



Maintaining Your Visa Status While on Optional Practical Training

1. **Keep a valid Employment Authorization Document (EAD)**

Students must have the EAD card in hand and the start date on EAD has arrived before employment can begin. Email a scanned copy of EAD card to the CIE.

2. **Report OPT Information to the CIE**

Students continue to be sponsored by Maryville College while they are engaged in post-completion OPT and OPT STEM. Students are required to report to the CIE, within 10 days of each change:

- a. any new employment,
- b. change in employment,
- c. change of residential/mailling address,
- d. change of legal name

For students on OPT STEM Extension, even if there are no changes, you are required to resubmit your existing employment and personal information every 6 months starting from the date the extension starts. When you are on OPT STEM Extension, if your employment is terminated for any reason prior to the end date of your OPT STEM Extension, your employer is also required to provide the following information to the CIE via [EMAIL](#) within 48 hours of the event: student's name, SEVIS ID number (if available), and the start/end dates of the OPT employment.

How to Report

To report a change of address or employment complete a CIE Reporting Survey and submit it online <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CIE-OPTRreporting>. The CIE will report your changes to Homeland Security.

3. **Have your I-20 signed by the CIE every six months.**

4. **Travel While on OPT/OPT Extension**

Each travel signature on your I-20 is only valid for 6 months. Here are the required documents to re-enter the U.S. if you have applied for post-completion OPT, and your program end date on your I-20 has arrived:

- a. before your OPT is approved: OPT I-20 with a valid travel signature; a valid passport and valid F-1 visa; OPT application receipt notice; proof of financial support; a job offer letter (strongly recommended)
- b. after your OPT has been approved: OPT I-20 with a valid travel signature; a valid passport and valid F-1 visa; a valid EAD card; proof of financial support; a job offer letter or an employment verification letter.
- c. Please consult with the CIE if you have questions.

5. **Departure/Grace Period**

F-1 regulations allow students to remain in the U.S. for 60 days after the expiration date of the EAD. During the departure/grace period, you cannot be employed. If you travel out of the U.S., you may not return in F-1 OPT status.

6. **Begin a New Academic Program at Another U.S. School**

If you start a new academic program at another U.S. school, your SEVIS record must be transferred from Maryville College to the new school. Notify the CIE if you plan to transfer so we can release your SEVIS record. Once you transfer out of Maryville College, your current I-20, EAD, and related work permission are no longer valid.

7. **Changed Your Status**

If you have changed your status, email proof of your new status to the CIE. The CIE will complete, or terminate your F-1 SEVIS record based on change of status. Your I-20 and OPT EAD will no longer be valid.

Acceptable Employment

The Department of Homeland Security requires students to report to their schools all periods of employment and unemployment while authorized for OPT. DHS has ruled that acceptable employment during OPT can include standard employment, contract employment, self-employment and volunteer positions. All employment must be appropriate to your degree and average at least 20 hours per week. Please refer to the following chart for more details.

Type of Employment	Instructions
Single Employer	Provide the employment dates and your employer's name and address.
None - Actively Seeking Employment	If you have been unemployed for more than 10 days since your OPT start date, indicate those dates. To remain in the U.S., you must be actively looking for relevant employment. In order to maintain your visa status, you must limit unemployment while on OPT to a total of 90 days or 120 days if you have been approved for the 17-month OPT extension.
Work for Hire (contract employment)	Provide the employment dates and your employer's name and address. If requested by DHS, you must be able to provide evidence that you worked an average of at least 20 hours per week.

Unpaid Volunteer or Intern	Provide the employment dates and your employer's name and address. If requested by DHS, you must be able to provide evidence that you worked an average of at least 20 hours per week and that the work was related to your OPT degree. This option is not available to students in the 17-month OPT extension period.
Self-Employed U.S. Business Owner	List your company's name or print "Self-Employed" and the business address. This location may be the same as your personal address, if appropriate. If requested by DHS, you must be able to provide evidence that you have proper business licenses, the business is related to your degree and that the business keeps you full-time employed. If requested by DHS, you must be able to provide evidence that you worked an average of at least 20 hours per week.
Note	It is essential that you keep documentation (e.g. employment letters, contracts, timesheets, pay stubs, etc.) of all of your employment while on OPT. Such documentation should include the position held, proof of the duration of that position, contact information for your supervisor and a description of the work. If it is not clear from the job description that the work is related to your field of study, then you should obtain a letter from your advisor stating how your degree relates to the position.

Unemployment Limits

Students in Initial OPT Period – Maximum of 90 days allowed during the 12-month OPT period.

Students With an OPT STEM Extension – An additional 30 days applies, for a maximum of 120 days allowed during the 27-month OPT period.

NOTE: The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has issued contradictory information regarding whether unemployment periods of less than 10 days count, or do not count, towards the 90 day unemployment deadline. **However, it is crucial that you report all periods of employment to avoid unnecessary accrual of unemployment days.**