Optional Practical Training (OPT)
Frequently Asked Questions

When should I apply?

Apply early!

- The earlies USCIS can receive the application is 90 days before the date of your program completion.
- The latest USCIS can receive the application is the 60th day following your completion date, assuming you do not leave the U.S. To accurately calculate your application window, you can refer to: https://www.timeanddate.com/date/dateadd.html
- It can take up to two weeks to prepare the OPT application before sending to USCIS

OPT: Optional Practical Training Application Form

There is no way to expedite an application.

How much OPT is available for F-1 students?

One year of OPT is available after completing each higher level degree program.

Do I need a job to apply for OPT?

A job offer is not required to apply for OPT. However, once you find a qualifying job, you must report within 10 days via your SEVP Portal account.

What type of status will I have while working on OPT?

During the OPT period, a student remains in F-1 status.

Can I work on campus while waiting for my EAD?

Once you complete your degree, you cannot work on-campus or off-campus until you have the EAD in your possession and your selected start date has arrived.

What is the average processing time at the USCIS to get my Employment Authorization Document (EAD)? Is there a way to expedite it?

The average USCIS processing time to issue the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) is 90 days. However, please visit the USCIS Processing Times(link is external) website for the most up to date processing times.

There is no way to expedite an application.

How can I check the status of my OPT application after I mail it to the USCIS?

When you receive your USCIS Notice of Action (receipt), visit USCIS Case Status Online(link is external) and enter your receipt number.

How do I contact the USCIS?

The number on the Notice of Action (1-800-375-5283) is the National Customer Service line. Have the receipt number ready before you call.

Is there any way to change the information on the EAD application (address, dates, etc.) once I have mailed the application?

After you have mailed your application to USCIS no changes can be made except for address updates. To update your address, visit your USCIS.gov Case Status page(link is external) OR contact the National Customer Service line at (1-800-375-5283). Withdrawing the OPT application is very difficult and the fee is non-refundable. If the OPT has been approved, it is not possible to withdraw.

How long can I stay in the U.S. after the end date of my OPT?

You have 60 days after your OPT ends to leave the U.S., request a transfer of your I-20, or change your status. You cannot work during this time.

Does my spouse or children get a new OPT I-20 too?

Yes, if you did not receive OPT I-20s for your family, contact Webster International Office.

90 days have passed since the Notice of Action receipt date. What can I do?

Verify your status at the USCIS Case Status Online(link is external). If your EAD application has been approved you will need to wait until the card arrives (2-4 weeks after it is approved).

Please note that USCIS will not share any information with Webster University's staff.

USCIS said that my EAD was approved, but I have not received it yet – can I start working?

No. You must be able to show the employer the EAD when you begin employment.

What is SEVP PORTAL

The SEVP Portal is a tool that lets F-1 students on post-completion optional practical training (OPT) report address, telephone and employer information to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). You must report directly to the portal within 10 days if you change your address, or start/stop employment to maintain your status.

Instructions on how to update these details can be found starting on page 23 of the SEVP Portal Student User Guide: **https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/assets/sevp_portal_student_user_guide.pdf**

Invitation

After your OPT application is approved **AND** the OPT authorization is active, you will get an invitation email within a few days from do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov. (For example, if your card is approved on December 10, and the start date on the card is December 15, the invitation will be sent after December 15.)

When you create your account, you will be asked to enter your SEVIS ID number and create a password. You can find your SEVIS ID in the top left corner of your Form I-20, below the words 'Department of Homeland Security.'

Carefully review the password guidelines for the portal here: **https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/make-and-maintain-user-password**.

For more information on how to navigate the SEVP Portal, visit SEVP Portal Help website: **https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevp-portal-help**

Common Issues

The link in my invitation email has expired or I cannot find my original invitation email.
Request that a new link is sent to you by completing this form: SEVP Portal Access Request

I created an account, but now I can't log-in.
Try using this log in link: **https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/#/login**

My account is locked.
If you have tried your password unsuccessfully three times, you will get locked out. To request a password re-set you must complete this form: SEVP Portal Access Request

I have received my OPT EAD Card but not the SEVP Portal Activation Link. Please complete and submit:

OPT Holders: I updated my employment via SEVP OPT Portal and now I need a new I-20 from Webster

You will be notified

For all other questions:
Refer to the **SEVP Portal Help webpage**, or contact the SEVP Response Center:

- Email at **SEVP@ice.dhs.gov**
- Telephone at (703) 603-3400 (Monday through Friday 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM ET, except U.S. holidays)

My EAD says "not valid for re-entry" on it. Does that mean I cannot travel abroad and re-enter on OPT?

It simply means that you must carry other documents to show proof of your eligibility to re-enter the U.S. such as your I-20 and valid F-1 visa stamp. The EAD alone is not enough to re-enter the U.S.

[Travel Tips](#)

I lost my EAD. How can I get it replaced?

The only way to receive a new EAD is by submitting a new I-765 and supporting documents (fee, photos, forms, etc.). It is impossible to replace an EAD if you are outside the U.S.

What counts as employment?

Please see the Webster IRIS website for more information:

[Types of Employment Allowed for Post-Completion OPT](#)

Is there a minimum number of hours I need to work?

To qualify as employment, you are required to work a minimum of **20 hours**/week.

I have been unemployed for 80 days. What is going to happen on the 90th day?

If you accumulate 90 days or more of unemployment, you are in violation of your status.

Do I need to complete any forms with my employer to begin working?
Yes. Speak with your employer about timelines and specific paperwork.

Can I change employers while on OPT?

Yes. No special permission is required to change employers. However, you must update your employer information via your SEVP Portal account.

Do I pay taxes while working on OPT?

Students in F-1 status are subject to all federal, state and local taxes that may apply.

What if I am not able to complete my degree program by the completion date on the OPT I-20 after submitting my OPT application?

Contact IRIS via intlservices@webster.edu (include your full name and Webster ID #)

What status do I have between my degree completion date and the start of my OPT?

If you have chosen a start date after your degree completion date, you will remain in F-1 status while the OPT is pending.

Can I go to school while on OPT?

Time spent going to school should only be an incidental part of your stay in the U.S. If you decide to go back to school full-time, you must speak to Webster IRIS about transferring your I-20 to the new institution or updating your I-20 if your degree program is at Webster.

Do I need to do anything with Webster IRIS while on OPT?

Yes, once you update your OPT employment via your SEVP Portal account you will request a new I-20 from Webster by submitting: OPT Holders: I updated my employment via SEVP OPT Portal and now I need a new I-20 from Webster

Can I start working without pay while waiting for my EAD?

No. Work that is normally paid requires employment authorization. You must have the card in hand and the start date must have arrived to begin working.

Does my visa need to be valid while on OPT?

While in the U.S., your visa may expire. It only needs to be valid if you wish to re-enter from abroad. Your I-20 remains active while on OPT. How to reapply for U.S. visa:

Apply for a U.S. Visa

How do I apply for Cap Gap I-20?

Please follow the instructions listed here:

Cap-Gap Extension Application

STEM OPT Frequently Asked Questions

How do I get a STEM extension of my EAD?

Only students who have completed certain STEM majors and have an eligible employer who is enrolled in E-Verify are eligible for the 24 Months STEM extension:

24 Months STEM OPT Extension

How do I apply for STEM extension?

Eligible students may apply for a 24-Month STEM Extension up to **90 days** prior to the expiration of their 12 Months OPT EAD. Please carefully read and follow the application instructions listed here:

24 Months STEM OPT Extension Application

There is no way to expedite an application.

How do I report my STEM OPT employment?

- You must report any change in address and employment information to Webster IRIS within **10 days** of the change through our online form:

STEM OPT Reporting Form

- STEM OPT holders are required to report <u>every 6 months</u> to Webster University as listed here:

24 Months STEM OPT Extension Reporting Requirements

via: STEM OPT Reporting Form

STEM OPT reports can be entered into the SEVIS as early as **30 days before** the report deadline.

Can I change employers while on pending STEM OPT?

Change of your employer while your STEM OPT pending is NOT recommended.

Can I change employers while on approved STEM OPT?

Yes, however you will have to report it as described (partial/incomplete documentation cannot be accepted) here:

24 Months STEM OPT Extension Reporting Requirements

How do I apply for Cap Gap I-20?

Please follow the instructions listed here:

Cap Gap Extension I-20 Request Form

Will I receive a new I-20 and when?

Once you complete and submit the OPT or STEM OPT report to our office, we will update the information into the SEVIS database. Please do not duplicate your OPT or STEM OPT report by placing additional phone calls or by sending additional emails (this creates confusion and slows our process down). We will contact you via email if your report will be missing anything.

We are responsible for 22 SEVP approved U.S. Webster campuses and SEVIS update process of your record will take approximately **7-10 business days**. There is no way to expedite the issuance of the I-20. Webster University is typically closed during federal holidays, weekends, and winter break. We appreciate your patience.

<u>Please note that not every change requires an issuance of the new I-20.</u>

We DO issue the new I-20 when:

- You apply for OPT or STEM OPT
- You are reporting your first employer
- Your employer has changed

- You report your first 6 Months STEM OPT Report
- You request a Cap Gap I-20

If your I-20 has to be mailed to you, you will receive a FedEx email notification with tracking number.

We DON'T issue the new I-20 when:

- Your address has changed
- Your supervisor, contact information of your employer has changed
- You report 12 Months STEM OPT Report

How do I request a Transfer OUT from Webster to another school?

Transfer Out Request