



## Optional Practical Training- OPT- Facts and Questions about Travel

**1. Now that I have turned in my application, can I travel outside the U.S. while I wait for the card to come?** According to the latest guidance from Department of Homeland Security, you may leave the country and re-enter if your OPT application is pending. You must carry the receipt notice from USCIS with your other documents when traveling and be ready to explain your situation to the Port of Entry officer.

However, once your OPT application has been approved, the border official will ask to see a letter verifying your offer of employment. Due to unpredictable processing times at USCIS, it is advisable that you **do not travel while the OPT application is pending** unless you have a job offer letter from an employer.

If you are considering traveling outside the U.S. while your OPT application is pending, it is important that you discuss this situation with the Director of International Student Services.

**2. What documents do I need to re-enter the U.S. while on OPT?** You will need your I-20 that has been recently endorsed on the travel line by the DSO, the Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) from the USCIS, your valid passport, and a current visa stamp. You must also take a letter from your employer stating your job description, salary, location of employment, and start date. If you do not have this letter or the other documents, the border official can deny you entry to the U.S.

**3. What if I still have some time left on my student program? Can I travel during that time, even though my I-20 shows that I've been recommended for OPT but it is still pending with USCIS?** Yes. You must be returning as a student to complete academic requirements. For example, a student who has applied for OPT in May, is enrolled during the summer, but who does not graduate until August, may still travel as a student until their graduation date by re-entering the U.S. with a valid passport, current visa stamp, and the I-20 endorsed by the DSO. We recommend that you carry with you a letter from the Registrar verifying your current enrollment and stating your expected completion date.

**5. The visa stamp in my passport has expired, but I need to travel outside the U.S. while on OPT. Do I need to get a new visa stamp at an embassy?** If you are going to Canada or Mexico or other contiguous territories (except for Cuba), and staying for less than 30 days, you could re-enter the U.S. on your expired F-1 visa stamp, with a valid passport, your EAD card and an I-20 that has been recently signed by the DSO. You must keep it in your passport to re-enter the U.S. on an expired visa. If you are traveling elsewhere, you will need to go to a U.S. embassy or consulate and seek a new visa stamp for re-entry.

**6. In what ways is my application to the embassy for a new visa stamp affected by being on Optional Practical Training?** The risk of denial for an F-1 visa renewal when you are on OPT is higher than while you are in your active student program. The fact that the focus of your stay in the U.S now is that of working rather than going to school, it may be seen as an avenue for immigration rather than a temporary stay. If the embassy official is not convinced of your intention to return home, the visa application could be denied.

**7. What documents do I need to show at the embassy for a new visa stamp under OPT?** You need to take a valid passport; your I-20 recently endorsed by the DSO, your EAD card, and the official employment letter showing your salary, location of where you are or will be working, job duties, and beginning date. You should also be prepared to discuss how this temporary job experience will apply to the job market in your home country, and how you intend to apply it there.

**8. Do I still need to get the travel line on my I-20 signed by the DSO during the period of my OPT?** Yes, during your OPT; if you need to travel outside the U.S., you need to have a recent signature on the back of your I-20. If you are not located in the North Canton area, mail the original I-20 to the DSO for the travel endorsement well in advance of your departure date from the U.S. You are required to send the I-20 through express mail and enclose a self-addressed, pre-paid express mail envelope for the DSO to return your I-20.