



**UTTyler**<sup>™</sup>  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

# Optional Practical Training

Office of International Programs

# Optional Practical Training...what is it?

- OPT is an F-1 visa benefit authorizing practical training (employment) in your field of study
- OPT authorization is for 12 months – at each educational level
- If you have a STEM eligible degree you can apply for STEM Extension OPT which authorizes an additional 24 months

# There are 2 types of OPT

## Pre-Completion OPT

- OPT done before you complete your program



## Post-Completion OPT

- OPT done after you complete your program

# Pre-Completion OPT - Eligibility

- Currently in F-1 status
- Lawfully enrolled full-time for one academic year (2 long semesters) at UT Tyler
- Have not completed your degree requirements
- Have not exceeded your 12 months of CPT allowance
- Have not exceeded your 12 months of OPT at your current degree level

# Pre-Completion OPT

## Enrollment

- As you are still in your program, full-time enrollment is required during Fall and Spring terms
- Summer enrollment is optional

## Hours

- OPT is part-time (20 hours per week or less) during the Fall and Spring terms
- OPT can be full-time over the Summer

# Is Pre-Completion OPT right for you?

- For most students, Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a better option. It allows for off-campus work authorization in your field of study without using any of the 12 months of OPT time.
- Pre-completion OPT may be a good fit for you if:
  - You are a student who will be moving straight from an undergraduate degree to a graduate degree
  - You are a student who will not have a full 12 months available after graduation for post-completion OPT

# Pre-Completion OPT - Applying

- You cannot apply for STEM OPT Extension after Pre-Completion OPT
- To have Pre-Completion OPT and Post-Completion OPT, you must apply twice
- Application process is the same as with Post-Completion OPT (as seen later in the presentation)

## Pre-Completion OPT

- OPT done before you complete your program



## Post-Completion OPT

- OPT done after you complete your program



# Post-Completion OPT - Eligibility

- ☑ Currently in F-1 status
- ☑ Lawfully enrolled full-time for one academic year (2 long semesters) at UT Tyler
- ☑ Completing your degree requirements this semester
- ☑ Have not exceeded your 12 months of CPT allowance
- ☑ Have not exceeded your 12 months of OPT at your current degree level
- ☑ Follow USCIS application procedures and timelines
- ☑ Maintain regulatory requirements, like reporting

# Applying for OPT



1. Get your OPT request entered into your SEVIS record
2. Prepare your documents
3. Create your myUSCIS account to apply online
4. Complete the online I-765 Application for Employment Authorization
5. Monitor your account for updates

Application can be done online or through mail

# 1. Get OPT Request entered into your SEVIS record

Send OIP ([ois@uttyler.edu](mailto:ois@uttyler.edu)):

- Completed [OPT Request form](#)
- Proof of [OPT Administrative Fee payment](#) (\$50)
- Proof of graduation fee payment (for Post-Completion OPT)

OIP will enter your OPT Request and issue you an I-20 that notes your request on page 2. You will need that I-20 to apply for OPT.

On the OPT Request form you get to choose your requested OPT start date.

For Pre-Completion OPT there is no requirements, but you should keep in mind that USCIS is currently taking 90 days to process applications

For Post-Completion OPT you can select a start date any day between:

