



FAQ'S REGARDING TRAVEL DURING OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) AFTER COMPLETION OF PROGRAM

While Your OPT application is PENDING with USCIS:

- **I have sent my OPT application to the USCIS Service Center. Can I go home (or travel outside the U.S.) while I wait for the EAD card to arrive?**
 - **Yes.** If you have an application pending with USCIS, and you choose to travel outside the U.S., you may reenter the U.S. to search for employment. To avoid problems you should make sure you return before the completion date on your I-20.
- **I want to leave the U.S. for a short time while my OPT application is being processed by the USCIS. I will return to the U.S. before my EAD card arrives. I have a tourist visa (B-2) that is valid for 10 years. Can't I just enter the U.S. on my tourist visa while waiting for the EAD card and then start work with the card once I get it?**
 - **NO!** If you leave the U.S. and re-enter on a tourist visa, you will not be in F-1 student status and be eligible for F-1 student benefits. Therefore, if you reenter the U.S. in B-2 status, your OPT application and EAD card will not be valid for work authorization.

After your OPT application has been APPROVED

- **My OPT application has been approved by the USCIS Service Center. Can I travel and then re-enter the U.S.?**
 - **ONLY IF YOU HAVE A JOB OFFER!!!**
 - If your OPT has been approved and you depart the U.S. **before you get a job, your OPT ends and you cannot re-enter the U.S.**
 - If your OPT has been approved and you have a job or a job offer, you may travel and re-enter the U.S. Please be sure that you have verification of your job before you travel.
- **What Documents do I need to re-enter the U.S.?**
 - A **letter from your employer** on official letterhead verifying that you are employed under OPT or a letter from an employer offering you a job.
 - Your **SEVIS I-20 for OPT with an ISSO Advisor signature** on page 3. This signature should **not** be more than 6 months old when you re-enter the U.S.
 - Your valid **Employment Authorization Document (EAD card)**
 - Your **valid passport**
 - A **valid F-1 visa stamp** (except for re-entry from Canada, Mexico and contiguous territories after short trips of < 30 days).
 - **NOTE:** Citizens of Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan & Syria **may not** re-enter the U.S. with an expired F-1 visa.
 - **NOTE:** Individuals who have a U.S. visa application **pending** at the U.S. consulate **may not** re-enter the U.S. with an expired F-1 visa.
 - **NOTE:** Individuals who have applied for a U.S. visa and have been **denied** **will not** be able to re-enter the U.S. with an expired F-1 visa.
- **The completion date in section 5 (page 1) of my I-20 is my graduation date and that date has passed. Is this a problem for me if I have a valid EAD card?**
 - **NO.** When you have been approved for OPT the 'validity' of your F-1 student status has been extended to the ending date of your OPT period. Therefore, you may travel as long as you have proof of employment **and** your EAD card.
- **Do I still need to get my I-20 signed by an ISSO advisor during the year of my OPT?**
 - **YES.** While on OPT you should have your I-20 signed every 6 months if you plan to travel outside the U.S.
- **The F-1 visa has expired in my passport but I want to travel outside the U.S. Do I need to get a new F-1 visa stamp?**
 - **NO,** if you are visiting Canada or Mexico and staying 30 days or less **and** you are **not** a citizen of Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan & Syria, you will not need to get a new F-1 visa stamp. You must have
 - A letter from your employer
 - A valid passport
 - A valid EAD card
 - Your I-20 (signed by ISSO advisor within the last 6 months)