

Transcript for OPT Video 3: Maintaining Status During OPT

Although you will no longer be pursuing an academic degree program during Post-Completion OPT, your F-1 status is still sponsored by Georgetown University and you will still need to fulfill certain obligations to maintain your valid F-1 status. In this section, we will outline your reporting requirements.

Do not begin working until your EAD card start date. USICS may authorize a start date different from the one you requested. You must have your EAD card in order to know the official start date.

After your OPT Application has been approved, there are some additional steps you need to take.

The Department of Homeland Security's Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) will send a link inviting you to create an SEVP Portal Account once the OPT is approved and the start date on the EAD is reached. The email will be sent to your Georgetown email address. Please always check your Spam, Junk, or Trash folders to see if this email gets redirected. All communication from our office and SEVP will go to your Georgetown email address during your OPT time, so make sure you are still actively using this email account.

Follow the instructions in that email immediately upon receipt and create your SEVP Portal account. This link expires in 30 days from the time it was sent and it can only be clicked once to register your SEVP Portal account. If the link is already expired, email your international student advisor to reset it. For any additional help with this process view the Study in the States website.

On the day your 12 months of OPT begins, you have a period of 90 days on OPT where you can be unemployed.

You must have a position that meets the OPT reporting requirements by the 90th day of unemployment in order for your OPT work authorization to remain valid. Keep in mind that your OPT work authorization is no longer valid once you exceed the 90 days of unemployment.

If you exceed the 90 days of unemployment then you lose your legal F-1 status and begin to accrue Unlawful Presence, and you should contact legal counsel. If you accrue enough Unlawful Presence then it can jeopardize access to future U.S. immigration benefits, including readmission to the United States.

Understanding the unemployment period is extremely important for F-1 students to maintain their status. You can job search while you are still studying in your degree program, in the gap between your program end date and your EAD start date, and during the 1st 90 days of your Post-Completion OPT period. However, in order to keep your OPT work authorization valid, you must begin OPT employment (at least 20 hours per week and

related to your degree) by the 90th day of your OPT period. As mentioned previously, your OPT work authorization immediately becomes invalid and you begin accruing unlawful presence on day 91. Paid positions, internships, and pro bono opportunities can all count as OPT employment.

From the start date on the EAD, you have a maximum of 90 days to find eligible employment. If you have a job that meets the OPT requirements on the first day of your 12 months of OPT, then you can save your 90 days of unemployment to spread out during the remainder of your 12 months of OPT. For example, you could quit one position and take a 30 day break before starting another job that meets the OPT requirements. Then you could work for a while and quit that position, take a 15 day break and then start a new position that you work at until the end of your 12 months of OPT. You will still have 12 months of OPT, but in our example, you would have 12 months minus the 45 days of unemployment time. However you break this up just remember that, cumulatively, you cannot exceed 90 days of unemployment and each and every position you take must be directly related to your Georgetown degree and you must consistently work at least 20 hours per week.

In order to maintain your F-1 status while on Post-Completion OPT there is information that you are required to update in the SEVP Portal

Within 10 days you must report any change in your address and employment as well as each new employer's name and address. Reporting periods of employment are essential, as your F-1 record may be automatically terminated after 90 days if nothing has been reported in your SEVP Portal. After you update employer information you can request a new Form I-20 from your international student advisor.

In addition to the SEVP Portal reporting requirements, there is some information you must report directly to your international student advisor

Before changing your visa status, starting a new degree program or even taking an additional class, please speak with us to determine the immigration implications that may arise. Even if you don't discuss these decisions with us beforehand, you must report if you have been admitted to a new academic program, or if there is any change in your immigration status. Additionally, let us know if you leave the United States permanently and choose not to work for the remainder of your OPT period. It is important that you report your departure date to your advisor as departure from the country does not automatically stop the 90-day unemployment clock and accrual of unlawful presence.

Once your OPT is approved, USCIS will send you an Employment Authorization Document called an EAD card. Carefully check your name, date of birth and validity dates on the card. Scan and email a copy of the front and back of this card to lawcentervisa@georgetown.edu.

The EAD is not an F-1 visa and is not valid by itself for travel. You will still need a valid F-1 visa to return to the U.S. after international travel. If your F-1 visa is expired, but you are not planning to travel internationally then your EAD card, I-94 Record, and Form I-20 show that you are in legal F-1 status. The first time you want to travel internationally after your

F-1 visa expiration date, you will need to give yourself enough time to apply for a new F-1 visa stamp at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad.

All paid workers in the United States needs a Social Security Number (SSN).

If you do not already have an SSN and did not request one on the Form I-765, you can apply for an SSN on or after the start date on your EAD card. Once you receive your SSN report it to your employer. When you receive your SSN card, please protect your SSN and other personally identifiable information from fraud. Always verify the identity of the person or organization requesting your SSN. If you are unsure if the person requesting your personally identifiable information is legitimate do not provide your information.

Tax filing is a legal obligation in the United States. You should receive an email from our office in February with additional information and a link to our tax website.

Health insurance is essential in the United States. Once your Georgetown student health insurance plan ends, you should obtain another health insurance plan. Many employers will offer health insurance plans as part of employee benefits. You can also find some third-party providers that have health insurance plans for international students at internationalservices.georgetown.edu

If you plan on traveling during the OPT period, you must have valid documentation to reenter the United States. You will need to show the following documents at the port of entry.

A passport (valid and unexpired six months into the future)

A valid F-1 visa and valid Form I-20 with a travel signature. Do not forget that the travel signature during OPT is only valid for 6 months! If you need an updated signature, please visit internationalservices.georgetown.edu/opt-approved for instructions.

An EAD card and job offer letter from your current employer

We also recommend having proof of funding if your job is unpaid

Remember, travel is absolutely discouraged until you have your EAD card in hand!

At the end of the OPT period, if you have not exceeded the 90 days of unemployment, you are allowed a 60 day grace period before departure from the United States. Paid and unpaid work is not permitted during the grace period, as the OPT authorization has ended. The grace period does allow you to pack up your belongings and prepare for departure, visit friends, explore the country, or transfer to another degree program. If you depart the United States, even to go to Canada or Mexico, before the end of the grace period, you will not be able to re-enter the country in F-1 status.