

Information for OPT applicants

Important Points To Remember (from the original instruction sheet *with notes*):

- 1- Your Application **MUST BE RECEIVED BY USCIS** by **THREE WEEKS** after we create the I-20 (see the date by your Coordinator's signature). We must **FULLY RE-CREATE IT** if it is sent back to you!
- 2- You do not need a job to apply for Optional Practical Training; however, you **MUST report the name and address of your company, your job title, connection to your degree field, and work dates**** within 10 days after you start the job (*if you change jobs, or have more than one job, you must update your information*). If your job title or company does not clearly show how it relates to your degree program, include an explanation of how it is related. If you are not sure how to describe that your academic Program Advisor, Student Employment Services office, or your International Coordinator/DSO may be able to help.
Your I-20 will be TERMINATED exactly 90 days after the EAD start date if you do not do this!!
- 3- You can apply for a Social Security Card with your EAD, you do not need a new one if you have a number (****Do NOT carry your card – if you lose it, you must have current work authorization to apply for a replacement. Also, you may not be able to apply for the number until the start date on your EAD card – you are allowed to work while it is processing - you may request an explanation letter from us**)
- 4- You **MUST WORK** at least 9 of your 12 months or $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time you have requested (you must start within 90 days of your EAD start date for post graduation OPT). *“Work” means getting valid experience IN YOUR FIELD. It does NOT need to be paid but, if it is unpaid, we suggest you get a letter from your ‘employer’ stating this is designed to be an unpaid or volunteer position.*
- 5- Your OPT **CANNOT** be “extended”. You can apply for a new OPT to use any unused time before you graduate (if you used Pre-Completion OPT) and get a new OPT block at your next level of education. At the Bachelor level or above **ONLY**, STEM majors can apply for a program called “STEM Extension”
- 6- F-1 employees pay income taxes, but there are some taxes F1s do not pay – see the Tax Code at <http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/International-Taxpayers/Federal-Income-Tax-Reporting-and-Withholding-on-Wages-Paid-to-Aliens>. *(There will be some basic tax information for F-1s on the webpage and at the monthly Friday Workshop each March – if you are in the area you are welcome to attend!)*
- 7- Follow normal F1 procedures for transfer to another institution. *(Be sure to tell them you are on OPT and the dates of your OPT –Transfer BY DAY 45 after OPT ends AND must start full-time classes in the next term by day 150 after OPT ends. Work authorization ends when we transfer your I-20 record.)*
- 8- To Travel outside of the US while on OPT you will need: your I-20 signed by an International Coordinator at Montgomery College, your EAD card, and a letter from your employer saying that you will be returning to continue your work (or a job offer letter if you have not started yet).
- 9- It may be difficult to re-new your F-1 visa after you graduate, even with your EAD card. *(OPT is “optional” and much shorter than a degree program. The best time to get a new visa may be after the first semester of your next program. You may return from Adjacent and Contiguous countries with: a signature on your I-20, EAD and an employer letter – a valid F-1 visa is not required for these only)*
- 10- Your passport needs to be valid for the entire time of your OPT at the time you apply.
- 11- You must **keep your address and telephone number current**** with the International Office. *You may email this information. You may work anywhere in the United States if you are on Post completion OPT*
- 12- To use Post-Completion (after graduation) OPT you must actually graduate. IF you do NOT graduate as you expect (fail a required class, end up with a gpa below 2.0, or find out you need an additional course) **DO NOT WORK** and contact your Coordinator **immediately** to find out your options.
- 13- Graduates may take part time classes but **NOT** start your “next level of education” program. *You may take classes at Montgomery College (re-take classes to raise your gpa, additional pre-requisites for your next degree, classes for your interest). Classes at other institutions are possible depending on their requirements but you cannot start your next degree program or study full time and continue working.*

****Set up your GOVERNMENT PORTAL TO RECORD YOUR EMPLOYMENT AND ADDRESS INFO!
You will get an EMAIL from SEVP once your OPT is “Approved” and must set this up within 30 days!**

SEE: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis-help-hub/student-records/fm-student-employment/sevis-and-the-sevp-portal>

***Tips about the SEVP Portal and Email:**

- *The email is usually sent 1 to 3 days after your OPT authorization start date.*
- *It is sent from a “NOREPLY” address to your email on record – usually your MyMC email unless you change it with your International Coordinator/DSO.*
- *If you do not see your email from SEVP, first check your ‘spam’ filter as it is sometimes caught there.*
- *To have the portal email resent, contact any of the International Coordinators/DSOs*
- *To request a correction or update to the portal that you cannot do, contact any of the International Coordinators/DSOs*
- *Contact your International Coordinator/DSO if you have questions*

International Office: Telephone (240) 567-5043, General Email: I20questions@montgomerycollege.edu.
Office Hours, **Tax Information**, and **Insurance** see www.montgomerycollege.edu/InternationalStudents