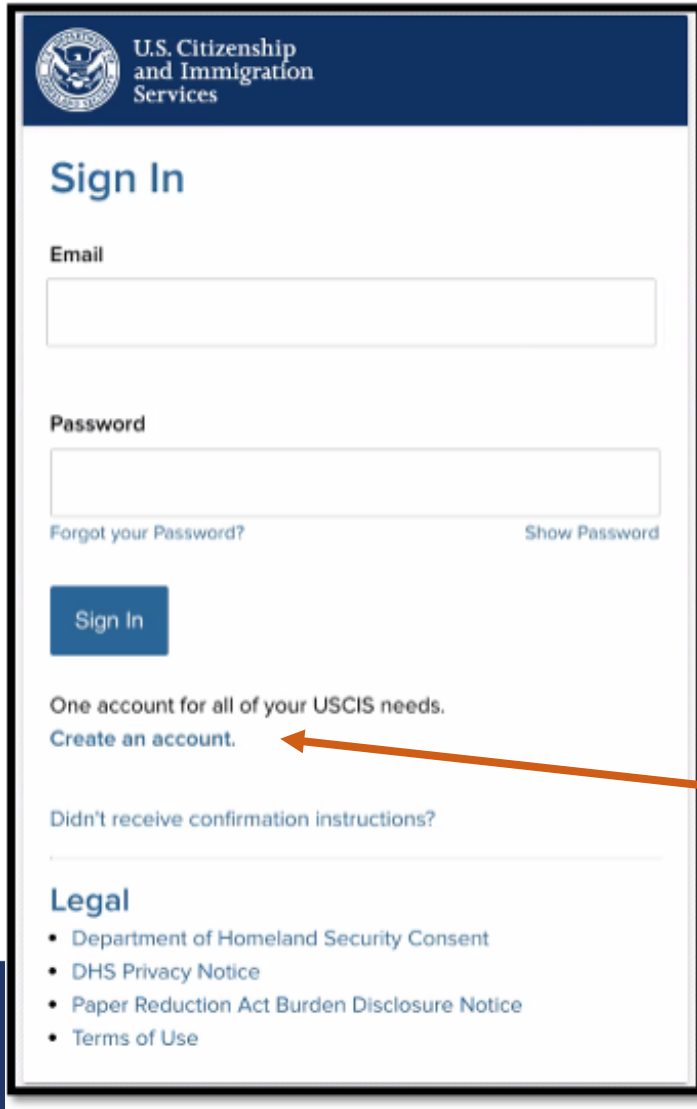
- Your Program End Date on your I-20 (last day of term)
- 60 days after the Program End Date

# 2. Prepare your Documents

- I-20 with OPT Request on it
- Passport scan
- Visa scan
- I-94 record
- Digital 2x2 passport style photos
- Scan of any previous EAD, front and back, if applicable

Also, have your credit/debit card on hand to pay the USCIS filing fee (\$410)

# 3. Create your myUSCIS account



The screenshot shows the USCIS Sign In page. At the top left is the USCIS logo and the text "U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services". Below this is the "Sign In" heading. There are two input fields: "Email" and "Password". Below the password field are links for "Forgot your Password?" and "Show Password". A blue "Sign In" button is positioned below the fields. Below the button is the text "One account for all of your USCIS needs." followed by a blue link "Create an account." which is highlighted by an orange arrow. Below this is a link "Didn't receive confirmation instructions?". At the bottom is a "Legal" section with a list of links: "Department of Homeland Security Consent", "DHS Privacy Notice", "Paper Reduction Act Burden Disclosure Notice", and "Terms of Use".

They will have you complete a two-step verification (sending a verification code to your email) and they will have you do a two-step verification each time you log in.

[Create an account](#)

# 4. Complete the online I-765 application

USCIS has an application period that you must apply within:

- Application period starts 90 days before your Program End Date on your I-20 (end of term)
- Application period ends 60 days after

Things to consider:

- USCIS is currently taking up to 90 days to process applications
- You must apply within 30 days of your OPT request being entered into your SEVIS record



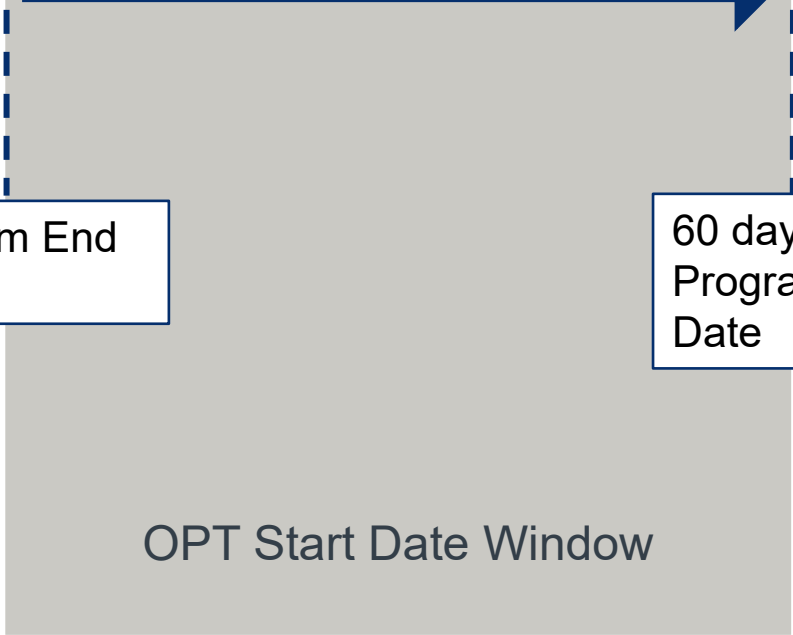
OPT Application Period



90 days before  
Program End  
Date

Program End  
Date

60 days after  
Program End  
Date



OPT Start Date Window

Log in and select myUSCIS

Then select File a Form Online

Welcome to your USCIS Account

Select what you want to do

**Edit My Profile**  
Editing your profile includes email, password, phone number, security questions, two-step verification and backup code.

**Login to a USCIS Service**

**myUSCIS**  
Apply for immigration benefits, find tools and resources to assist in preparation for naturalization, and search for doctors in your local community.

**FIRST**  
Submit, manage and receive Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

**myE-Verify**  
Confirm your records for employment eligibility, track E-Verify or Self-Check case status, and protect your identity by locking your Social Security Number (SSN).

Not sure what service you need? Start at [USCIS.gov](https://uscis.gov)

Welcome To Your USCIS Account

Select What You Want To Do

**Add a paper-filed case**  
View your case status and case history by adding your case to your account

**File a form online**  
Start a new form, upload evidence, and pay and submit online

**Enter a representative passcode**  
Review and sign forms prepared for you by your attorney or representative

**Verify your identity**  
Answer questions about your immigration history to verify your personal identity

Then select Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)

Within the application you will be asked which OPT you are applying for:

- Pre-Completion OPT (c)(3)(A)
- Post-Completion OPT (c)(3)(B)
- STEM Extension for OPT (c)(3)(C)

There will be sections to complete on your personal information, contact information, and immigration information.

There are also sections to upload your documents, or evidence as USCIS calls it.

Once completed you will be prompted to review your application, sign it, and then you can pay the USCIS filing fee. The fee is currently \$410.

# 5. Monitor your Account

Once you submit your application you can monitor your application in your account. It will have a receipt number for your case/application.

If receive a Request for Evidence (RFE) from USCIS, you canupload additional documents in your account.

If you find out that you won't be graduating as expected, contact OIP immediately.

# What happens now?



- Await USCIS notices
- Find employment
- Know your OPT requirements and abilities

# USCIS Notices

## Receipt Notice

- You will receive a mailed receipt notice
- Your receipt number will be in your USCIS account as well

## Approval Notice

- Approval notices are mailed
- An approval notice does not provide the authorization to start working

## EAD

- An EAD card (employment authorization document) is mailed
- **Once you have your EAD card and your start date has arrived, you are authorized to begin working**

If you requested an SSN in your OPT application, you should receive the social security card within 7 days of your EAD card. If you did not request an SSN but need one, contact OIP once you receive your EAD.

# Finding Employment

All OPT employment must be in a job that is related to your degree program AND you must work on average at least 20 hours per week.

Resources for finding jobs:

- Office of Career Success
- Faculty in your department
- Fellow students

## Employment can be:

- Single employer
- Multiple employers
- Paid position
- Unpaid position (volunteer or unpaid internship)
- Direct contract with employer
- Contract through a third party (like a consulting firm)
- Self-employment

You can change employers during OPT as long as each job is directly related to your major and educational level.

You can have more than one employer at the same time.



# Unemployment Limits

- You are allowed 90 days of unemployment throughout your 12 months of OPT
- Your unemployment day count starts on the start date of your EAD/authorization
- Your unemployment counter is in your SEVIS record, so make sure you report your employment

What happens if you exceed 90 days?

# Reporting Requirements

## Employment

- Report your employment information for every employer you have during the 12 months
- Report any updated start and end dates

## Personal

- Change of address
- Change of name
- Change of contact information

**Report changes within 10 days** of the change or employment offer. Not reporting is a visa violation which can cause you to lose OPT and visa status.

