

Travel during Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

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Overview

This section applies only to F-1 students who have applied for or have been approved for Optional Practical Training (OPT) by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and want to leave and re-enter the U.S. **after** the completion of their academic program.

Before the completion of your academic program, the usual procedures for travel still apply. After completion of your academic program, the guidance for travel is related to whether your OPT has been approved yet or not.

Post-Completion OPT is Pending

If your post-completion OPT **has not** been approved and you do not have a job or a job offer, you may leave and then re-enter the U.S. to continue to look for employment.

In order to have the best chance of re-entering the U.S. without problems when your post-completion OPT is pending, you should travel with the following documents:

- Passport (valid for six months after you plan to re-enter the U.S)
- Valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport (this requirement does not apply to Canadian citizens)
- I-20 (with a travel signature no older than six months *)
- I-765 receipt notice (Form I-797)

If you need to apply for a new F-1 visa when your post-completion OPT application is pending, you should also be sure to have your I-765 receipt notice (Form I-797) in addition to the usual documents required for a visa application.

Post-Completion OPT is Approved

If your post-completion OPT has been approved (EAD card has been issued by USCIS) and you have a

job or a job offer, you may leave and re-enter the U.S. in order to begin or resume employment.

After USCIS has issued an EAD card for post-completion OPT, in order to have the best chance of re-entering the U.S. without problems, you should be sure you have the following documents:

- Passport (valid for six months after you plan to re-enter the U.S.)
- Valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport (this requirement does not apply to Canadian citizens)
- I-20 (with a valid travel signature no older than six months*)
- EAD card
- Evidence that you already have a job in the U.S. or that you have a job offer.

If you need to apply for a new F-1 visa, you should also be sure to have your EAD card and evidence that you already have a job in the U.S. or that you have a job offer in addition to the usual documents required for a visa application.

* Regulations state that during post-completion OPT, the travel signature should be no older than six months. The International Center recommends while on post-completion OPT that you get a valid travel signature every six months. Source: 8CFR214.2(f)(13)(ii)

Summary of Guidance

Students who have an EAD card for post-completion OPT and evidence of either a job or a job offer are allowed to leave and re-enter the U.S. during their OPT period. Of course, re-entry to the U.S. is never guaranteed.

Students whose EAD card has not yet been issued (OPT application has not yet been approved by USCIS) are allowed to re-enter the U.S. to resume the search for employment. While your OPT application is pending, you are not required to have a job or a job offer for re-entry to the U.S.

If a student who has an EAD card but does not have a job or a job offer leaves the US during the post-completion OPT period, OPT ends. Border officials might not allow someone in this situation to re-enter the U.S. Thus, students who do not have a U.S. job or a U.S. job offer but who plan to leave and re-enter the U.S. after their EAD card has been issued (their OPT has been approved by USCIS) are taking a risk.

For more information, see [U.S. Department of Homeland Security FAQ for Travel](#) [1].

Source URL: <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/travel-post-opt>

Links

[1] <https://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel>