

Transcript for Video 1: Post-Completion OPT Overview and Eligibility Requirements

Welcome to the first of several online videos on Post-Completion Optional Practical Training for F-1 students, otherwise known as OPT. We hope these videos will provide you with the information you need to further your academic and professional development in the United States.

Let's get started by going over exactly what Post-Completion OPT is.

OPT is an extension of your F-1 immigration status that allows you to work in the United States for 12 months after you graduate at each new and higher degree level. You will remain in F-1 status for the entire duration of your 12 months of OPT. During the 12 months of OPT, every position you take must be directly related to the major field of study listed on your Form I-20.

OPT is designed to allow you to gain practical experience related to your degree. To maintain F-1 status during the OPT period, students must be engaged in paid or unpaid work that is directly related to the major field of study listed on the Form I-20. Pro bono opportunities, internships, and paid employment may be considered work for OPT purposes.

Students must work for at least 20 hours per week to maintain their F-1 status on OPT.

There are a few requirements you must meet to be eligible for Post-Completion OPT

In order to be eligible, you must have been studying full-time for at least one academic year immediately preceding your OPT application.

You must be in good academic standing with at the time of application. This means that you need a GPA above a 2.0 and you must not be facing any disciplinary charges.

The good news is that you do not need a job offer in order to apply for OPT!

Now that you know what Post-Completion OPT is and who is eligible, we'll discuss when you should apply for Post-Completion OPT and some items to keep in mind. Your point of reference is the program completion date on your Form I-20. Pause the video and check your Form I-20 for your specific program end date.

You can apply for Post-Completion OPT up to 90 days before that program completion date. You can also submit your OPT application up to 60 days after your program completion date. This means the application must reach USCIS and be

received by day 60. Regardless of when you apply, you must request an OPT start date to begin within 60 days of the program completion date listed on your Form I-20.

You can apply for the 12 months of Post-Completion OPT without a job offer. If there is any chance you wish to work in the United States after graduation or if you wish to take a bar exam should apply as early as possible. You can continue job searching while your OPT application is pending.

OPT is both a benefit and extension of your F-1 status. Once you submit your Post-Completion OPT application to USCIS (a U.S. government agency) you remain in F-1 status, including the gap between your program completion date and your EAD start date.

If you are graduating in May, we recommend that you start the OPT application process in mid to late February. You must be physically present in the United States to request OPT.

Due to the long processing times at USCIS, you'll thank yourself for applying early. In the next section, we'll discuss how to choose your OPT start date and what variables you need to take into account.

F-1 students generally start their academic program with a 12-month bank of OPT. The Post-Completion OPT application process requires that students identify their start and end dates. Let's review the factors you'll need to consider to determine these dates.

So how much OPT do you have? Each F-1 student has a total of 12 months of OPT at each new and higher degree level. For example, if you completed your undergraduate degree in the United States, used 12 months of OPT, and then started a J.D. at Georgetown then you are eligible for a new 12-month period of OPT.

If you previously used OPT as part of a post-undergraduate degree in the U.S., please consult your advisor to see if you would be eligible to apply for OPT as part of your current degree.

One factor that could affect your OPT end date is the use of Pre-Completion OPT.

This means that if you have already benefitted from Pre-Completion OPT, those months must be deducted from your 12-month bank. If you have used Pre-Completion OPT (OPT used during your course of study), your advisor will be able to help you calculate how much time you have used, how much Post-Completion OPT you have left, and how that will affect your Post-Completion OPT start and end dates.

If you used Pre-Completion OPT but only worked part time then the time used is deducted at 50%.

If you have used CPT or Work with an International Organization during your time at Georgetown, these work authorizations would not be subtracted from your 12 months of Post-Completion OPT

For many, OPT applications can be stressful. So many things are still uncertain. Maybe you don't have a job offer in hand and without a job offer, how can you pick an accurate start date for your work authorization? Don't worry. You are in control of this application. You get to decide when you want to submit the application to USCIS and you decide the date you want the employment authorization to begin. This graphic outlines the 60-day period in which your OPT authorization must begin. Day 1 is the day following your Form I-20 program completion date. Day 60 following the Form I-20 program completion date is the last possible OPT start date. You may choose any start date within the 60-day timeframe.

A variety of considerations will influence your choice of OPT start date, but it's important to remember that your requested start date CANNOT be changed after your application is submitted to the U.S. government.

Are you planning to take a bar exam? Most students taking a bar exam choose the latest possible start date as they plan to prepare for the bar rather than work immediately following graduation.

Or are you forgoing the bar exam and want to begin work immediately after graduation? If so, you may wish to choose an earlier OPT start date.

Do you have an employment offer or are you still looking for a job? If you are uncertain how long it will take to find a job and worry about accruing too many days of unemployment, then you might want to request a later start date. Just remember that if you choose a later start date and then find an employer who wants you to begin working immediately, you will not be able to change your requested OPT start date.

Once you submit your OPT dates to USCIS, they cannot be changed!

In the next video, we'll look at what goes into the actual OPT application that you will need to submit to the U.S. government.