



TEXAS  STATE[®]
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
AND SCHOLAR SERVICES

OPT

Optional Practical Training

TEXAS  STATE[®]
UNIVERSITY

MEMBER THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

TYPES OF OPT

Pre-
Completion

Post-
Completion

STEM OPT
Extension

PRE-COMPLETION OPT

Temporary Work Authorization while the student is still attending school.

For F-1 students in a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral program to gain practical experience prior to the student's program end date.



POST-COMPLETION OPT

Temporary Full-time Work Authorization Benefit

For F-1 students in a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral program to gain practical experience after completion of all course requirements for the degree (excluding thesis or equivalent).



STEM OPT EXTENSION

24-month extension for STEM degree students. Full-time Work Authorization Benefit.

For F-1 students in post-completion OPT with a STEM degree.



WHAT IS OPT? OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

F-1 students apply to USCIS for temporary employment authorization for **12 months**.

Students in **STEM-designated degrees** can apply for a 24-month extension known as **STEM OPT**.

OPT employment must **directly relate to their major area of study**.

Refer to the STEM list on USCIS website.

LEGAL ADVICE AND ISSS ADVISING STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

- International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) offers best practice information on temporary employment authorization such as Optional Practical Training (OPT) and STEM OPT Extension as a courtesy to international students under a Texas State University-issued Form I-20.
- You may choose to compile and submit your application for temporary employment authorization on your own and inform ISSS accordingly through email.

Please note that all information provided is not considered legal advice.

WHY OPT?

Participating in OPT is an excellent way to demonstrate and expand the skills and knowledge you learned, in the classroom, in a place of work.

Think about the following:

- Why should an employer hire you?
- What skills and knowledge do you have that sets you apart?
- What contributions can you offer to your future employer?
- What are your goals for OPT?

ELIGIBILITY FOR OPT

- Consecutive enrollment full-time (UG 12hrs/ GRAD 9hrs) for one full academic year.
- Full-time enrollment, every fall and spring semester. If you are not enrolled full-time submit an RCL.
- Lawfully maintained and currently in active F-1 status.
- Ineligible if completed 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT).
- You must complete OPT within 14 months following the completion of study (date of graduation).

OPT FOR THESIS/DISSERTATION STUDENTS

A student who only has the thesis or equivalent remaining may either apply for pre-completion OPT or post-completion OPT while completing the thesis/dissertation.



WHEN TO APPLY

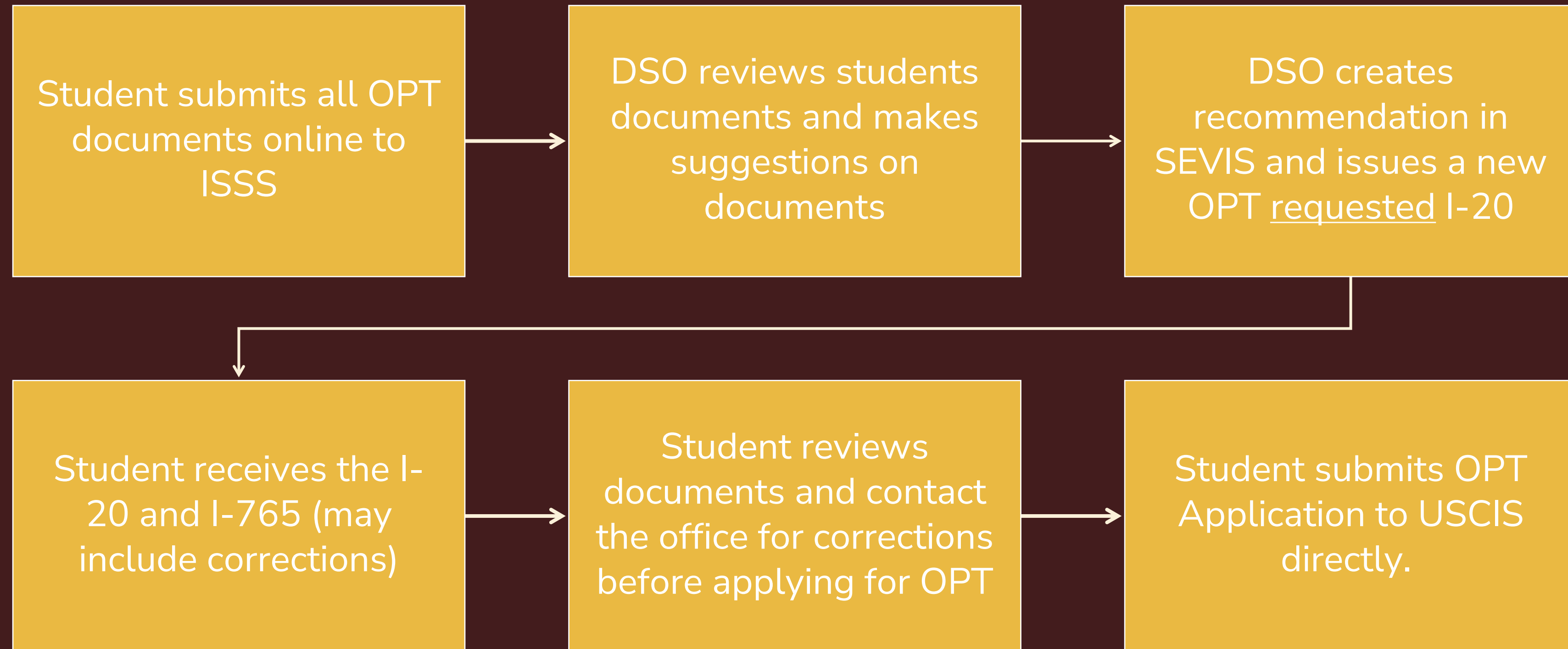
Per the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, students can apply for Post-OPT 90 days before their program completion, and no later than 60 days after their program completion.



FALL 2023 GRADUATE APPLICATION PERIOD

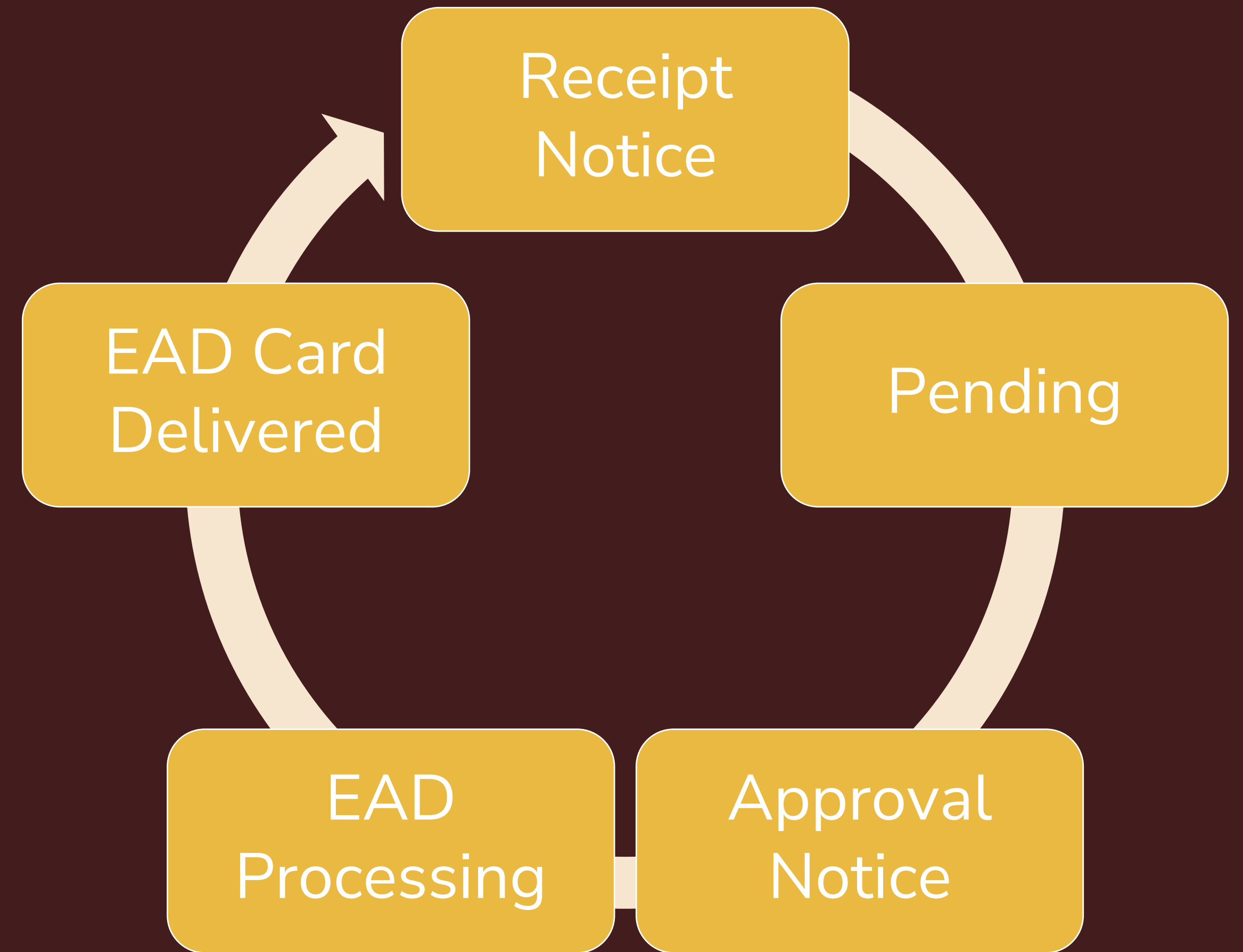


OPT APPLICATION PROCESS



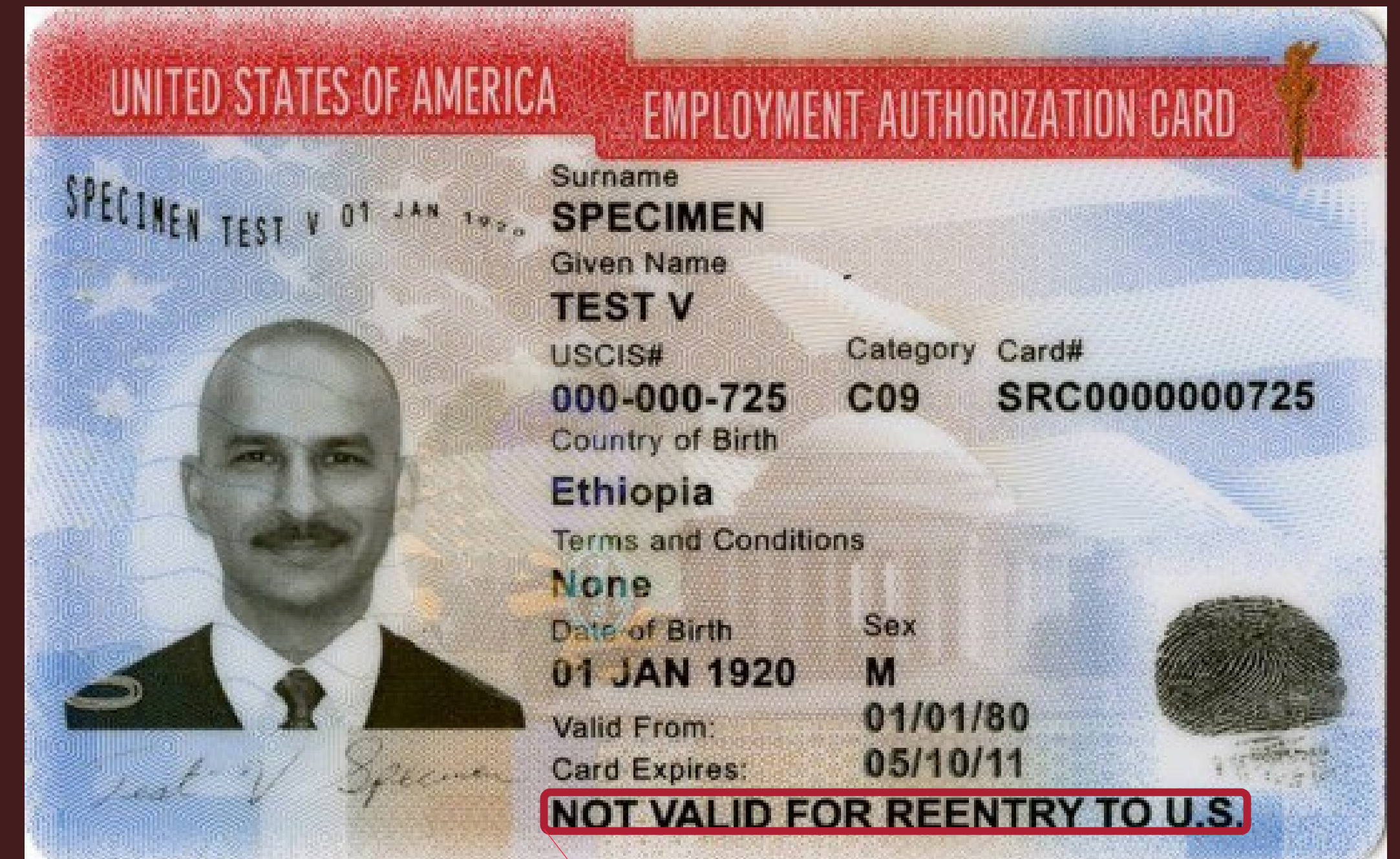
USCIS APPLICATION PROCESS

- Submit documents online for a DSO review.
- DSO enters OPT request in your SEVIS record.
- ISSS issues the new I-20 and I-765 feedback.
- Student reviews documents and submits application to USCIS.



EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION DOCUMENT EAD CARD

- Can only work between
 - Valid From (start date)
 - Card Expires (end date)
- Must renew if lost
- Must renew if applying for STEM OPT
- Used when traveling into the US



Must have a valid passport, F-1 visa, and I-20 with a travel signature.

WHEN & HOW TO APPLY FOR OPT



Apply 90 days before but no later than 60 days after the graduation date.



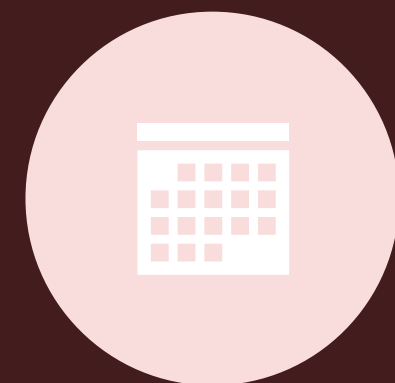
Allow up to 5 months for USCIS processing. **Apply early!**



Submit ISSS and USCIS documents online



Offer of employment is not required to apply for OPT.



When choosing the **Start Date** consider when you expect to begin working. This date cannot be changed.



Work with **Career Services** for career readiness.



THE OPT APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Submit Documents Online:

- OPT Statement of Responsibility signed by the student
- Legal Advice and ISSS Advising Statement of Understanding signed by the student
- Completion of Degree Form signed by an Advisor or Professor or Letter of Completion from the Graduate College
- *Completed Form I-765
- Valid Passport
- Most Recent Entry I-94
- Passport photo
- Any previous EAD Card or I-797 Change of Status approval (if applicable)

*Review USCIS website for most up to date filing fee and Form I-765 edition

Part 1. Reason for Applying

I am applying for (select **only one** box):

- 1.a. Initial permission to accept employment.
- 1.b. Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document, or correction of my employment authorization document **NOT DUE** to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) error.

NOTE: Replacement (correction) of an employment authorization document due to USCIS error does not require a new Form I-765 and filing fee. Refer to **Replacement for Card Error** in the **What is the Filing Fee** section of the Form I-765 Instructions for further details.

- 1.c. Renewal of my permission to accept employment. (Attach a copy of your previous employment authorization document.)

Select 1.a.

Part 2. Information About You (continued)

Your U.S. Mailing Address

- 5.a. In Care Of Name (if any)
- 5.b. Street Number and Name
- 5.c. Apt. Ste. Flr.
- 5.d. City or Town
- 5.e. State 5.f. ZIP Code
[\(USPS ZIP Code Lookup\)](#)
6. Is your current mailing address the same as your physical address?
 Yes No

NOTE: If you answered "No" to **Item Number 6.**, provide your physical address below.

Use your personal mailing address or the ISSS address

Information About Your Eligibility Category

27. **Eligibility Category.** Refer to the **Who May File Form I-765** section of the Form I-765 Instructions to determine the appropriate eligibility category for this application. Enter the appropriate letter and number for your eligibility category below (for example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii)).

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Lower case "c,3, B"

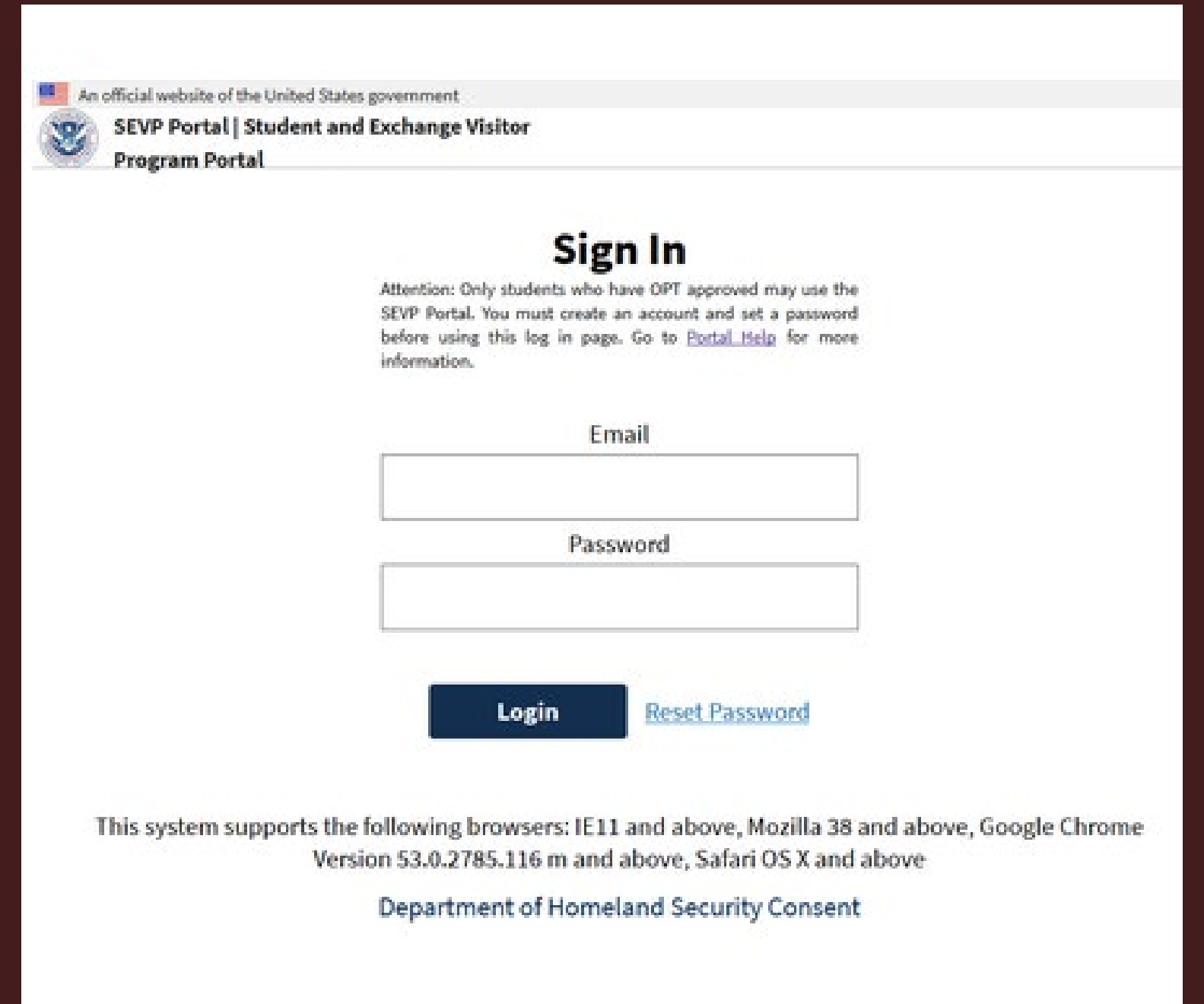
REPORTING EMPLOYMENT AND PERSONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

You must report your employment and personal contact information using the SEVP Portal.

All updates must be reported within 10 days of changing.

SEVP Portal Website: <https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/#/login>

Remember: You can only log in to the SEVP Portal after you have activated your account. Once your OPT is approved you will receive an email with an activation link. This link is only valid for 14 days.



The screenshot shows the SEVP Portal login page. At the top, it says "An official website of the United States government" and "SEVP Portal | Student and Exchange Visitor Program Portal". The main heading is "Sign In". Below this, there is a warning: "Attention: Only students who have OPT approved may use the SEVP Portal. You must create an account and set a password before using this log in page. Go to [Portal Help](#) for more information." There are two input fields: "Email" and "Password". Below the fields are two buttons: "Login" and "Reset Password". At the bottom, there is a note: "This system supports the following browsers: IE11 and above, Mozilla 38 and above, Google Chrome Version 53.0.2785.116 m and above, Safari OS X and above" and "Department of Homeland Security Consent".

ELIGIBILITY FOR A 24-MONTH STEM EXTENSION

STEM students are eligible to apply for a 24-month extension of post-completion OPT if...

- The degree that was the basis for the student's current period of OPT is a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in one of the degree programs on the STEM Designated Degree Program List, published on the SEVP website at www.ice.gov/sevis.
- The student's employer is registered in the E-Verify program, as evidenced by either a valid E-Verify company identification number or, if the employer is using a designated agent to perform the E-Verify queries, a valid E-Verify client company identification number, and the employer is a participant in good standing in the E-Verify program, as determined by USCIS.

You must apply before your current OPT expires (as early as 90 days)

H-1B CAP GAP EXTENSION

SEVIS has been modified to automatically add cap-gap extensions to records of eligible F-1 students whose H-1B petition was receipted by USCIS.

Manual extensions by a DSO:

- H1-B Filed (received by not receipted) – **June 1**

Classic scenario:

Step	Date
USCIS – <i>Electronic Registration Process</i>	03/09 – 03/25/2021
H-1B COS Filed	April 1, 20XX
Standard OPT Ends	May 31, 20XX
Cap Gap Begins	June 1, 20XX
H-1B COS Approved	August 15, 20XX
Cap Gap Ends	September 30, 20XX
H-1B Status Begins	October 1, 20XX

WHAT CONSTITUTES EMPLOYMENT?

- **Paid employment (salary/hourly)**
 - **Self-employment**
 - Must be able to prove student has the proper business licenses.
 - **Multiple (short-term) employers**
 - Artists, Musicians - Maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration
 - **Work for hire (contractual relationship)**
 - Maintain evidence showing the duration of the contract and name/address of the contracting company
 - **Employment through an agency**
 - **Volunteering or unpaid internship**
 - Be mindful to not violate any labor laws
- Employment must directly relate to the student's program of study. Review how to assess a direct relationship between the job and major.

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT OPT

May **not** begin working before the EAD Card start date.

F-1 status is dependent on employment. May not accrue an aggregate of more than **90 days of unemployment**.

Must work **at least 20 hours per week** (no maximum hours).

Work must **directly relate to the major area of study**.

Report all changes in phone number, address, name, and status of employment in the **SEVP Portal**.

Request a new OPT I-20 every time there is a change in your employment.

QUESTIONS ABOUT TRAVEL

Can I reenter if my request for OPT is pending?

- *Yes, but traveling during this time should be undertaken with caution. USCIS may send you a request for evidence while you are away, however, so you would want to make sure you have provided a correct U.S. address both to your DSO and on the application and would be able to send in requested documents. Also, if USCIS approves your OPT application, you will be expected to have your EAD in hand to re-enter the United States. Like a request for further information, USCIS can only send the EAD to your U.S. address.*
 - *Things you need for international travel: signed I-20, valid passport, valid visa, OPT EAD, and a letter from your employer*

Can I reenter if I left while on OPT?

- *If USCIS has approved your OPT you will be expected to have your EAD in hand to re-enter the United States, in addition to your Form I-20, valid passport and visa, and a letter of employment if you have one. If you exceed the limits on unemployment while outside the United States, you will not be eligible to re-enter the United States in F-1 status.*
 - *If you have a job, you may travel and reenter to resume work at the same job or you have a written offer for another job.*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **What happens if I do not graduate, can I still do OPT?**
 - *Yes. ISSS does not recommend canceling the OPT application. However, you might have to cancel or withdraw your OPT application. Contact ISSS as soon as you are informed that you will not be graduating.*
 - *Students cannot work more than 20 hours per week while taking face-to-face classes.*
 - *Graduate students completing only thesis/dissertation requirements are permitted to work more than 20 hours.*
- **Can I study while on OPT?**
 - *Students cannot be actively engaged in a new degree program and on OPT at the same time (online-only programs are fine). If a student's SEVIS record is transferred or a change of level I-20 is created, the OPT is immediately terminated.*
- **Can I apply early for OPT?**
 - *Pre-completion OPT is available, but the time used is deducted from post-completion OPT.*
 - *Graduate students in thesis/dissertation, or equivalent, only may apply for OPT prior to completing their program of study.*
 - *If a student does not complete the thesis/dissertation during OPT, or STEM OPT, the student should prepare to change status, change education level, request a SEVIS transfer, or depart the country prior to the end of the 60-day grace period.*

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I GRADUATE OR FINISH OPT?

After completing your studies, you have a 60-day Grace Period to do one of the following:

1. Apply for Optional Practical Training, OPT.

- Apply for STEM (before finishing OPT)

2. Depart the US

- Complete the SEVIS Completion Request: <https://www.international.txstate.edu/current/SEVIS-Completion.html>.

3. Apply for a change or adjustment of status

- Update your immigration status with ISSS.

4. Request a SEVIS Transfer to begin a new degree at a different institution.

5. Request a Change of Level I-20 to begin a new degree at Texas State.

TIPS AND REMINDERS



Start saving money now!



Apply early for OPT due to USCIS processing delays.



No appointment necessary to submit your OPT request to ISSS



Use I-765 Form Instructions and ISSS Template. Sign Form I-765 – no digital signatures.



Check Passport expiration date and I-94 Classification



Be confident in your decision to pursue OPT.



Visit the OPT Website For More Information:

www.international.txst.edu/work-authorization/optional-practical-training-opt.html