



## **Student Responsibilities to Maintain Valid F-1 Status during Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

### **1. Review your Form I-797 (Notice of Action: Receipt Notice) and provide copy to ISSS:**

Approximately 30 days after your OPT application is received and receipted by USCIS, you will receive a Form I-797 Receipt Notice at the U.S. mailing address you provided to USCIS on your Form I-765. The notice will contain a receipt number you can use to check the status of your OPT application on the USCIS website - [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov). If you do not receive Form I-797 after 30 days, please notify [issm@miami.edu](mailto:issm@miami.edu).

Upon receipt of Form I-797, please verify that all of your information is accurate and upload a copy at [www.miami.edu/optdocs](http://www.miami.edu/optdocs). If the information is not correct, contact [issm@miami.edu](mailto:issm@miami.edu) immediately so that a request for correction can be submitted to USCIS.

Note: USCIS may need additional information to approve your OPT and may send you a Request for Evidence (RFE). Follow the instructions on the RFE and contact [issm@miami.edu](mailto:issm@miami.edu) if you need assistance.

### **2. Review your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and provide copy to ISSS:**

If your OPT application is approved, between 90 to 150 days from the date USCIS received your OPT application, you will receive work permission from USCIS, which will be in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), at the U.S. mailing address that you provided on your Form I-765. If you change your address before you have received your EAD, you must update your address on the USCIS website - [www.uscis.gov/addresschange](http://www.uscis.gov/addresschange) and email your address to [issm@miami.edu](mailto:issm@miami.edu).

**Upload a copy of your EAD (front and back) at [www.miami.edu/optdocs](http://www.miami.edu/optdocs).** ISSS will issue and mail you a new I-20 reflecting your OPT approval. You will need this I-20 for employment, travel, and all benefits (e.g. driver's license).

If your OPT application is not approved, you will receive a Denial Notice at the U.S. mailing address provided on your Form I-765. Notify [issm@miami.edu](mailto:issm@miami.edu) and submit a copy of your Denial Notice to [issm@miami.edu](mailto:issm@miami.edu) for further guidance.

### **3. Create an SEVP Portal Account:**

After your OPT has been approved and is active, you will receive an email notice from [do-notreply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:do-notreply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov) that includes a link to the SEVP Portal registration pages. You will be required to complete the registration using your SEVIS ID number to create an account.

The SEVP Portal is a tool for F-1 students on post-completion or STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) Optional Practical Training (OPT), which will allow you to:

- View details about your post-completion or STEM OPT.
- Report changes to your address, telephone and employer information.
- View and update data on all your employers.

SEVP has created an [SEVP Portal Help](#) section on the *Study in the States* website with:

- Information about the portal.
- The [SEVP Portal User Guide](#), which provides screenshots and detailed step-by-step instructions for using the portal.
- [SEVP Portal videos](#).
- A useful [one-page reference sheet](#) on the portal.

#### **4. Report changes to your address, telephone number and employer information on the SEVP Portal throughout your OPT.**

If you have any questions about the portal or need assistance related to the portal, call the SEVP Response Center at (703) 603-3400. For all other matters related to your F-1 status, contact ISSS at [iss@miami.edu](mailto:iss@miami.edu) or at (305) 284-2928.

**Your valid F-1 status in the U.S. is dependent on your employment for the duration of your OPT.** To maintain valid F-1 status during your OPT, you **MUST** report your employer information and changes in your local and/or permanent address and telephone number on the SEVP Portal.

Your employment must be directly related to your major field of study and appropriate for your level of education. If you change employers during your OPT, you must update the information on the SEVIS Portal within 10 business days. You may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during OPT. If you fail to report employment within 90 days of your start date, you will be out of status with immigration.

**You may not begin employment until you have received your EAD**, or until the approved start date on your EAD. Any work you do before receiving the EAD will be considered unauthorized employment. USCIS defines employment as the following: "...any type of work performed, or services provided, in exchange for money, tuition, fees, books, supplies, room, food or any other benefit."

**Social Security Number (SSN):** You will need a Social Security Number (SSN) to start employment. If you applied for your SSN on your OPT application (Form I-765), you will receive your Social Security Card at the address indicated on the form within two weeks of OPT approval. Do *not* e-mail or send a copy of the card to ISSS.

**Travel Instructions:** If traveling after completing your studies, follow these instructions:

*Before* your EAD has arrived, you must present the following documents to USCIS at the port-of-entry in order to seek reentry to the U.S.:

- Form I-797 (USCIS receipt notice for pending EAD application)
- SEVIS Form I-20, endorsed for travel by your ISSS advisor
- Valid passport
- Valid F-1 visa

*After* your EAD has arrived, you must present the following documents to USCIS at the port-of-entry in order to seek reentry to the U.S.:

- EAD issued by USCIS
- A letter from the U.S. employer regarding the employment for optional practical training.
- SEVIS Form I-20, endorsed for travel by your ISSS advisor within the last six months
- Valid passport
- Valid F-1 visa

Absence from the U.S. during OPT is limited to 90 days, or 5 months if on authorized leave or traveling as part of your U.S. employment.

## 5. Important Reminders:

**Definition of OPT:** OPT is employment that is related to the student's degree major and appropriate for the degree level. The location of the OPT employment must be within the US. OPT may be in any of these forms: 1. Working for one or multiple employers (short or long term). 2. Working on a contractual basis. 3. Working as a self-employed business owner on a full-time basis (with evidence of the proper business license). 4. Working through an agency. 5. Volunteering or holding an unpaid internship as long as the position does not violate any labor laws and that the volunteer work or internship is for at least 20 hours/week.

**Failure to graduate on date indicated on OPT application:** Contact ISSS immediately if you do not complete your degree requirements by the date indicated on your OPT application and on your Form I-20. Failure to do so will negatively affect your immigration status and your employment eligibility.

**Termination of Optional Practical Training:** Authorization to engage in OPT is automatically terminated when you transfer to another school or begin study at another educational level.

Please inform ISSS at [iss@miami.edu](mailto:iss@miami.edu) immediately if you have left the United States permanently and have decided not to pursue your OPT.

**Health insurance through United Healthcare:** International students who are no longer enrolled at the University but remain in the U.S. to engage in post-completion OPT may still be insured under the Student Insurance policy if they originally purchased a plan that continues beyond the completion of their studies. [Visit Student Health Service](#) for more information.

**Note:** It is your responsibility to retain copies of all your immigration documents and all immigration applications (Form I-20, employment, change of status, program extension, etc.) for your records/future use. ISSS is required to keep copies of your documents and applications for only three years beyond the end of your program of studies at UM and any authorized post-completion OPT.