# How to Report

## SEVP Student Portal

- You should receive an automated email from SEVP to sign in and activate your portal account. If you do not receive it and want to use the portal let OIP know.
- You can update personal and employment changes at any time.
- If you use the portal to update your information you do not need to report the changes to OIP.

Portal info/help, tutorials, guides: [studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevp-portal-help](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevp-portal-help)

# How to Report

## OIP

- When you need to report a change/update, email OIP ([oip@uttyler.edu](mailto:oip@uttyler.edu)) the information
- One of the advisors will update your information and let you know when it is complete.
- If the change is an employment related change, an advisor will send you an updated I-20.

# Traveling

## After the program completion date, OPT not yet approved

- Valid passport
- Valid visa
- Latest I-20 with travel signature
- OPT receipt

## After OPT approved

- Valid passport
- Valid visa
- Latest I-20 with travel signature
- OPT EAD
- Proof employment (job offer letter or pay stubs)

# STEM Extension for OPT

Extends OPT an additional 24 months.

STEM Extension is available at the Bachelor's educational level and at the Master's educational level.



# STEM Extension - Eligibility

- ✓ Graduated in STEM major/program found on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) eligibility list
- ✓ Currently be on Post-Completion OPT (you cannot apply for STEM Extension while on Pre-Completion OPT)
- ✓ Currently employed in work that is appropriate to a STEM degree
- ✓ Have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment during OPT
- ✓ Employer uses federal E-Verify system
- ✓ Employer is willing to sign I-983 Training Plan for student
- ✓ Follow USCIS application procedures and timelines

# STEM Extension - Applying

## Application Period

- Starts 90 days before the end date on your EAD card
- Ends on your OPT EAD end date

USCIS application processing time is 90 days. If you do not get a decision by the time your end date arrives, your work authorization extends for 180 days or until you get a decision, whichever comes first.



# STEM Extension - Applying

1. Get STEM Extension request added to your SEVIS record
  - a. Submit [STEM Extension request](#) to OIP
  - b. Submit proof of [STEM OPT Administrative fee payment](#) (\$100)
  - c. Submit [I-983 Training Plan](#), pages 1-4

## 2. Gather documents

- I-20 with STEM Extension Request on it
- Passport scan
- Visa scan
- I-94 record
- Digital 2x2 passport style photos
- Scan of previous EAD, front and back
- Proof of STEM degree (scan of diploma, official transcripts, or unofficial transcript)

Also, have your credit/debit card on hand to pay the USCIS filing fee (\$410)

# STEM Extension - Applying

3. Complete the I-765 online application

- Same process but select the eligibility category STEM Extension for OPT (c)(3)(C)

4. Monitor your account

# Form I-983 Training Plan

This is a five-page form. Pages 1-4 are required to get your STEM Extension request put into your SEVIS record.

- It requires the student and the employer to sign
- Sections include Student Information, Employer Information, and Training Plan

Page 5 is used for reporting throughout your 24-month extension.

# Employment Options

## Employment can be:

- Single employer
- Multiple employers
- Paid position
- ~~Unpaid position (volunteer or unpaid internship)~~
- Direct contract with employer
- Contract through a third party (like a consulting firm)
- ~~Self-employment~~

You can change employers during OPT as long as each job is directly related to your major and educational level. You will need to complete a new I-983 for every new employer.

You can have more than one employer at the same time.

# Unemployment

You get an additional 60 days of unemployment. So, once approved for STEM extension you would have 60 days in addition to your unused unemployment days from OPT.

You would have a total of 150 days from the start of OPT to the end of your STEM Extension.

# Reporting Requirements

Report within 10 days of change:

- Address change
- Job ending (turn in final evaluation)
- New job starting (turn in new I-983)
- Employment address

## Validations & Evaluations

- 6 month – Validation
- 12 month – Self-evaluation (top of page 5 of I-983) & Validation
- 18 month – Validation
- 24 month (or end of job) – Final Evaluation (bottom of page 5 of I-983) & Validation

Learn more!



[www.uttyler.edu/oip](http://www.uttyler.edu/oip)



[oip@uttyler.edu](mailto:oip@uttyler.edu)



(903) 565-5960



3620 Varsity Dr

**Questions?**



**UTTyler**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER