BEGINNING OPT EMPLOYMENT

Once you are approved for OPT, you will receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card, also known as the I-766 form. Getting hired and maintaining your F-1 status should be your next top priorities.

Getting Hired

When you have been offered a job, you will need to fill out important forms for your employer. Once you have your offer letter and EAD card, you can apply for a Social Security number if you do not already have one. Your employer may need to complete an I-9 form showing you are authorized to work, so be prepared to take show your passport, EAD card, and I-20. Review tax information, as well, so that you can enter the proper deductions on the W-4 form the employer may request.

Maintaining F-1 Status on OPT

During your OPT work authorization period, you are still in F-1 status and required to maintain your status. To do so, you:

• May only begin work once you have received your EAD card and not before the employment start date on the card.
• May only work in a position related to your field of study and are required to work full-time (more than 20 hours per week), which can include multiple part-time jobs.
• Are limited to 90 days of unemployment while on OPT. If you exceed 90 days of unemployment, your SEVIS record can be terminated. If you are approaching the limit of unemployment days, contact OISP to discuss options.
• Must report any changes in address, legal name, employer name or address, and start/end of employment within 10 days. OISP will update your SEVIS record with this information.

Traveling during OPT

You may travel while on OPT, but it is important to understand risks and requirements. For example, it is recommended that you do not travel outside the US until your OPT application has been approved and you have an employment offer. You should be prepared to show the following when re-entering the US after traveling abroad:

• Valid passport
• Valid F-1 visa
• Valid EAD card
• Employment offer letter
• I-20 with travel signature less than six months old

Contact OISP prior to planning international travel to discuss special circumstances.

Helpful Resources

• I-9 information: https://www.uscis.gov/i-9
• W-4 information: https://www.irs.gov/uac/About-Form-W4
• Obtaining a Social Security Number: https://studyintheusa.dhs.gov/obtaining-a-social-security-number
• Tax obligations: https://www.irs.gov/Individuals/International-Taxpayers
• OPT Travel: https://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel