



EASTERN OREGON
UNIVERSITY

Office of Student Diversity & Inclusion // International Student Services

Eastern Oregon University, HUB 209

One University Blvd.

La Grande, OR 97850

Office: 541-962-3406 // mnmorton@eou.edu

Post-Completion OPT Application is Approved

Once the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) approves your OPT, you will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card. You cannot begin to work until you have received your EAD. Your EAD card explicitly states the dates you are authorized to work. All OPT employment must be directly related to your major field of study and occur within the periods of authorized employment as shown on the EAD.

Employment Requirements

- You cannot begin employment until you receive your EAD card, or before the authorized start date on your EAD card has been reached. Working without proper documentation will jeopardize your legal status in the United States.
- OPT authorizes employment/practical training that is related to your major area of study and commensurate with your level of education. *It is your responsibility to evaluate how a job relates to your major area of study. Your International Student Services adviser CANNOT review job descriptions to assess if they are related to your studies.*
- OPT does NOT authorize employment unrelated to your major area of study. If you work in a job unrelated to your major area of study, or that does not meet the government's requirements for your type of OPT (12-month standard, 24-month STEM extension) you are in violation of your F-1 status. Immigration and Customs Enforcement can terminate a student's F-1 SEVIS record if a student works in a position unrelated to their studies. A terminated SEVIS record cancels OPT authorization and invalidates your F-1 status in the U.S.
- **IMPORTANT!** Many employers may not know what OPT is. It will be your responsibility to explain to them how they can help you avoid unlawful employment. Please refer to the following Code of Federal Regulation: 8CFR 214.2(f)(10) for a broad definition of 'Practical Training,' and 8CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii) for a specific definition as it relates to your OPT.

Please note, OPT is not a different immigration status. A person with OPT authorization is still an F-1 student holding an EAD for OPT.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Please mail or email a copy of your EAD card (front and back) to your International Student Services office at EOU (mnmorton@eou.edu).
2. **YOUR SEVP PORTAL.** The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) will send a link inviting you to create an SEVP Portal Account. Once your OPT has been approved, the email will be sent from **do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov**. Please check your Spam, Junk, or Trash folders to see if this email gets redirected.

Follow the instructions in that email immediately upon receipt and create your SEVP Portal Account. This link expires in 30 days from the time it was sent and it can only be clicked once to register your SEVP Portal Account. If the link is already expired, contact your International Student Services office at EOU to reset it. **SEVP Portal Reset requests are processed within 3 business days.**

For help with this process, please visit the [SEVP Portal Help Website](#), email **SEVP@ice.dhs.gov**, or call the SEVP Response Center at (703) 603-3400 between the hours of 8am-6pm ET Monday through Friday, except US holidays.

Portal users who already set up their account can now reset their own accounts if they have been locked out. A "Password Reset" option is available on the SEVP Portal login page.

WHAT TO REPORT IN YOUR SEVP PORTAL

The U.S. government periodically checks that students with OPT authorization are engaged in practical training experience (work/internships/unpaid professional experience) related to their major area of study.

WARNING If you do not report your practical training/employment, the U.S. government will terminate your F-1 SEVIS record **90 days after the OPT start date print on your EAD card**. A terminated SEVIS record cancels OPT authorization and requires you to leave the U.S.

**** The EOU International Student Services office also requires you to report your employment / unemployment information as soon as possible. ****

Report the following changes using the SEVP Portal throughout your OPT period:

- **Employment/Practical Training information:** Report employment/practical training as soon as you start working. Report employment changes within 10 days.
 - Post-completion OPT: Do not exceed 90 days of unemployment.
- **Contact Information changes:** Report your new address within 10 days of moving. Also be sure to update your U.S. / home country phone number. OPT Employer Name and Address, OPT supervisor name and their contact information

Employment Periods

On your EAD start date, you must begin reporting information on all training positions. You must report your start date and end date. If you have a paid or unpaid position, you will need to report the name and address of your employer.

You must be employed at least 20 hours per week in activities directly related to your major to maintain F-1 status. If you work in a position 20 hours or more per week, ensure that you select the **full-time** indicator in the SEVP Portal. If you are unemployed there is no employment information to report, but you should keep track of the total days of unemployment accumulated.

Regardless of your job title or how the position is classified, such as an “intern,” “temp,” “freelance contractor,” “post-doc,” etc., the following employment options are allowed:

- **Multiple employers:** you may work in your field of study for more than one employer. The cumulative number of hours should be 20 or more in a week. You can accept full-time employment, part-time employment, or a combination of both.
- **Short-term multiple employers (performing artists):** musicians and other performing artists may work for multiple short-term employers (gigs). Keep a list of all positions, dates, and duration.
- **Work for hire:** contract employment in your field of study
- **Self-employment:** you may start a business and be self-employed in your field of study. You must have a business license and document your active engagement in business related to your degree.
- **Employment in your field of study through an agency or consulting firm.**
- **Sole proprietorship firm**
- **A Limited Liability Partnership (LLC) firm**
- **Volunteer service:** you may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern in your field of study, as long as this does not violate any labor laws.

