Optional practical training workshop

International student and scholar services
What is OPT?

- Work authorization for 12 months
- Employment must be related to field of study
- Benefit of F-1 status that can be used at each higher-level degree

Bachelors  Masters  Doctorate
Who is eligible for OPT?

- International students who have...
  - Been in F-1 status at least one academic year
  - Accumulated no more than 364 days of full-time curricular practical training
  - A passport valid for at least six months into the future
Post-completion OPT

Starts and ends after program end date on I-20
Post-completion OPT

- F-1 status maintained by being employed (instead of being enrolled)
- Only 90 days of unemployment during OPT
- Must report employment to International Center to track unemployment period

> Online document request: [OPT employer address update](#)
Post-completion OPT

- Must work full time (21 or more hours per week)
- Employment can be paid or unpaid
- Can work for multiple employers
- Can switch employers
- Can take part-time incidental courses, but cannot start another academic program
OPT timeline

OPT application period
- 90 days
  Can start applying up to 90 days before program end date

OPT period
- 60 days
  Can choose OPT start date any time during these 60 days
  Work authorization for maximum of 12 months from OPT start date or 14 months from program end date, whichever is earlier

Grace period
- 60 days
  Time to transfer, start a new program, change status or exit the U.S.

Program end date

OPT ends
Thesis/dissertation students

- Post-completion OPT may start before you graduate
  > Formal course work must be complete
- Program end date would be shortened to facilitate the start of your OPT period
  > Program end date on I-20 and graduation date might be different in this case
  > Thesis or dissertation must be completed by end of OPT — program extension not possible
Thesis/dissertation students

- Must enroll during the semester of the program end date on your I-20
- After program end date on I-20, you can still enroll in research credit or exam credit if required by department
Timing tips

- Application must be received by USCIS before grace period ends
- OPT typically takes three months to be approved by USCIS
  > To maximize 12 full months of OPT, apply as early as possible
- You cannot begin working until you have your employment authorization document (EAD)
Timing tips

- On-campus work authorization ends on program end date.
- There may be a gap in employment between program end date on I-20 and date OPT begins.
- If driver’s license is expiring, you can only renew license once you have your EAD.
Withdrawing/canceling

- Changing dates once you apply for OPT is difficult and not guaranteed
- If your application is still pending, you can withdraw your application
  - Talk to your international student adviser if you decide to withdraw
- You cannot cancel your OPT after your application has been approved
- Your OPT will be ended by USCIS if you:
  - Begin a new academic program
  - Transfer to a new school
It’s March and Grace is planning to graduate with a master’s in food science in May. She doesn’t have a job yet, but has applied several places and hopes to get an interview soon.

> When should Grace apply for OPT?

> When can Grace tell her prospective employers she can begin working?

> What steps will Grace take after she is employed?
Application: Three-step process

- Step 1: Complete paperwork
- Step 2: Submit application to International Center
- Step 3: Submit application to USCIS and wait (patiently)
Step 1: Complete paperwork

Choose your OPT start date

On-campus employment must end by the program end date on your I-20

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Student name: ___________________________ MU ID#: __________
Degree level: ___________________________ Major: ___________________________
Requested OPT dates: to begin (mm/dd/yyyy), ________________ to end (mm/dd/yyyy), ________________
Regulatory information: No regulatory requirements.

If applicable, what date will your on-campus job or internship end? ________________
Please note that your I-20 end date will be shortened based on the completion information listed below. All on-campus employment must end by the date noted on your new OPT I-20.
Additional comments (optional):

TO BE COMPLETED IN FULL BY THE ACADEMIC ADVISER
What are the specific degree requirements remaining for the student (e.g. coursework, defense, corrections, etc.)? ________________

Anticipated defense date: ________________ Anticipated graduation date: ________________

Academic adviser’s signature: ___________________________
Printed name: ___________________________ Date: ________________
Email: ___________________________ Phone: ___________________________
Step 1: Complete paperwork

Remember to mark this top box.

You can use the International Center’s address here.

Eligibility code: (C) (3) (B)
Step 2: Submit application to International Center

- Online document request for OPT
- OPT adviser verification form
- I-765
- Copies of all previous I-20s
- Copies of passport, visa, I-94 and any previous EAD cards
- OPT workshop review
- Job offer letter (if you have one)
Step 3: Submit application to USCIS

- Check or money order for $380 payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- Two passport-style photographs (taken recently)
- I-765 (original)
- Copy of new OPT I-20
- Copies of previous I-20s
- Copies of I-94, visa, previous EADs, passport
- Copy of job offer letter (if you have one)
- G-1145 form (optional)
After you apply

- You will receive a receipt in the mail two to three weeks after your application is received by USCIS

- Use this receipt to check the status of your application through the USCIS website
  - Use your receive number (LIN), which will be in the upper left-hand corner of your receipt notice
  - Your application will be in the initial review for most of the processing time
After you apply

- Once your EAD card arrives and your start date has passed, you may begin working somewhere in your field of study.

- If your EAD card is approved after your requested start date, the start and end dates will be adjusted to give you the full benefit of your authorized period of employment.

- If your EAD card is approved after your 60-day grace period, you can stay in the U.S. while your OPT application is pending.
During your OPT period

- You are still in F-1 student status at MU and using a benefit of that status.
- Your I-20 is still valid — the third page shows OPT dates even though the first page program end date has passed.
- 90 days of unemployment begin from the OPT start date listed on your EAD card.
- You can sign up for insurance through Aetna while on OPT, but it is not automatically applied unless you are enrolled in MU courses.
During your OPT period

- You must continue to maintain your F-1 status and update the International Center within 10 days of:
  - Moving to a new address
  - Finding employment or switching employers
  - Ending employment

- Report these changes through the online document request system
  - OPT employer address update
Travel outside the U.S.

- Before graduation and pending OPT:
  > Travel with a letter from your department stating you have not yet graduated

- After graduation and pending OPT:
  > You may re-enter the U.S. while your OPT application is pending in order to resume searching for a job
  > To re-enter the U.S., you will need:
    - Valid passport
    - Visa
    - I-20 signed for travel within the past six months
    - OPT receipt notice (proof of pending OPT)
Travel outside the U.S.

- After graduation and approval of OPT:
  > You may re-enter the U.S. if you have proof of employment
  > To re-enter the U.S., you will need:
    - Valid passport
    - Visa
    - I-20 signed for travel within the past six months
    - EAD card (this will say “not valid for re-entry”)
    - Letter from your employer stating you need to return to the U.S. to resume working
OPT 17-month STEM extension

- You are eligible to apply to extend OPT for an additional 17 months if:
  - Your degree is in certain STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, mathematics)
    - Check this list to see if you are eligible: [ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/stem-list.pdf](http://ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/stem-list.pdf)
  - You are working in a job related to your major
  - Your employer is registered with the E-Verify employment verification system
Application for 17-month STEM extension

- Must apply before initial OPT period ends
- Log in as a guest user and submit online document request for OPT STEM extension
  - international.missouri.edu/document-request
- See online checklist for what documents to submit to USCIS
H-1B cap-gap extension

- Automatic extension of your employment authorization until H-1B status begins

- Eligibility: F-1 students working on OPT who have
  - An OPT work authorization end date between April 1 and Oct. 1
  - An employer who has filed a timely H-1B petition for you with a start date of Oct. 1
H-1B cap-gap extension

- This extension is automatic and allows you to continue working between your OPT end date and H-1B start date.
  - This applies to all students on OPT, regardless of what subject your degree is in.
- If H1-B is denied, extension is terminated and you have a grace period again before having to leave the U.S.
Summary

- When will you apply for OPT?
- What are the three steps to apply for OPT work authorization?
- How long will it take USCIS to process your application?
- What do you do after your OPT is approved?
Questions?

- International Center website: international.missouri.edu/opt
- Becky Showmaker: showmakerr@missouri.edu
  > All sponsored students
- James Kaemmerer: kaemmererj@missouri.edu
  > F-1 students with last names starting with A–K
- Kristen Albrecht: albrechtkl@missouri.edu
  > F-1 students with last names starting with L–S
- Justine McCarty: mccartyje@missouri.edu
  > F-1 students with last names starting with T–Z