What is OPT?

- Optional Practical Training (OPT) gives F-1 students 12 months of “temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major area of study.” [8 CFR § 214.2(f)(10)(ii)]

- OPT gives F-1 students an opportunity to apply knowledge from their degree program to a practical work experience off campus.

- OPT is not a requirement for completion of your degree program, and it can be done either during or after your academic program.
To Be Eligible for OPT, You Must:

- be in F-1 status for at least one full academic year,
- be physically present in the U.S.,
- be maintaining lawful status at the time of the application, and
- intend to work in a professional development opportunity directly related to your major field(s) of study.
Important Factors to Consider

- OPT can be applied for either as pre-degree completion or post-degree completion.

- You **do not** need a job offer before applying for OPT.

- All employment must be **directly** related to your major field(s) of study. Your confirmation of how the work is related to your program of study will be saved in your SEVIS record.

- OPT applies to both **paid and unpaid** positions.

- OPT must be authorized by USCIS **before** you start the position.
Additional Factors

- If you have completed more than 12 months of full-time CPT, you are not eligible for OPT.
  - Part-time CPT, in any amount, does not affect OPT eligibility.

- A student may be eligible for OPT once per each new degree program at a higher education level.
  - For example, if a student moves from a Bachelor’s OPT into a Master’s program, or a Master’s OPT into a PhD program, they may be eligible to apply for OPT at their new degree level.

- You must report employment and address information to OISS to maintain your legal F-1 immigration status.
Types of OPT

- OPT can be applied for both pre-degree completion or post-degree completion.

- For both types of OPT, you must apply directly to USCIS for authorization. The processing time can be up to 90 days (or longer).
Pre-Completion OPT

- Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) is practical training authorized before the completion of a student's program of study.

- Students must work 20 hours per week while school is in session. Falling below 20 hours does not meet the minimum OPT requirements, and exceeding 20 hours is considered “full time,” which is not allowed as per immigration regulations.

- Full time Pre-Completion OPT may be authorized in the summer.

- Students are required to maintain their full time course enrollment requirement while on Pre-Completion OPT.

- Applies to both paid and unpaid positions directly related to a student’s declared major field(s) of study, as listed on their I-20.
Pre-Completion OPT

- You may apply up to 90 days before your intended employment start date.
  - Start date must be after you have completed one academic year.

- Any periods of Pre-Completion OPT used before graduation will be deducted from the total twelve-month period available.
  - For example, full-time Pre-Completion employment for two months during a summer vacation would leave a student with only ten months of Post-Completion OPT available after graduation.
  - Part-time Pre-Completion OPT deducts at half the rate. For example, four months of part-time Pre-Completion OPT would count against two months of full-time Post-Completion OPT, leaving a student with only ten months of Post-Completion OPT after graduation.
Why Apply for Pre-Completion OPT?

- Some students will use Pre-Completion OPT if they have an opportunity to gain experience in their field of study, but there is no curricular justification for them to apply for employment authorization under the provisions of CPT.

- Students will also use Pre-Completion OPT when they wish to begin their own business related directly to their field of study during their degree program, as CPT cannot be used for entrepreneurial endeavors.
Post-Completion OPT

- Post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) is practical training authorized *after* the completion of a student's program of study.

- Students are authorized to work full time, but you *do not* need a job offer to apply.

- Applies to both *paid and unpaid* positions directly related to a student’s *declared* major field(s) of study, as listed on their I-20.

- Most students choose this option to gain one year of experience in their field after graduation.

- You may apply up to 90 days before your program end date. USCIS *must* receive your Post-Completion OPT application *before* the 60 day grace period from the end date on your I-20 has passed.
## F1 Employment Comparison Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CPT</th>
<th>Pre-Completion OPT</th>
<th>Post-Completion OPT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What Is It</strong></td>
<td>Authorization for off-campus internship/training/research, which is required for, or an integral part of, an F-1 student’s major field(s) of study during their program.</td>
<td>Authorization for off-campus internship/training/research, which is related to an F-1 student’s major field(s) of study during their program.</td>
<td>Authorization for off-campus internship/training/research, which is related to an F-1 student’s major field(s) of study after their program completion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Eligibility Criteria**       | • Full-time enrollment in lawful F-1 status for one academic year prior to training.  
• Must be required as “integral to the established curriculum.”  
• Available only before a student completes their degree program. | • Full-time enrollment in lawful F-1 status for one academic year prior to training.  
• Must be related to major field(s) of study.  
• Available only before a student completes their degree program. | • Full-time enrollment in lawful F-1 status for one academic year prior to training.  
• Must be related to major field(s) of study.  
• Available only after a student completes their degree program. |
| **Job Offer**                  | • Required as part of the application process.  
• Employer-specific authorization. | • Not required for the application process.  
• Authorization is not employer-specific – can work for any employer as long as the position is related to major field(s). | • Not required for the application process.  
• Authorization is not employer-specific – can work for any employer as long as the position is related to major field(s). |
| **Duration of Training**       | Approved on a semester by semester basis (ex. Fall, Spring or Summer). | 12 months maximum.* | 12 months maximum.* |
|                                | *Pre-Completion will affect Post-Completion OPT                       | **STEM students have option to apply for extension.     |
| **Full-Time/Part Time**        | • Part-time (under 20 hours/week) only during the semester.*  
• Full-time (over 20 hours/week) may be authorized over the summer & breaks.** | • Part-time (exactly 20 hours/week) only during the semester. Deducted at 50% rate.*  
• Full-time (over 20 hours/week) may be authorized over the summer & breaks.** | • Full-time (over 20 hours/week).  
• May work multiple part-time jobs, but all work deducts time at a full-time rate. |
|                                | *Any on-campus employment also calculates to 20 hour/week maximum.    | **Any on-campus employment also calculates to 20 hour/week maximum. |
|                                | **12+ months of full-time CPT makes students ineligible for OPT at the same degree level. | |
| **Granted By**                 | CPT I-20 issued by OISS.                                             | EAD card issued by USCIS.                                | EAD card issued by USCIS.                                |
| **Application Fee**            | $0                                                                  | $380                                                     | $380                                                     |
| **Processing Time**            | Approximately 1 week.                                               | Approximately 3 months.                                 | Approximately 3 months.                                 |
Applying for OPT

Step One: Submit Request to OISS
Step Two: Gather Application Materials
Step Three: Attend OPT Pick-Up Appointment
Step Four: Mail Application Packet to USCIS
OPT Application: Step One
Submit Your Request to OISS
Submitting Your Request to OISS

• To begin the OPT Application Process, OISS must issue you a new I-20 with OPT Recommendation.

• For OISS to process the OPT I-20, you must submit:
  • Degree Completion Verification for Optional Practical Training Form with Statement of Understanding, and
  • I-765 Application for Employment Authorization Form.
Complete Section One on Page 3
- List your declared major field(s) of study,
- Select whether you are applying for Pre- or Post-Completion OPT, and
- Choose your requested OPT employment dates (see next slide for details)

Carefully read the Statement of Understanding on Page 4 and initial each statement
- Be sure to include a non-Rice email address
Choosing Your OPT Dates

• For Pre-Completion OPT, you may choose any start date up to 90 days in the future.

• For Post-Completion OPT, you may choose any start date between 1 and 60 days after your program end date.
  • Example: Your program end date is May 17. You may choose an OPT start date between May 18 – July 16.

• Once your application has been mailed to USCIS, we cannot change your requested dates.
Have Your Faculty Academic Advisor Complete Section Two.

If applying for Pre-Completion OPT, your advisor must certify their approval of beginning employment prior to your degree completion.

If applying for Post-Completion, your advisor must certify your program end date (see next slide for details).
Your Program End Date*

- Option One: Graduation
  - All Undergraduate Students
  - All Professional Masters’ Students
  - Masters/PhD Students with a Thesis/Dissertation

- Option Two: Thesis/Dissertation Defense Date
  - Masters/PhD Students with a Thesis/Dissertation

- Option Three: Thesis/Dissertation Submission Date
  - Masters/PhD Students with a Thesis/Dissertation

*For Post-Completion OPT Only
Factors to Consider

- You must continue to meet full time enrollment through your program end date.
  - ONLY exception: students who have been approved by OISS for a reduced course load during their final semester.

- ALL employment (including: stipends, fellowships, on-campus research/employment, RA/TA assistantships) must end on or before your program end date.

- If your defense/submission date changes due to delays or a committee member rescheduling, this could impact your OPT. (Contact OISS immediately if this happens.)
Filling Out the I-765 Application Form

- Fill out the I-765 Application Form online, carefully typing in your answers
  - Mark “Permission to Accept Employment”
  - List your full legal name(s) as they appear on your I-20
  - When entering your address, keep in mind this will be where USCIS mails your employment authorization. If there is any possibility you may move in the next 4 months, please use the OISS address!
  - For question 11, only mark “Yes” if you have had OPT before. CPT does not count!
  - For question 16
    - Pre-Completion OPT use the code (C) (3) (a)
    - Post-Completion OPT use the code (C) (3) (b)
  - Leave questions 17 & 18 blank!
- Print and Sign the form by hand (you cannot submit this form online)
I-765 Form

Mark "Permission to accept employment"

Address must be valid for the next four months—do not use a friend’s address!
You may use the OIS address:
6100 Main St. MS-365
Houston, TX 77005

"yes" if you have applied for OPT. CPT does not count.

Post-completion
OPT: (c)(3)(b)

Leave blank!

Make sure to sign in blue ink

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form Type</th>
<th>T430S</th>
<th>Form Only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>T430S</td>
<td>Form Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Birth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zip Code</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone Number</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Name of Student
2. Date of Birth
3. Address
4. City
5. State
6. Zip Code
7. Phone Number
8. Email Address

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field 1</th>
<th>Field 2</th>
<th>Field 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field 1</td>
<td>Field 2</td>
<td>Field 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field 1</td>
<td>Field 2</td>
<td>Field 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field 1</td>
<td>Field 2</td>
<td>Field 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field 1</td>
<td>Field 2</td>
<td>Field 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature

Date

Print Name

Address

Form Filled on Date: 10/10/2023

Printed Name: John Doe

Signature: John Doe

Date: 10/10/2023

Address: 123 Main St. Houston, TX 77005
OPT Application: Step Two
Gather Your Application Materials
• OISS will review your request and process a new I-20 with your OPT recommendation. This usually takes 2-3 business days.

• While waiting for your new I-20, you will need to compile the remaining application materials:
  • **G-1145 form** (optional, but recommended),
  • 2 official **passport style photographs**,
  • Check or money order made payable to the “US Department of Homeland Security” for $380,
  • Photocopy of valid passport biographical data page,
  • Photocopy of most recent F-1 visa stamp,
  • Most recent **I-94 printout**, and
  • Copy of previous EAD card(s), if you have had OPT before.
Your Passport Photo & Check

PAY TO THE ORDER OF Department of Homeland Security

Three Hundred and Eighty 00/100 DOLLARS

MEMO Sevis # and/or I-94 # Your Signature
OPT Application: Step Three
Attend an OPT Pickup Appointment
Attending an OPT Pick-Up Appointment

- An OISS Advisor will email you when your new I-20 with OPT recommendation is ready, along with:
  - Details on how to schedule an appointment time
  - Reminder of remaining documents

- OPT Pick Up Appointments are one hour in length.

- OPT Pick Up Appointments are usually group appointments – please be on time!
During Your Appointment

- Review your I-20 for accuracy, especially OPT start/end dates & sign

- Review the following documents* with the OISS Advisor:
  - **G-1145 form** (optional, but recommended),
  - 2 official **passport style photographs**,
  - Check or money order made payable to the “US Department of Homeland Security” for $380,
  - Original I-765 form (already submitted to OISS),
  - Photocopy of new I-20 with OPT recommendation (OISS will provide this),
  - CPT Printout from SEVIS (OISS will provide this),
  - Photocopy of valid passport biographical data page,
  - Photocopy of most recent F-1 visa stamp,
  - Most recent **I-94 printout**, and
  - Copy of previous EAD card(s), if you have had OPT before

*Items in **BOLD**, you will need to bring with you. Items in **ITALICS** will be at the OISS.
# Reviewing Your New I-20

## Program of Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Major 1</th>
<th>Major 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Level</strong></td>
<td>MASTER'S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal Program Length</td>
<td>36 Months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Start Date</td>
<td>01 SEPTEMBER 2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program End Date</td>
<td>28 AUGUST 2015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program English Proficiency</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Student is proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Financials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Average Costs For: 12 Months</th>
<th>Student's Funding For: 12 Months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuition and Fees</td>
<td>Personal Funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ 36,551</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## OPT Information

- **Department of Homeland Security**
- **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement**
- **SEVIS ID:** [Redacted]
- **Name:** [Redacted]
- **Employment Authorization**
  - **Employment Status**: FULL TIME
  - **Employment Start Date**: 07 SEPTEMBER 2015
  - **Employer Name**: [Redacted]
  - **Comments**: The student has met the full academic year requirement
  - **Type**: POST-COMPLETION OPT
  - **Employment End Date**: 06 SEPTEMBER 2016
  - **Employer Location**: [Redacted]

- **I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status**
  - OMB NO.: 1653-0038

- **Program End Date**: 28 AUGUST 2015
OPT Application: Step Four
Mail Application Packet to USCIS
Mailing Your OPT Application

- You must submit you completed OPT application packet by mail directly to USCIS.
- Most students will submit their application to the USCIS Texas Service Center.*

For Regular/Priority Mail:
USCIS
P.O.Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

For Courier Services (FedEx/UPS/DHL):
USCIS, Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121
Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

*If you use an address on your I-765 form that is not in Texas, please use the correct mailing address as found on https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses. An OISS Advisor can help you determine the correct mailing address.
After You’ve Applied

USCIS Processing Timeline
Travel While Application Is Pending
In Case of Changes
USCIS Processing Timeline

- **Two Weeks**: USCIS typically sends a I-797 Notice of Action form once your application is received.
  - This notice will contain a receipt number (usually starts with “SRC”) which you can use to check application status at [https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsp/index.jsp](https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsp/index.jsp).

- **90 Days**: Average processing time for the OPT Employment Authorization request.*

*Do not* call the USCIS Service Center to check your application status, as this may cause delays.
Travel While Your OPT Application Is Pending

- Leaving the USA while OPT is pending is **RISKY** and not recommended!
- Traveling during this time should be undertaken with caution.
- Application for an F-1 visa renewal during OPT (especially while the application is still pending) can be risky.
- If you try to re-enter the USA after your program end date, you will be expected to have your EAD in hand.
If Something Changes, Let OISS Know!

- Defense/Submission date is rescheduled*
- You will not graduate on time*
- You no longer wish to pursue OPT
- Remember: OISS cannot change your requested start/end dates of OPT once you have submitted the application to USCIS.

*A change in your academic plans likely means that you may not be eligible to work full time as planned. Depending on your situation, you might require an I-20 extension to remain in valid F-1 status. Please contact an OISS advisor immediately if this happens!
After You’ve Been Approved

Your EAD Card
OISS Updates
Travel While On OPT
1. Scan OISS oiss@rice.edu a copy of the front of your EAD card

2. Complete F-1 OPT status updates online (http://oiss.rice.edu/opt/) whenever you have employment changes, move, or change to another visa status. OISS uses this information to accurately maintain your F-1 SEVIS record.

3. Make sure OISS is aware of any status changes
Your EAD Card

- Review your EAD Card for accuracy & submit a copy to OISS.
  - If there is an error, please contact an OISS advisor to discuss correction process.
- You **must** have your EAD card in hand in order to begin employment.
- Employment may begin **on/after** the start date listed on your card.
- Please keep your card in a safe place, as you will need it to begin working & travel.
  - Replacement cards require a new application to USCIS, which cost $380 and take up to 90 days to process.
Since you will continue to stay in F-1 status during OPT, you must report to OISS:

1. Employment information, including new employment and any changes to employment (unemployment)
2. Address information
3. Legal name changes
4. Marriage/births
5. Changes to immigration status

OISS needs this information in order to maintain your legal immigration status.
Submitting OPT Updates to OISS

- You must submit any changes to OISS within 10 (ten) calendar days.

- Updates are submitted online at http://oiss.rice.edu/opt/

- Information provided on our update form is saved in your SEVIS record.

