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# Office of International Engagement

## Optional Practical Training (OPT)



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# Optional Practical Training

A period in which undergraduate and graduate students with an F-1 or F-3 status who have completed or have been pursuing a degree for one full year may be permitted by USCIS to work towards getting practical training to complement their field of study. Post-completion OPT is temporary employment that is **directly related to your major field of study.**

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# Who Qualifies for Post-Completion OPT?

- To qualify, you must have been enrolled full-time for one consecutive academic year (e.g., fall/spring, spring/fall)
- You must be in valid immigration status
- You must be in your final semester
- You must be a candidate for graduation

\*PhD students pending dissertation only must make an appointment with International Engagement to discuss options.

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# Points to Remember

- A job offer is **NOT** required
- More than 90 days of unemployment will automatically cancel your OPT
- \*You may work anywhere in the US
- During OPT your status is F-1/F-3 student
- You can apply as early as 90 days before your program end date and 30 days after your program completion
- Once you complete your degree, you cannot work on/off campus until you receive your OPT card
- The average OPT application processing time is 90 days so you are encouraged to apply early

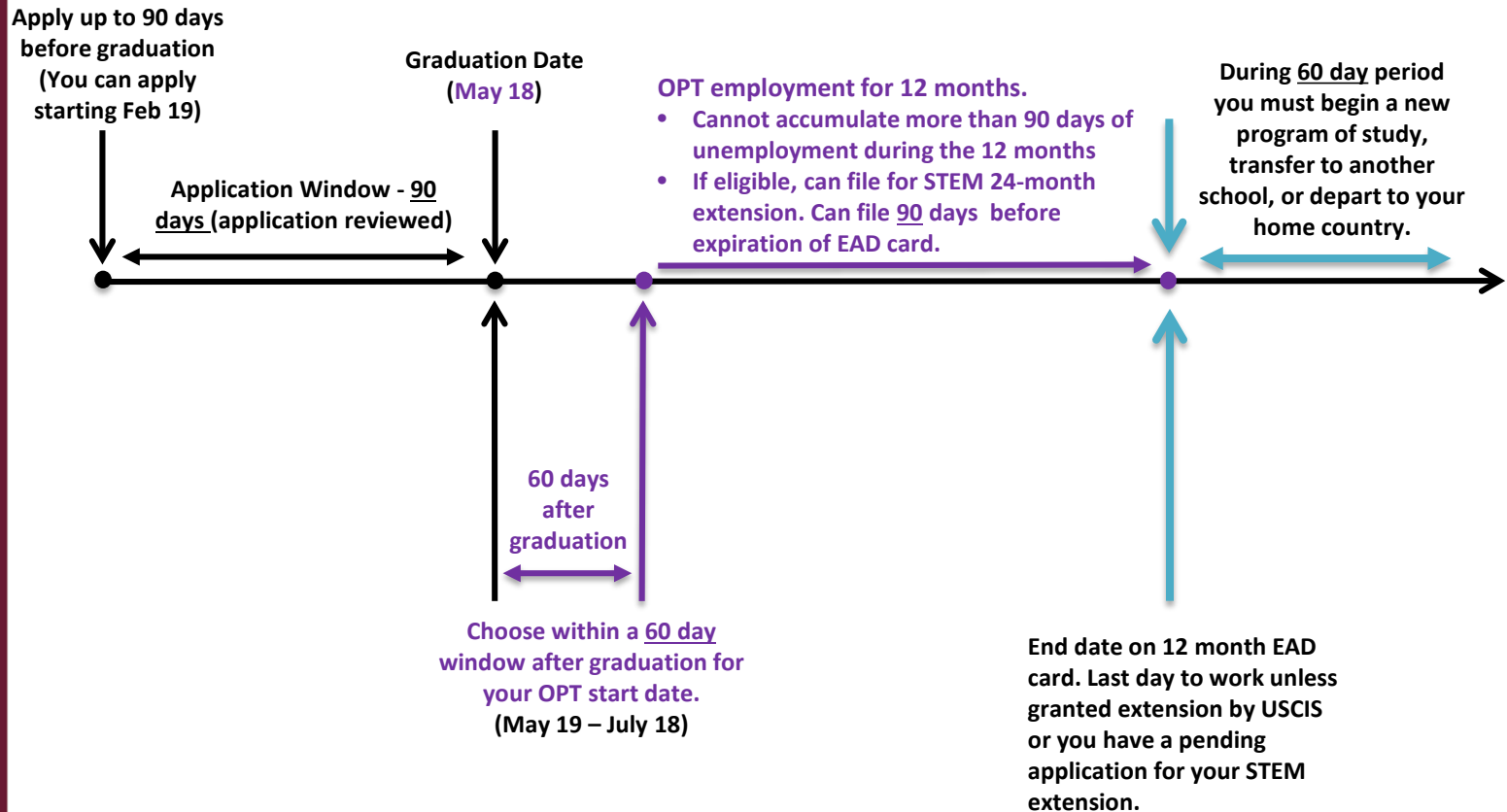
\*F-3 visa holders cannot reside in the US, therefore you are limited to the Laredo area



