

OPT Workshop

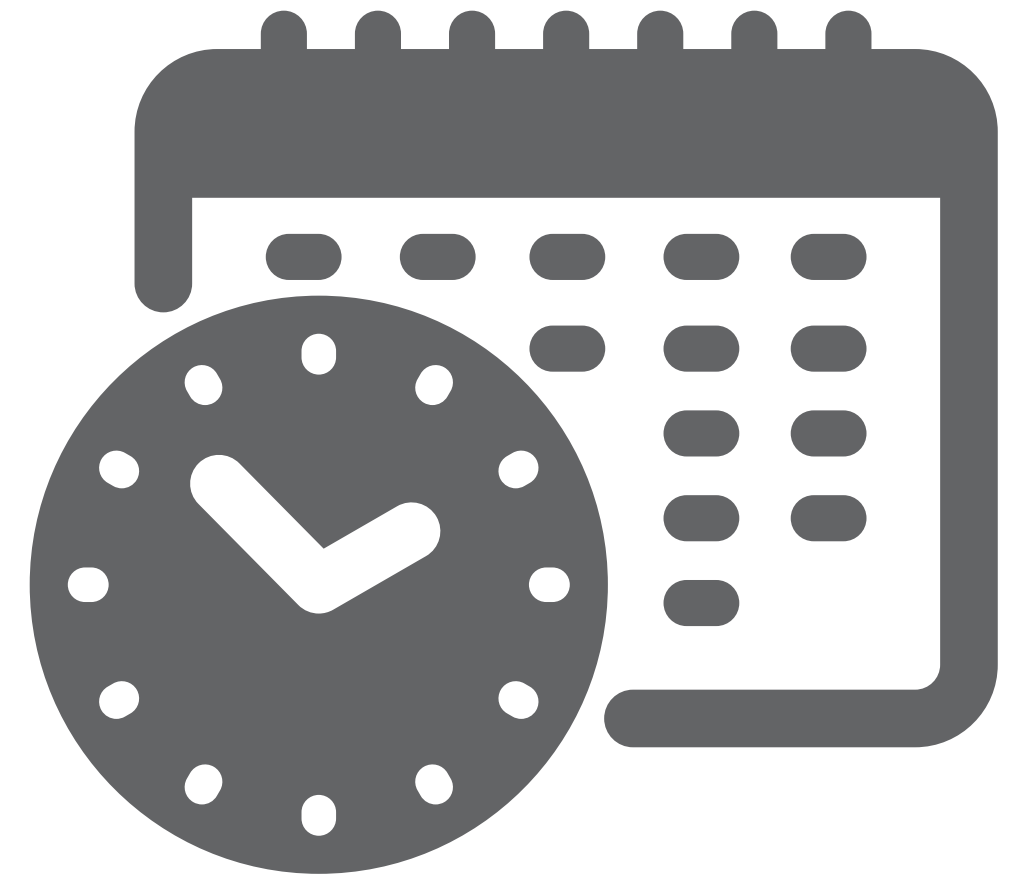


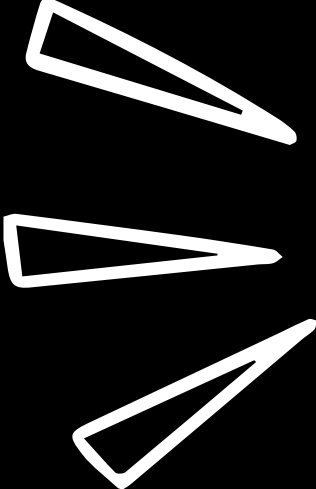
CENTER FOR GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

Office of International Students and Scholars

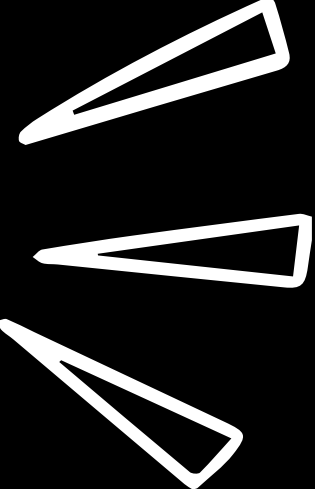
Agenda

- What is OPT?
- OPT Basics
- After Approval
- Application Step-by-Step
- Special Topics
- After OPT
- Questions?



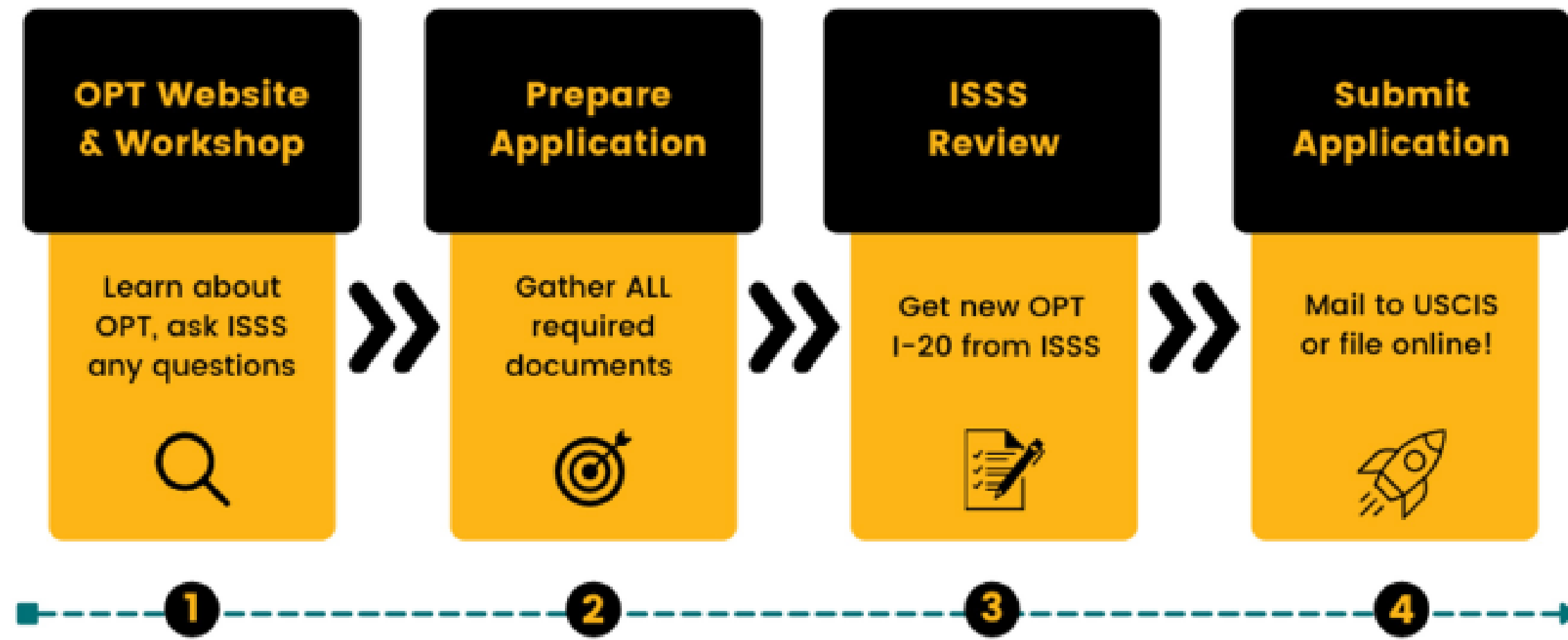


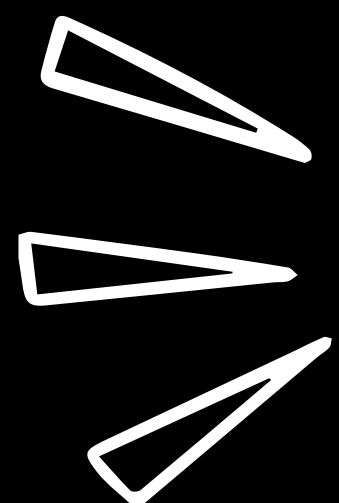
What is OPT?



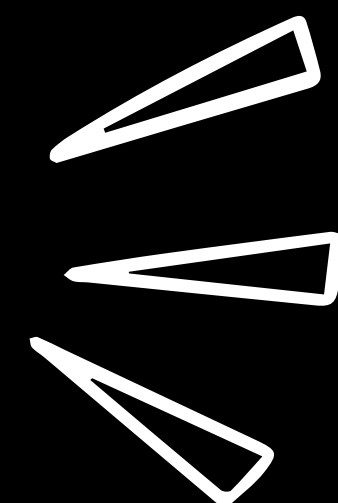
Optional Practical Training

- 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 Basics



Do I need a job to apply for OPT?

No. USCIS can take more than three months to review your OPT application. It would be WAY TOO LATE to apply if you waited to find a job first.

No. You should apply as soon as possible!



When Can I Apply?

