OPT Dates and Deadlines
This information applies to F-1 students completing a program in April 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date or Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-Month OPT Application Window Opens</td>
<td>Tuesday, January 19, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPT Processing Window</td>
<td>Monday, February 1 to February 29, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AN APPOINTMENT IS REQUIRED</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program End Date - IMPORTANT</td>
<td>Saturday, April 16, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you don’t complete your degree as planned (maybe you withdrew from or failed a course), you must apply for a program extension BEFORE this date!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-Day Grace Period Begins</td>
<td>Sunday, April 17, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Possible OPT Start Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Day for USCIS to Receive OPT Applications</td>
<td>Wednesday, June 15, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-Day Grace Period Ends</td>
<td>Wednesday, June 15, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Possible OPT Start Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Month OPT Application Window Window Closes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IMPORTANT APPLICATION FILING INSTRUCTIONS**

No matter when you apply for OPT during the 5-month application window, USCIS must receive your OPT application within BOTH of these deadlines:

1. Within **30 days** of when your OPT recommendation is entered in SEVIS by a DSO, **and**
2. Before your 60-day grace period ends.

If you miss either of these deadlines, your application will be denied.
5 Easy Steps to Apply for OPT

1. Do your homework! Read up on OPT regulations. Resources are included in this packet.

2. Prepare the documents listed on the following page.

3. Make an appointment to meet with a Designated School Official (DSO) at Monroe College to get a new I-20 with an OPT recommendation on page 2. Appointments can be made by emailing dso@monroecollege.edu.

4. Use U.S. Postal Service Priority Express Mail only to send your new OPT I-20 and all of the documents listed on the following page to USCIS:

   USCIS Attn: AOS  
   2501 State Hwy. 121  
   Business Suite 400  
   Lewisville, TX 75067

5. Track your application status online at https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard.do. For address changes, or if your application processing time has exceeded 90 days, contact:

   USCIS National Customer Service Center  
   1-800-375-5283

Important Deadline!

USCIS must receive your OPT application within 30 days of when your DSO recommends OPT for you in the SEVIS database. This is often the date your new OPT I-20 is issued. OPT denials, although rare, are usually the result of students missing this 30-day deadline.
These are the documents you need to bring to your DSO appointment:

- OPT Request Form completed by you and signed by you and your advisor.
- Copy of your degree audit ("EVAL") available from your advisor or Student Services front desk.

These are the documents you need to bring to your DSO appointment AND send to USCIS:

- Form G-1145 – 1 original completed as a PDF online and printed from http://www.uscis.gov/g-1145.
- Form I-765 – 2 originals with your signature in blue ink completed as a PDF online and printed from http://www.uscis.gov/i-765. A cheat sheet to help you with this form is included in this packet.
- Form I-94 printed from www.cbp.gov/i94.
- Copy ALL of your I-20s. Each I-20 has three pages. Copy them all.
- Copy your passport picture page with expiration date. Your passport must be valid.
- Copy your F-1 visa (valid or expired) or USCIS change of status approval notice.
- If you have done OPT in the past, copy your previous OPT card, front and back.
- Have two (2) passport photos taken. They must be 2x2 inches in size with a white background. Print your name and SEVIS ID number from your I-20 on the back of each photo.
- Purchase a money order for $380. Make it payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security. If you have never used a money order, or if you would like help with your money order, we can talk about how to get a money order and how to fill it out during your DSO appointment.
### I-765 CHEAT SHEET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am applying for:</th>
<th>Check off: Permission to accept employment.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Name</td>
<td>Enter your family name in all CAPITAL letters. Then enter your first name and finally middle name. Line up your names underneath the prompt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Other Names Used</td>
<td>Enter any other legal name you have had. If you have not had any other legal name, leave this line blank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Address in the United States</td>
<td>For line 1: Enter your number and street and apartment letter or number. For line 2: Enter your town or city, country and zip code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Country of Citizenship/Nationality</td>
<td>Enter the name of the country where you hold citizenship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Place of Birth</td>
<td>Enter the town or city, state or province &amp; country of your birth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Date of Birth</td>
<td>Enter your date of birth in the U.S. format: MM/DD/YYYY.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Gender</td>
<td>Check male or female.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Marital Status</td>
<td>Check off the box indicating your current marital status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Social Security Number</td>
<td>Enter your nine-digit SSN. If you don’t have one, leave it blank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Alien Registration Number or I-94 Number</td>
<td>Before you complete the I-765, print your electronic I-94 from <a href="http://www.cbp.gov/i94">www.cbp.gov/i94</a>. Enter your Admission (I-94) Record Number from the print-out into item 10 on the I-765.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Have you ever before applied for employment authorization from USCIS?</td>
<td>Check “No” and skip to item 12 if this is the first time you are applying for employment through USCIS. CPT and on campus employment are not processed through USCIS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Date of Last Entry into the U.S.</td>
<td>Enter the date you last entered into the U.S. from abroad in the U.S. format: MM/DD/YYYY.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Place of Last Entry into the U.S.</td>
<td>Enter the city in which you last entered into the U.S. This should be the location where you passed through a CBP check-point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Status at Last Entry</td>
<td>Enter the status in which you entered the U.S. most recently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Current Immigration Status</td>
<td>Enter your current status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Eligibility Category</td>
<td>Enter (C) (3) (B) in the parentheses. This is the code for post-completion OPT directly related to your studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. (c)(3)(C) Eligibility Category</td>
<td>Leave this item blank. It is only for students applying under category (c)(3)(C) which is the 17-month STEM extension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. (c)(26) Eligibility Category</td>
<td>Leave this item blank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant’s Signature</td>
<td>Leave a spot for your signature, but enter your phone number and the date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature of Person Preparing Form, if Other Than Applicant</td>
<td>Leave this item blank.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OPT Request Form for F-1 Students
Use this form to request a DSO Recommendation for OPT

Name: ____________________________________________

Monroe College Student ID#: __________________________

Academic Program (circle one): Certificate / Associate / Bachelor / Master's

Major Area of Study: __________________________________

Semester and year you are completing your program: Fall 20__ Winter 20__ Spring 20__

U.S. Address: _______________________________________

City: __________________________________________ State: __________ Zip Code: __________

Cell Phone: _______________________________________

Personal Email Address: ______________________________

Select which type of optional practical training you are requesting:

☐ Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (starts after you complete your academic program)

☐ Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (starts before you complete your academic program)

Please list any previous OPT or full-time CPT which you have been granted: ______________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Academic Advisor or Department Chairperson Recommendation

This student is applying for permission to obtain practical training in a position directly related to his or her academic program.

- Student’s expected completion date: Fall 20__ Winter 20__ Spring 20__
- Please attach a degree audit (EVAL)

I confirm that this student is expected to complete his or her academic program on the date listed above. I recommend the student for practical training in a position directly related to his or her academic program.

Advisor or Chair Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Page 1 of 2
Choose an OPT Start Date

Eligible F-1 students can apply for 12 months of full-time OPT. You must choose a date to begin your OPT authorization period. Your start date must fall after the final day of your academic program and before your 60-day post-completion grace period ends. What date would you like to begin your employment?

Month __________ Day __________ Year __________

Student Certification

☐ I will report changes to my physical address; employment or enrollment status; and any changes or requested changes to my F-1 status to a Designated School Official (DSO) within 10 days.

☐ My OPT position must be directly related to my field of study. I am responsible for finding and obtaining an appropriate OPT position.

☐ My OPT application must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the date my DSO recommends me for OPT in the SEVIS database.

☐ If I choose to travel at any point after applying for OPT, my return to the U.S. is at the discretion of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and cannot be guaranteed.

☐ I may begin work only after I receive my OPT card and only during the validity period printed on my card. When I get my OPT card, I will provide a copy of the card to a Monroe College DSO. I will not work without pay while I wait for my OPT to begin.

☐ I may apply for a Social Security number after I receive my OPT card and after I reach my authorization start date. I will provide the College with a copy of my Social Security card.

☐ I cannot be unemployed for more than 90 days (total) once my OPT authorization begins.

☐ I understand that I cannot be on OPT and study at the same time. If I decide to take classes toward a new program, I will notify a DSO immediately; qualify for a new I-20 for my new program; and enroll as a full-time student again. Taking classes while on OPT cancels OPT.

☐ When my OPT authorization ends I understand that I have another 60-day grace period to pursue one of the options below. If I make any other arrangements, I will notify a DSO.

■ Enroll full-time in a new program with Monroe College and qualify for a new Form I-20

■ Complete the process to transfer my SEVIS record to another school

■ Depart the U.S.

☐ I understand that issuance of the DSO recommendation and I-20 is not a guarantee of approval for employment. I am responsible for submitting a complete application package to USCIS including the Form I-765, required fee, and supporting evidence.

Student Signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________________
The 90-Day Rule for OPT

This is the 90-day rule for standard OPT:

During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. You may not accrue a total of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT.

Each day (including weekends) during the period when OPT authorization begins and ends that you do not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment.

If you are approaching a total of 90 days of unemployment during OPT, you need to take immediate steps to protect your F-1 status. Options include: enrolling as a full time student again and getting a new I-20 to match the new program; transferring schools, and departing the U.S.

Beginning in spring 2016, the SEVIS database will begin automatic terminations of the F-1 records of students who exceed a total of 90 days of unemployment during OPT.

Here is how to protect your status during OPT:

The following activities are considered “employment” during standard post-completion OPT, if the job is directly related to your program of study:

1. **Regular paid employment.** For post-completion OPT, the work must be for at least 20 hours per week. You may work for multiple employers, as long as it is directly related to your degree. You should maintain a list of all jobs, the dates and duration.

2. **Work for hire.** You should be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.

3. **Self-employed business owner.** You may start a business and be self-employed. You should be able to prove that you have the proper business licenses and are actively engaged in a business related to your degree program.

4. **Employment through an agency.** You must be able to provide evidence showing you worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.

5. **Volunteers or unpaid interns.** You may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, where this practice does not violate any labor laws. The work should be at least 20 hours per week. You should be able to provide evidence, acquired from your employer, to verify that you worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.
F-1 Student Travel During OPT

There are always risks with international travel and those risks are increased during the transition between your academic program and OPT. If you are planning to travel, we advise that you do so before you complete your final set of courses. If you are traveling after you finish your program or before, during, or after OPT, you need to be prepared for the risks involved. Please remember, U.S. Customs and Border Protection is solely responsible for determining whether or not to admit you into the U.S. Your return to take part in OPT cannot be guaranteed.

Read about preparing for travel and knowing what to expect at these websites:

http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel
http://www.cbp.gov/travel/international-visitors/study-exchange/exchange-arrivals
http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/what-is-secondary-inspection
http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/what-is-a-form-i-515a

You should also be aware of an option called automatic revalidation which allows eligible non-immigrants to re-enter the U.S. with an expired visa under certain conditions:

1. Nonimmigrants who departed the United States for brief travel to Canada, Mexico, or an adjacent island (for F and J nonimmigrants) for thirty (30) days or less;
2. Nonimmigrants with a valid (unexpired) admission stamp or paper Form I-94, Arrival/Departure Record, endorsed by DHS.

If you have an expired visa, you meet the two conditions listed above, and would like more information about automatic revalidation, take a look at these websites:

http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/automatic-revalidation.html

As with all F-1 travel, you need a valid travel signature on page 2 your I-20. Unlike a regular travel signature like you would have received from us during your studies, a travel signature for an OPT student is only valid for six (6) months.

The best practice if you plan to travel during OPT is to visit a Monroe College DSO so that you can:

1. Report your OPT employment details.
2. Get a re-print of your I-20 to show your employment information and to indicate “OPT approved”.
(Date)

Dear U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer:

This letter serves to confirm that (Employee Name) is currently employed at (Company Name) through post-completion optional practical training (OPT) for F-1 students. (He or She) has been employed with us since (employment start date) and is expected to continue with (his or her) employment until (his or her) OPT ends on (OPT end date).

(Employee Name) has requested permission to travel to (travel destination) from (date leave begins) to (date leave ends) and has been given approval to do so. (He or She) is scheduled to return to work on (date employee will return to work).

Any courtesy that you can extend to our valued employee will be greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (supervisor’s phone number) or (supervisor’s email address).

Sincerely,

(SUPERVISOR’S SIGNATURE)

(Supervisor’s Name)
(Supervisor’s Title)
OPT Employment Reporting Form for F-1 Students

Use this form to report your OPT employment information to a DSO. You are required to report new employment and any changes within 10 days. In order to maintain F-1 status during OPT, you may not accrue more than 90 days of unemployment over the course of your OPT period.

Scan and email this form to: DSO@monroecollege.edu

Your Name: ____________________________________________

Student ID#: __________________ SEVIS ID# from your I-20: N_____________________

U.S. Address: __________________________________________

Cell Phone: ____________________________________________

Personal Email Address: __________________________________

Employer/Company Name: ________________________________

Employer Tax ID Number (EIN) If Available: __________________

Your Job Title: __________________________________________

Employment Start Date: ____________________________ Employment End Date: ______________

End Date of Prior OPT Job (if any): __________________________

Hours Per Week: _____ Part-time (less than 20 hrs) _____ Full-time (more than 20 hrs)

Employer/Company Address: ______________________________

Supervisor’s Name: ______________________________________

Supervisor Phone Number: ________________________________

Supervisor’s Email: ______________________________________

Please explain how this employment is related to your academic program at Monroe College:

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

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Student Signature: __________________________ Date: __________
Resources for OPT Students

Study in the States

A user-friendly Department of Homeland Security website for students and schools

https://studyinthesates.dhs.gov/working-in-the-united-states

Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Policy Guidance

An Immigration and Customs Enforcement website with an extensive list of answers to your OPT questions


Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Practical Training

An Immigration and Customs Enforcement website with a good summary of practical training and access for the F-1 regulations

https://www.ice.gov/sevis/practical-training

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)

A Department of Homeland Security website with an excellent overview of OPT eligibility and outline of the application process


A Department of Homeland Security website with details about the employment authorization application which is a form called the "I-765". This is the form used to apply for OPT

http://www.uscis.gov/i-765

Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Travel

An Immigration and Customs Enforcement website with answers about traveling during the OPT application process and after OPT has been approved

https://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel