

OPT

A step-by-step guide

What is OPT?

- **Optional Practical Training**
 - Work permission for **1 year** (with option to **extend 2 years** for **STEM** degrees)
 - Purpose is to gain **experience in your field**

 - **One year of OPT per degree level**
 - Must be progressively higher (i.e. bachelor → master → doctoral)
-

OPT Application Process



Don't I need a job to apply for OPT?

NO!

- Why not??
 - USCIS can take up to **three months** to review your OPT application
 - It would be **WAY TOO LATE** to apply if you waited to find a job first
-

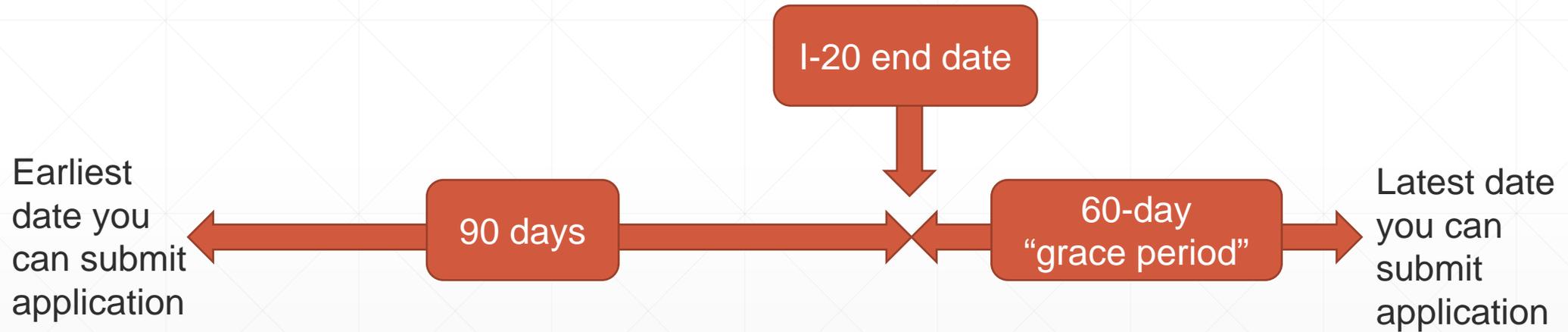
When can I apply?

- Apply for OPT during your **last** semester at UMBC
- The **earliest** you can apply for OPT is **90 days** before your I-20 end date
- The **latest** you can apply for OPT is **60 days** after your I-20 end date

Approximate OPT timeline by grad term

	Spring grads	Fall grads
Earliest date	Feb 25	Sept 25
I-20 end date	May 25	Dec 23
Latest date	July 24	Feb 20

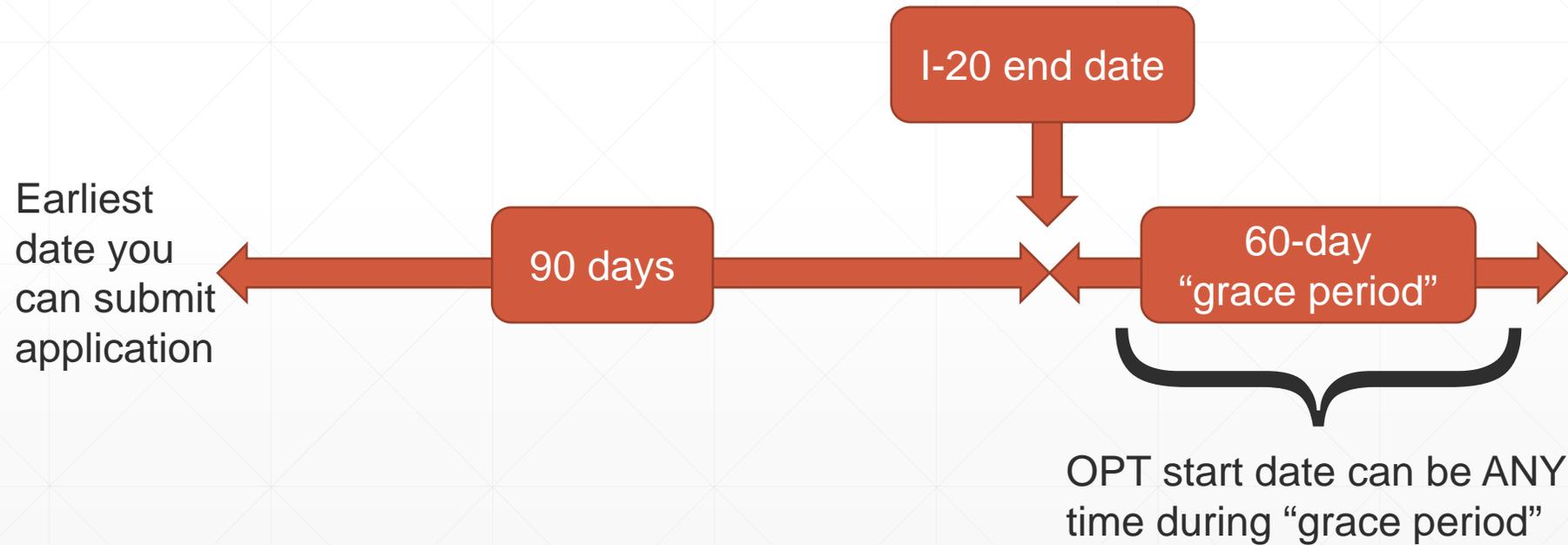
Another way to think about it



Don't wait until it's too late!

- Remember that many other students will want to apply for OPT around the same time you do
 - **OPT applications cannot be rushed**
 - We process applications as they come in, **not based on your OPT start date**
 - USCIS can take up to **90 days** to review your OPT application
-

Choosing a start date



If I don't have a job, how do I pick a start date?

- Based on the job market or how much job hunting you've done so far
 - Allow time for **application processing** – this can take up to **90 days**
 - Consider travel and what you might do during break from school

 - **Remember: you do not have to have a job on your OPT start date**
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OK, I've chosen a start date. Now what?

1. Complete OPT application (*more on this to follow*)
 2. Get academic (departmental) adviser's signature
 3. Email ALL required documents to **ies@umbc.edu**
 4. Receive scanned OPT I-20 by email, print and sign
 5. Mail application to USCIS
 6. Wait (patiently!) for approval
-

After you apply, you receive:

1. Receipt
 - Usually arrives between 2 weeks and 1 month after submission
2. Approval notice
 - Usually arrives after about 3 months
3. EAD card
 - Usually arrives about 1 week after approval notice

If you submit form G-1145 you will also receive email and text updates

I'm approved!

Way to go, you!

What are the rules governing my OPT time?

- You **must** be **working!**
 - The expectation is that you will be working during your year of OPT
 - You also have up to **90 days** of **unemployment** time, meaning it is OK not to have a job in your SEVIS record for up to 3 of your 12 months of OPT
 - All jobs during OPT must be **directly related** to your UMBC **degree program**
 - Part-time or Full-time, paid or unpaid — all OK during OPT
 - You must be working at least 20 hours per week (combined) to meet these requirements
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What are the rules governing my OPT time?

- Unlike CPT, you are allowed to change jobs at any time
 - However, you **must** update your SEVP Portal:
 - change jobs
 - get a new job
 - end an earlier job
 - change your address
 - SEVP Portal: <https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/>
-

SEVP Portal

An official website of the United States government

 **SEVP Portal | Student and Exchange Visitor Program Portal**

Sign In

Attention: Only students who have OPT approved may use the SEVP Portal. You must create an account and set a password before using this log in page. Go to [Portal Help](#) for more information.

Email

Password

[Login](#) [Reset Password](#)

This system supports the following browsers: IE11 and above, Mozilla 38 and above, Google Chrome Version 53.0.2785.116 m and above, Safari OS X and above

Department of Homeland Security Consent

You are about to access a Department of Homeland Security computer system. This computer system and data therein are property of the U.S. Government and provided for official U.S. Government information and use. There is no expectation of privacy when you use this computer system. The use of a password or any other security measure does not establish an expectation of privacy. By using this system, you consent to the terms set forth in this notice. You may not process classified national security information on this computer system. Access to this system is restricted to authorized users only. Unauthorized access, use, or modification of this system or of data contained herein, or in transit to/from this system, may constitute a violation of section 1030 of title 18 of the U.S. Code and other criminal laws. Anyone who accesses a Federal computer system without authorization or exceeds access authority, or obtains, alters, damages, destroys, or discloses information, or prevents authorized use of information on the computer system, may be subject to penalties, fines or imprisonment. This computer system and any related equipment is subject to monitoring for administrative oversight, law enforcement, criminal investigative purposes, inquiries into alleged wrongdoing or misuse, and to ensure proper performance of applicable security features and procedures. DHS may conduct monitoring activities without further notice.

SEVP Portal

Employer #:	Employer Name	Date	Errors
722631	Finmec...	7/1/2017 - 6/14/2018	-

Self Employed

Employer Name: Required
Enter the legal name of the company that hired you.

Finmeccanica

Employer Address: Required
Address:
Enter the address where you work. Enter the street address in the top line. Use Address 2 line for the name of the building, if it is normally part of the address. See <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov> for more details.

320 23rd St S

Health insurance

This is **VERY serious**:

- You will no longer be automatically enrolled in UMBC's health insurance
 - You can choose to remain on UMBC's plan by contacting uhs@umbc.edu
 - You **need** to think about this! It is extremely dangerous to be in the US without health insurance. See about options your employer might have, or consider the Healthcare Marketplaces established through the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare)
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Continuing education

- You are free to take classes during OPT
 - But you may **not** begin a new **degree program**, or your OPT ends automatically
 - Register for courses as a “non degree-seeking” or “visiting student”
 - Degree-seeking programs would require you to transfer your SEVIS record or change your Education Level, which **automatically ends** your **OPT** approval
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Got it. Let's do this.

Ready to complete the OPT application?

IES OPT Info Sheet

- SEVIS ID, I-20 end date, Major
 - Copy from page 1 of your I-20
- OPT dates, fill if you have decided

- Read the statements at the bottom
- **Sign and date**



International Education Services
1000 Hilltop Circle, 222 Administration Building
Baltimore, MD 21250
PHONE: 410.455.2624 FAX: 410.455.1130
E-mail: ies@umbc.edu
WEB: www.umbc.edu/ies

IES OPT Information Sheet

This form is to be completed by the student. It is used by IES advisers to confirm your eligibility for OPT and to process your OPT recommendation I-20 in SEVIS.

First name: _____ Last name: _____

SEVIS ID: _____ Telephone: _____

Personal (NOT UMBC) Email address you will use while on OPT:

OPT START DATE: _____ OPT END DATE: _____

I-20 End date: _____

Major/field of study _____

Degree level: Bachelor's Master's Doctorate (Ph.D.)

Required for all students –review and confirm the following statements by signing below:

- I have thoroughly reviewed the OPT application information on the IES website.

Adviser form

- Review with your academic (departmental) adviser – **not IES!**
- Adviser is confirming you have completed all **coursework** requirements of your degree program, but not necessary thesis/dissertation/capstone work
- This form is **required** in order to receive your OPT I-20



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Academic Adviser's Recommendation Form

This form is to be **completed by the academic (departmental) adviser** during the last semester before the student will complete all coursework requirements and apply for OPT. This form should be returned **via email**. Alternatively, an email directly from the advisor confirming the student's expected completion of coursework in the current semester is acceptable. If you have any questions please direct them to the IES office at 410-455-2624 or ies@umbc.edu. This form is only required if the student is applying for post-completion OPT.

Name of Student: _____

Academic Advisor's name: _____

Department: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

By checking the box you are confirming that the above mentioned student is in their final semester at UMBC and is expected to graduate at the end of it.

I-765

- Step-by-step instructions:
 - <https://ies.umbc.edu/opt-application-information/>
-

G-1145

- Fill this form out so you will receive email and text updates when USCIS takes action on your application
- We recommend that you use an email address **other than** your UMBC email address
- Make sure to use a **mobile/cell phone number** for the SMS text updates

Complete this form and clip it on top of the first page of your immigration form(s).

Applicant/Petitioner Full Last Name	Applicant/Petitioner Full First Name	Applicant/Petitioner Full Middle Name
Email Address		Mobile Phone Number (Text Message)

I-94

- Available online
Search for “I-94” – choose **.gov** site
- Enter name **exactly** as it appears on your F-1 student visa
- Copy passport number and issuing country from your passport
- Click next.....

Enter Your Traveler Info

Note: The info returned may not reflect applications submitted to or benefits received by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services or Immigration and Customs Enforcement.



* First (Given) Name :

* Last (Family) Name/Surname :



* Birth Date :

Day

Month

Year



* Passport Number :



* Passport Country of Issuance :



[Cancel](#)

NEXT >

Proceed to your most recent I-94

I-94

- Available online
Search for “I-94,” choose .gov site
- Enter name **exactly** as it appears on your F-1 student visa
- Copy passport number and issuing country from your passport
- Click next....
- This is your I-94 record!

I-94 Admission Record

Admission (I-94) Record Number :

[REDACTED]

Most Recent Date of Entry:

[REDACTED] January 16

Class of Admission :

F1

Admit Until Date :

D/S

Details provided on the I-94 Information form:

1. Last/Surname :

[REDACTED]

2. First (Given) Name :

[REDACTED]

3. Birth Date :

[REDACTED] July [REDACTED]

4. Passport Number :

[REDACTED]

5. Country of Issuance :

[REDACTED]

I-94 Admission Record

Admission (I-94) Record Number :

[REDACTED]

Most Recent Date of Entry:

[REDACTED] January 16

Class of Admission :

F1

Admit Until Date :

D/S

Details provided on the I-94 Information form:

1. Last/Surname :

[REDACTED]

2. First (Given) Name :

[REDACTED]

3. Birth Date :

[REDACTED] July [REDACTED]

4. Passport Number :

[REDACTED]

5. Country of Issuance :

[REDACTED]

I-94

- The “Admission (I-94) Record Number” will be entered on the form I-765
- You can also view your **Travel History** through this site
- The most recent entry record will also be entered on the form I-765

Passport and visa

- Make photocopies of your current passport and F-1 student visa
 - If your F-1 visa is in an older passport, include copies of **both** old and new passport in your application
 - Your F-1 visa **can** be expired
 - Your passport **cannot** be expired
-

Forms I-20

- You should make copies of **all** the I-20s you have ever been given
 - Yes, **ALL** your old I-20s
 - If you cannot find one or more of your old I-20s, you should include as many as you still have
 - USCIS is most concerned with I-20s that show work authorization, but remember to include all available I-20s
-

OK. Now what?

Got it all? Now put it together and make an appointment with IES

OPT Document Review by IES

- Gather **ALL** the required documents
 - Email the required documents (IES OPT Info sheet, **signed** academic adviser form, completed I-765) to **ies@umbc.edu** and wait for us to send back your new OPT I-20
 - If you have detailed questions or doubts about OPT– contact IES ahead of time, before submitting all your documents
 - You are not required to visit the IES office to apply for OPT, everything can be handled over email. If you would like IES to review your complete assembled OPT application package, please stop by our Walk-In Advising hours (10-12, Mon-Thu)
-

Now mail it away!

Once you have your new OPT I-20 from IES, you can submit your application

Special topics

1. International travel

2. MVA/DMV

3. Ph.D. end dates

- **Before** your OPT start date, the same rules apply to international travel as when you were a full-time student. You must carry your valid passport, visa, and I-20 with a travel signature not older than 1 year.
- **After** your OPT start date, you must **ALSO** carry your EAD card, a job offer letter or proof of employment, and your I-20 signature cannot be older than **six months**.
- **After** your I-20 end date but **before** your OPT start date, no US Embassy or Consulate will renew your visa
- So be sure to consult with IES regarding any travel if you do not hold a valid F-1 visa

Special topics

1. International travel
2. MVA/DMV
3. Ph.D. end dates

- It can be difficult to renew your driver's license or State ID Card while your OPT application is **pending**
- When your I-20 end date has passed but your OPT start date has not yet arrived, you may have difficulty renewing your license
- Be sure to complete the **SAVE verification** online **before** you go to the MVA
- There is a link to the SAVE verification form from IES's website

Special topics

1. International travel
2. MVA/DMV
3. Ph.D. end dates

- Doctoral students have some flexibility in their I-20 end dates, as many students conduct ongoing dissertation research during their OPT period
- There is a type of OPT called **pre-completion**, which, as the name suggests, is OPT authorization **before** your academic program is complete and your I-20 end date arrives
- IES generally discourages this option when **full-time CPT** is available, but we are more than happy to discuss your options if you are an eligible Ph.D. student

Special topics

1. International travel
2. MVA/DMV
3. Ph.D. end dates

After OPT

Post-practical training options

After OPT

1. STEM OPT

2. I-20 transfer

3. Change of Ed Level

4. Leave US

- Students in **approved STEM disciplines** have the option of **extending** their year of OPT an additional **two years**
- You must submit another OPT application to USCIS **before** the end date of your post-completion OPT and **no earlier** than **90 days** before that end date
- Must show you have **earned your degree** OR that you have a thesis pending (IES cannot prove this)
- Can only work for employers enrolled in E-Verify
- Must submit **I-983 Training Plan** for each and every employer you work for during STEM OPT
- See IES's website for further information about STEM OPT

After OPT

1. STEM OPT

2. I-20 transfer

3. Change of Ed Level

4. Leave US

- When your OPT ends (or your STEM OPT ends, if you are eligible and apply), you have **another 60-day grace period**, during which you **cannot work** but can **legally remain** in the US
- You can choose to begin a new degree program, either at UMBC through a Change of Education Level, or at another school through an I-20 transfer
- If you do not wish to begin a new program, your F-1 status requires that you leave the US within the 60-day grace period
- Instructions on changing your education level or transferring your I-20 to another school are available on IES's website

After OPT

1. STEM OPT

2. I-20 transfer

3. Change of Ed Level

4. Leave US