Proof of Employment

Be sure to maintain copies of all OPT materials, including job descriptions, for your personal records. The International Student Services office recommends taking a screenshot of the data in your SEVP Portal for your records as well. The captured employment update should be retained with your job offer letter and other employment documentation as evidence of your compliance with post-completion OPT requirements.

Immigration regulations do not specify what documents are “proof of employment.” Examples of employment documentation could include:

- Offer letter from your employer
- Letter from your supervisor on official letterhead that confirms continued employment (or internship/volunteer service)
- If the connection between your field of study and your employment/practical training is not obvious, it might be helpful for the letter to explain how your practical training relates to your studies.
- Payment records
- Timesheet/activity log for unpaid practical training experience

Unemployment Periods

F-1 OPT students are permitted a maximum of 90 unemployment days between the start and end date on their EAD card. The SEVIS database automatically calculates unemployment days based on the information students submit in their SEVP Portal account, so it is very important to keep your

reporting for your OPT up-to-date. Students may use unemployment days before, between, or after OPT activities in increments of any size. Each day (including weekends) that you do not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment. There is no grace period after 90 days of unemployment.

Students who exceed the 90-day unemployment limit begin to accrue unlawful presence, which may jeopardize access to future U.S. immigration benefits, including readmission to the United States. The International Student Services office recommends that students depart the United States and contact the office to close their F-1 record in order to avoid accruing unlawful presence.

Students who exceed the 90-day unemployment limit may not transfer their F-1 status to begin a new academic program and do not have an F-1 grace period. Students should consult an experienced immigration attorney for further guidance on the implications of unlawful presence in the United States.

Do not delete previous Post-Completion OPT employer information already in the portal.

3. **TRAVELLING WHILE ON OPT.** After graduation, if your post-completion OPT has been approved and your EAD issued, you can travel and reenter the U.S. **only if you have proof of employment.** If you are still looking for practical training opportunities, you should not travel internationally.

For travel, carry the following documents with you:

- OPT I-20 signed for travel by your international student adviser within the last **6 months** (you must obtain a travel signature every **6 months**.)
- Proof of employment in your field of study (letter of employment, written job offer)
- EAD card (on the EAD card, there is a statement “Not Valid For Reentry.” This means the EAD card **cannot be used by itself** for reentry to the U.S.)
- Valid passport
- Unexpired F-1 visa (unless you are Canadian or are returning from a short trip to Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean, with some exceptions). If you have any visa-related questions, please contact your consulate or the International Student Services office at EOU.
- You can apply for an F-1 visa during your OPT period. Follow the regular procedures to apply for an F-1 visa *outside of the U.S.* For the F-1 visa application, plan to provide the documents listed above, as well as proof of financial ability to stay in the U.S. and proof of continuing ties to your home country.

PLEASE NOTE: After the OPT approval start date, time spent outside the U.S. will count as unemployment against the 90-day limit. However, travel while employed either during a vacation authorized by an employer or as part of your employment will not count as unemployment. Please keep your International Student Service Office at EOU informed of any travel plans while on OPT that may affect your status.

4. **HEALTH INSURANCE.** Medical insurance is an extremely important consideration while you are on OPT. The cost of medical care for an accident or illness in the US can be more money than you earn in an entire year of OPT employment!

Additionally, health insurance in the U.S. is typically linked to your employer. If your OPT activity is not with an employer that offers insurance, or if your employer's plan does not cover medical evacuation/repatriation for people living internationally, then you should purchase additional coverage.

When researching plans, consult the insurance company to see if they provide coverage during OPT. Some companies only provide coverage while you are a registered student. Some other points to consider and make sure you understand:

- medical terminology/jargon (examples: deductibles, exemptions, in-network/out-of-network, preferred provider)
- medical evacuation & repatriation coverage (very important, and not typically included in U.S. employer-sponsored health insurance plans)

5. **REPORT ALL FINAL DEPARTURES FROM THE U.S.** DHS requires all F-1 international students engaging in Post-Completion OPT to report their permanent departure from the U.S. if the departure occurs before the end date on your EAD card. Please contact the International Student Services office and update them with plans of your departure.

Grace Period

Students who do not exceed 90 days of unemployment and report employment to the International Student Services office as required are automatically granted a 60-day grace period after the end date listed on the EAD. Within this 60-day grace period, you have the following options:

- Depart the United States. Once you leave the United States (including trips to Canada and Mexico) after completing your studies and OPT period, you are not eligible to reenter with your current I-20. This grace period is meant for travel within the states and preparation to depart the U.S.
- Request a new I-20 if you will begin a new academic program/change education level at EOU (undergraduate to graduate program).
- Transfer your SEVIS record to a new school (starting a new program at another institution)
- Apply to change your status to another visa category. Please consult with an experienced immigration attorney for more information.

DISCLAIMER: Any information shared by the International Student Services office at Eastern Oregon University is general information and provided as a service to international students and does not constitute as legal advice on Department of Homeland Security policies, regulations, and other matters related to immigration. Immigration laws are constantly changing; please consult with an experienced immigration attorney, your local U.S. Embassy or U.S. Consulate if you have any questions.