISGSS@LEWISU.EDU. Your STEM extension application window opens 90 days before your OPT end date. To check whether you are eligible for the 24-month STEM extension, check your CIP code on your i20 if it matches on this [website](#). Check the STEM OPT extension document on our ISGSS website for more details.

Traveling while on OPT

It is not recommended to travel while OPT is pending. You may travel outside of the US; however, there will be risks in re-entering the US without proper documentations. If your OPT is approved and you have a job offer, prepare the following before traveling and for re-entry:

1. Email isgss@lewisu.edu 2 weeks before your travel date
2. Bring your valid passport and visa
3. Bring your updated i20
4. Bring your EAD card and OPT job offer letter



OPT ACADEMIC ADVISOR RECOMMENDATION FORM

This form provides the information required by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for granting of employment for practical training.

SECTION I: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE STUDENT

Name (first, middle, last): _____

Lewis ID Number: _____ Date of Birth (mmddyyyy): _____

Degree: __ Bachelors __ Masters __ PhD Major/Program of Study _____

My preferred OPT start date (mmddyyyy): _____

I have applied for graduation and I am attaching my graduation application along with this form.

Student signature:	Date Signed:
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SECTION II: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR

The above-named student is applying for permission to engage in Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) directly related to the student’s degree/major field of study. Please review the student’s records and confirm that the student meets the requirements listed below to begin an application for OPT:

The student’s anticipated program completion date is: _____

- There are no grades that will impact the student’s ability to complete their program by the date above.
- There are no holds on the student’s account that will bar them from registering for remaining coursework and/or completing their program of study by the date above.
- The student is enrolled full-time in their final term OR has been approved for a reduced course load form.
- The student has completed or will complete the program requirements by the date indicated above.

IMPORTANT: If there is any concern about the student’s ability to pass their remaining courses before the program completion date written above, or you cannot attest to all of the requirements listed above, **do not sign this form!** Please assist the student to take steps to meet the requirements above and/or suggest waiting to apply for OPT until after they have successfully completed their degree.

By signing below, you certify that you have reviewed and verified all of the above information. Based on the information I have provided; I recommend that the International Student and Global Scholar Services Office authorize this student for employment under federal regulations for Post-completion Optional Practical Training. I understand the final decision is subject to the review and approval of the International Students and Global Scholars Services Office at Lewis University.

Advisor signature:	Date:
Advisor name:	Title:
Department:	Extension:

Return this signed form to: Office of International Student and Global Scholar Services. Email: isqss@lewisu.edu