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# OPT Timeline



# How to Apply

Setup an appointment with International Engagement  
Bring the following to your appointment:

- I-20
- Visa
- Passport
- I-94 (or [Electronic I-94](#))
- Money order in the amount of \$410.00 made out to **“U.S. Department of Homeland Security”**
- Two **recent** passport size photos (IE – \$10.00)
- Complete [Form I-765](#)
- Complete the [OPT Request Form](#)



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# After You Apply

- Your application may take up to 90 days for a decision to be made
- United States Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) will send you an I-797 Notice of Action receipt.
- Visit [My Case Status](#) to track your application once you receive your I-797
- You may not begin employment until you receive your EAD card.
- Travel while OPT application is pending is not recommended





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# Travel

## **Travel with caution while OPT is pending:**

- USCIS may request evidence while you are away
- If OPT is approved, you are expected to have your EAD in your possession when you re-enter the U.S.
- OPT can be viewed as abandonment

## **After OPT has been approved:**

- Visa
- Passport
- I-94
- I-20
- Letter from your employer
- OPT Card

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# Reporting Requirements

**The following information must be reported within 10 days:**

- Employer's name (company name)
- Employers address (your office location)
- Employers EIN # (nine digits long and the format is XX-XXXXXXX)
- Job title
- Employer start date (the day you begin working)
- Full-time/part-time
- Supervisor's name
- Supervisors phone number
- Supervisors email address
- Explanation of how your employment is related to your field of study
- Any legal change in your name
- Report your residential address
- Any periods of unemployment

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# After OPT

Once you complete you OPT you must choose from the following options in order to keep your SEVIS active:

- Begin a new program of study at TAMIU
- [Transfer](#) to another SEVP approved school
- [Depart](#) to your home country



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# STEM OPT

F-1 students who receive science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (**STEM**) degrees included on the **STEM** Designated Degree Program List, are employed by employers enrolled in E-Verify, and who have received an initial grant of post-completion **OPT** related to such a degree, may apply for a 24-month extension.

## To qualify:

- Must be currently approved for post-completion OPT
- Must have completed a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in a science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) field
- You have a job or job offer from an [E-Verify](#) employer

## When to Apply:

- 90 days before your current OPT expires

[STEM Designated Degree Program List](#)

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# How to Apply for STEM OPT

- [I-983 Form](#)
- Copy of STEM degree
- Completed I-765
- Photocopy of I-20's
- Photocopy of I-94
- Photocopy of your last EAD card
- Photocopy of visa
- Two recent passport size photos
- \$410 check or money order





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# Cap-Gap

- If your H1-B visa application is approved or pending you will qualify for a cap-gap if your current OPT expires before October 1<sup>st</sup>.
- If your OPT expires after October 1<sup>st</sup> you do not need a cap gap.
- If your H1-B visa application is denied during your cap-gap then you must make a change to your SEVIS within 60 days or depart the country

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**Questions?**

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