What to Expect after Filing Your OPT Application
(Your Responsibilities & Maintaining F-1 Status)

After filing your I-765 OPT application with USCIS, it is important that you read and understand the information presented below. More detailed information can be found on the HIO website here: http://www.hio.harvard.edu/optional-practical-training-opt

AFTER FILING

- Download and save a copy of your e-filed I-765 OPT application for your records.
- You will receive a confirmation and receipt number from USCIS shortly after submitting your online application to USCIS. You may track your case status via your USCIS account.
- You should also receive three (3) pieces of mail from USCIS: an I-797 notice of receipt, an I-797 notice of approval, and the official EAD card. Review the information carefully on all documents for accuracy.
- You may start working only AFTER you receive the physical EAD and the start date has commenced.
- You are not permitted to work on campus between your graduation date and the start date of your EAD.
- Contact your HIO advisor immediately if:
  - You do not receive your USCIS receipt notice within 60 days of submitting your OPT application;
  - You receive a Request for Additional Evidence (RFE) from USCIS;
  - There is incorrect information on your EAD card.

OPT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Failure to report your employment information is a violation of your F-1 status and will have serious repercussions on your current and future U.S. immigration benefits and visa applications. The SEVIS system will calculate unemployment dates and will terminate your SEVIS record for exceeding the 90-day unemployment limit. You MUST timely report all employment you undertake while on OPT to the HIO via the HIO’s Post-Completion OPT Reporting Form.

- Report the following changes within 10 days by using the HIO’s Post-completion OPT Reporting Form: http://www.hio.harvard.edu/post-completion-opt-reporting-form
  - New OPT Employment
  - Changes to your OPT employer’s name, address, dates of employment, etc.
  - Change of U.S residential address

- Notify your HIO advisor directly via email if:
  - You permanently depart the U.S. before the end date of your OPT EAD card.
  - You decide after mailing the OPT application that you no longer wish to pursue OPT.
  - You change your visa status from F-1.
  - You change your name or country of citizenship (or dependent’s names/citizenships).

- REMEMBER: You have a maximum period of 90 days of unemployment that you can accrue from the start date listed on your EAD card.

More details about your mandatory reporting requirements for post-completion OPT can be found here: http://hio.harvard.edu/optional-practical-training-opt
**TRAVEL**

Travel during the COVID-19 pandemic is rife with complications. Before traveling, review updates in the HIO’s [comprehensive coronavirus FAQ](https://hio.harvard.edu/coronavirus) and our [post-Completion OPT travel page](https://hio.harvard.edu/travel-post-completion-opt-or).

When are you traveling and re-entering the U.S.? | What’s your OPT application status? | Documents you need to re-enter the U.S.: |
---|---|---|
BEFORE graduation or I-20 program end date | PENDING | ✓
  - Valid Passport
  - Valid F-1 visa
  - Valid travel signature on most current I-20
  - I-901 SEVIS Fee receipt
  - Negative COVID test
  - Proof of COVID Vaccination Record

AFTER graduation or I-20 program end date | PENDING | ☠️
  - The HIO does **NOT** recommend travel during this time.

AFTER graduation or I-20 program end date | APPROVED | ✓
  - Valid Passport
  - Valid F-1 visa
  - Valid travel signature* on most current I-20
  - I-901 SEVIS Fee receipt
  - EAD
  - Proof of OPT employment
  - Negative COVID test
  - Proof of COVID Vaccination Record

- Travel signatures while on OPT are **only valid for 6 months**.
- If you need a new travel signature contact your [HIO advisor](https://hio.harvard.edu/advisors).
- Travel and re-entry to the U.S. is permitted with all the necessary documents any time **after** you have received your EAD from USCIS.
- Do **NOT** enter the U.S. using another visa status (e.g., ESTA or B tourist visa, etc.) as this will nullify your OPT application and F-1 immigration status.

**REMEMBER**: OPT is an extension of your F-1 status and **you will remain under Harvard’s F-1 visa sponsorship**. Please be sure to continue to read HIO travel emails even after you graduate and are working on OPT. Additional travel information can be found on the HIO website [here](https://hio.harvard.edu/travel-post-completion-opt-or).

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The HIO provides general guidance on your OPT/STEM OPT application based on information obtained from reliable sources and reflecting our years of experience in working with students. We make every attempt to ensure that we provide you with the most up-to-date information available. Any advice provided to you by our office (as well as the information in this packet) does not constitute legal advice, however. The OPT application is a personal application for which you are responsible; the application preparation and USCIS case decision will vary depending on the facts at issue in your particular case. The HIO does its best to provide you with the most current guidance, but please be mindful that USCIS may change its interpretation of these policies, procedures, regulations, and eligibility requirements at any time. The HIO is not responsible for any errors or omissions, or for the results obtained from USCIS.