- Failure to report employment will result in automatic termination of your SEVIS record and cancellation of your OPT.
Travel While on OPT

- Traveling while on OPT is allowed.
- In order to re-enter the United States, you will need:
  - Valid Passport
  - Valid I-20 signed for travel*
  - Valid F-1 visa stamp
  - Valid EAD Card
- Application for an F-1 visa stamp renewal during Post-Completion OPT can be risky.
- Many students on OPT are met with additional questioning when they re-enter the USA.
  - Expect delays.
  - It is helpful to have proof of employment with your immigration documents.

* Travel signatures are valid for 6 months. If you need a new travel signature, please keep in mind that OISS does not express mail documents. You will either need to leave enough time for regular mail or have a friend pick up your new I-20 and express mail it to you.
OPT Employment

Reminders
While on OPT

- Students may work part-time (exactly 20 hours per week) in the Fall/Spring semesters and full-time (over 20 hours per week) in the summer/breaks during Pre-Completion OPT.
- Students are required to work full-time (defined as over 20 hours per week) during Post-Completion OPT.
- Unpaid work within a student’s major field(s) of study counts as employment.
- Students are permitted only 90 total days of unemployment during the 12-months of OPT.
- If you accrue more than 90 days of unemployment, you must depart the USA immediately.
Important Employment Reminders

- Authorized Employment = Legal Employment
- Unauthorized Employment = Illegal Employment
- Any unauthorized employment poses a serious threat to your ability to remain in or return to the United States – even if it was one day or you did not realize it was unauthorized.
- You must always make sure that you have the necessary employment authorization before you begin work. Beginning work without prior authorization-even if you receive authorization later is considered illegal employment.
  - For example, if you requested July 1 as a start date, you cannot begin working on July 1 if your EAD card has not arrived from USCIS. Until you have the EAD card in hand, employment is not authorized!
Social Security

- Once you have received your EAD card, you will be required to apply for a Social Security Number if you don’t have one already.
- You will apply directly with the Social Security Administration.
When OPT Ends

Grace Period

STEM Extension

H1-B Cap-Gap
Grace Period

- You have a 60-day grace period to stay in the USA after OPT ends.
- You **cannot** work during that time.
- The grace period allows for:
  1. Travel in the USA,
  2. Transfer to another degree program, and
  3. Applying to change your visa status.
- If you leave the United States during your grace period you will not be allowed to re-enter on your F-1 visa.
STEM Extension

- Students in STEM fields are eligible to apply for an additional 24 months of Post-Completion OPT following their *post-completion* OPT.
- The STEM extension can be applied for twice in your lifetime.
- Employment with an E-Verify employer is required in advance.
- Application must be submitted before the regular Post-Completion OPT has expired (applications will be accepted up to 120 days before the end of your post-completion OPT period).
- For additional information, refer to the “STEM OPT Handout”
H1-B Cap-Gap

- Cap-Gap provides an extension of Post-Completion OPT for students whose H-1B applications are pending or approved before the annual October 1st H-1B start date.
- This allows F-1 students to remain in the U.S.A. and continue working even after the completion of OPT as listed on your EAD card.
- The extension is automatic and does not require a new I-20 (one may be requested, however, if needed to prove ongoing work authorization to an employer).
Questions?

Office Location
Lovett Hall, Entrance A, 2nd Floor

Phone
713-348-6095

Email
oiss@rice.edu

Website
http://oiss.rice.edu/opt/
**OPT Timeline**

- **Degree completion date**: Apply up to 90 days before your program completion.
- **12 month OPT Period**: Cannot accrue more than 90 days of unemployment once OPT begins.
- **OPT End date**: If your degree is in a STEM field, your job is with an E-verify employer, and you are interested in the OPT STEM Extension, apply up to 120 days before your OPT end date.
- **Grace period**: Grace period of 60 days to depart the US, start a new degree program, or change visa status.

### 12 month OPT Period

**Important**: You cannot start working until:
1. you have been approved by USCIS,
2. you have your EAD card in hand, and
3. you are in between your OPT start and end dates.

### Important Factors to Consider:

1. **Apply early.** USCIS can take up to 90 days to process OPT.
2. **Once USCIS receives your application,** changing start dates can be almost impossible.
3. **If you leave the USA after graduation,** and have not applied for OPT, you will not be able to apply for OPT.
FAQs

When should I apply for OPT?
As early as possible! You must have your EAD card (Employment Authorization Document) in hand to start working, even unpaid. USCIS can take up to 90 days to process OPT applications, so plan ahead. You do not need a job offer to apply. Applications can be submitted up to 90 days before the completion date on your new I-20 (the date filled in by your academic adviser on the Degree Completion Verification form in Step #3). The completion date is generally the end of the semester for non-thesis students. For thesis/dissertation students, this date depends on the timing of your oral defense. Please attend an OPT workshop or discuss your situation with an OISS advisor to determine what completion date would make sense for you.

What happens if my plans change after applying for OPT?
Immediately schedule an appointment with an OISS advisor if your graduation or oral defense plans change after your OPT application has been submitted. A change in plans likely means that you are not eligible to work full time as planned. Depending on your situation, you might require an I-20 extension to remain in valid F-1 status.

As a thesis/dissertation graduate student, what date should I use as my date of completion?
You may use one of the following:
• Thesis/ dissertation defense date
• Thesis/ dissertation submission date
• Commencement/ last day of final semester
Since the selection of a completion date for thesis/dissertation graduate students can depend on a variety of factors, it is recommended that students meet with an OISS advisor to discuss their options and strategy.

Once I receive my OPT I-20, how long do I have for USCIS to receive my application before it is voided?
30 days
FAQs

What status am I on while on OPT?
You are on F-1 status. OPT is not a status in itself.

When can I start working?
You can start working once you have your EAD card in hand and you are within the dates listed on your EAD card.

What if I don’t find a job right away . . . how much unemployment time can I have?
Students are required to work full time (defined as over 20 hours per week) during OPT. Students are permitted 90 total days of unemployment during the 12-month OPT. Unpaid work within a student’s major field counts as employment. If you accrue more than 90 days of unemployment, you must depart the USA immediately.

My EAD states ‘not valid for re-entry” on it. Does that mean I cannot travel outside of the U.S. while on OPT?
No. It means that your EAD card alone will not allow you admission into the U.S.A. You will need to bring the other required documentation (see OPT Tutorial PowerPoint travel slide).
FAQs

What if I want to travel outside of the U.S. during my OPT period – what do I need to keep in mind?
F-1 students authorized for OPT can travel outside the U.S. and re-enter provided they have all of the following documents: 1) Passport valid at least 6 months; 2) unexpired F-1 visa stamp in passport; 3) I-20 signed for travel by OISS advisor within preceding six months; 4) EAD card; 5) employment letter. Application for F-1 visa renewal during OPT can be risky. Please meet with an OISS advisor and refer to http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq_f2.htm#_Toc81222042 for further discussion of travel during OPT (or travel while OPT application is pending).

What is “Cap Gap”?
Cap Gap provides an extension of OPT for students whose H-1B applications are pending or approved before the annual October 1 H-1B start date. This allows F-1 students to remain in the U.S. and continue working even after the completion of 12 months of OPT. The extension is automatic and does not require a new I-20 (one may be requested, however, if needed to prove ongoing work authorization to an employer).

What is a STEM Extension?
Students in STEM fields are eligible to apply for an additional 24 months of OPT. However, employment with an e-Verify employer is required in advance and application must be made before the regular OPT has expired. For additional information, refer to the “STEM OPT Handout” (http://oiss.rice.edu/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=408) and make an appointment with an OISS advisor.

Is there any required follow-up with OISS when I am on OPT?
In your final appointment before mailing your OPT application, your OISS advisor will remind you of the requirement to:
1. Bring or send OISS a copy of your EAD card.
2. Complete F-1 OPT status updates online (http://oiss.rice.edu/gateway.aspx?id=204) whenever you have changes in employment, move, or change to another visa status. OISS uses this information to accurately maintain your F-1 SEVIS record.

How do I get a social security number when on OPT?
Once you have received your EAD card, you will be eligible to apply for a SSN if you don’t have one already.