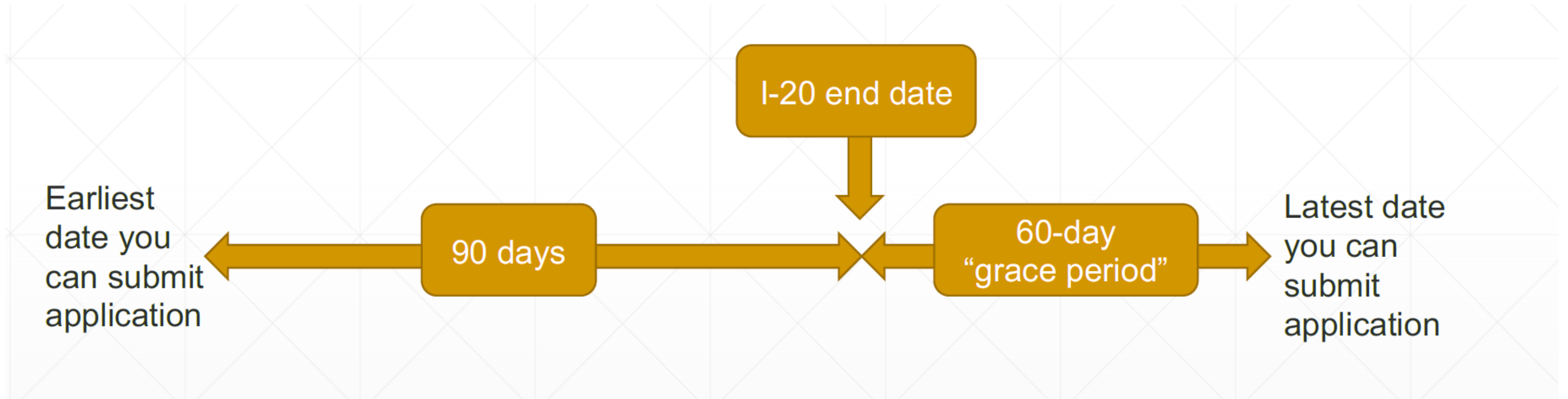
- During your last semester at UMBC
- The **earliest** you can apply is **90 days** before your program end date.
- The **latest** you can apply for OPT is **60 days** after your I-20 end date

Not sure if you'll graduate on time? Worried about passing a course? This is the one time we recommend you wait - rescinding an OPT application if you don't graduate can be tricky!

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



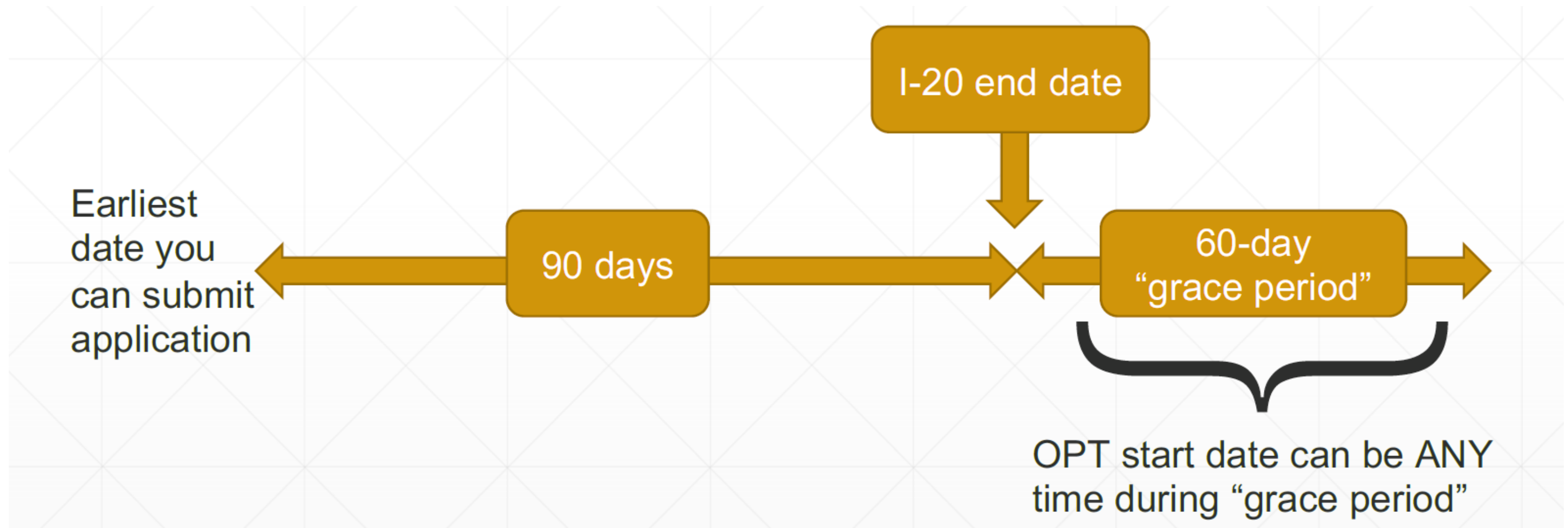


Don't Wait to Apply!

- Once you're confident you will graduate, don't wait further to apply - give yourself plenty of time.
- Remember that many other students will want to apply for OPT around the same time you do
- OPT applications cannot be rushed
- Applications are processed as they come in, not based on your OPT start date
- USCIS can take more than 90 days to review your OPT application



Choosing a Start Date



If I don't have a job offer, how do I choose 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 more than 90 days
- Consider travel and what you might do during break from school
- There is no way to guarantee uninterrupted work permission– be open and honest with employers!

Remember: you do NOT have to have a job offer to apply for OPT.



Next Steps

1. Review the OISS website for application instructions and prepare Form I-765 through the USCIS online system.
2. Complete and submit OPT Application through the ISSS Portal
3. Invite your academic advisor to approve your application through the ISSS Portal
4. Receive scanned OPT I-20 in your ISSS Portal account, *print it out and sign it!*
5. Submit your complete application online through <uscis.gov>.
6. Wait (patiently!) for approval



After you Apply to USCIS, you Receive:

1. Receipt

- a. Available for download on the USCIS website immediately after you submit your application and pay the fee.

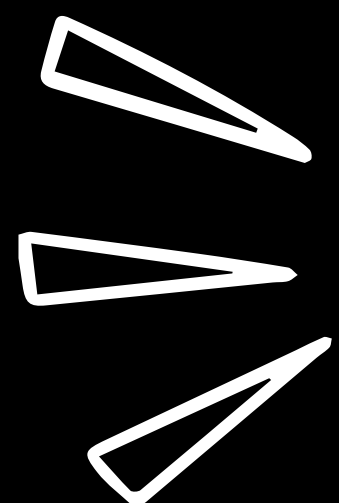
2. Approval Notice

- a. Usually arrives after 2 - 3 months - can take longer!

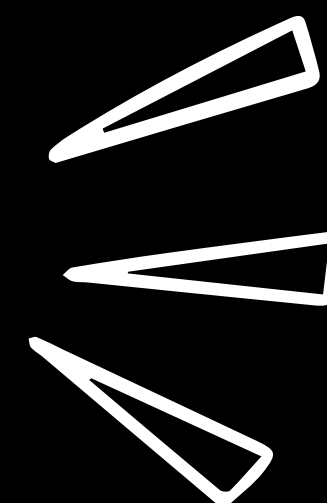
3. EAD Card

- a. Usually arrives about 1 week after the approval notice.





After Approval



Maintaining your Status while on OPT

- **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.
- All jobs must be **directly related** to your degree program at UMBC.
- Part-time (< 20 hrs) or Full-time, paid or unpaid — all OK during OPT
 - You must be working at least 20 hours a week (total) to meet requirements.
- You can change jobs at any point during OPT.
- You must update your SEVP Portal account whenever you:
 - change jobs
 - change your address
 - change any contact information



SEVP Portal

<https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/>

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

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.

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.



Health Insurance

This is **VERY serious**:

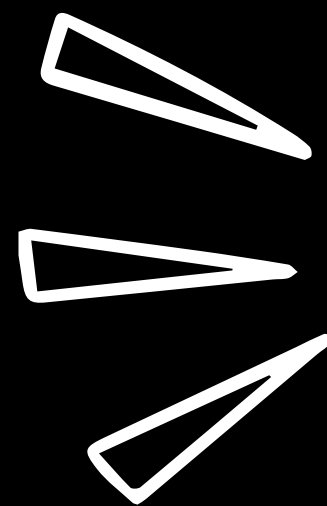
- You will no longer be automatically enrolled in UMBC's health insurance
- You may be offered health insurance coverage from your employer, or you can look at third-party providers like ISO, Gateway USA, etc.
- *You need to think about this!* It is extremely risky to be in the US without health insurance. See about options your employer might have, or consider the Healthcare Marketplaces established through the Affordable Care Act



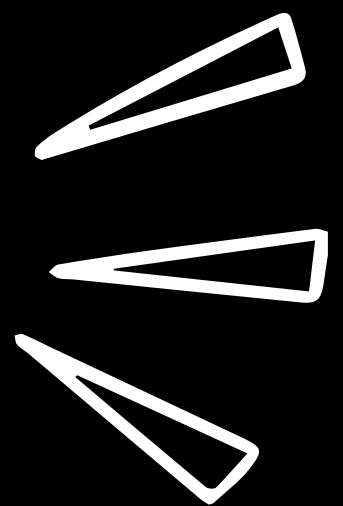
Continuing Education

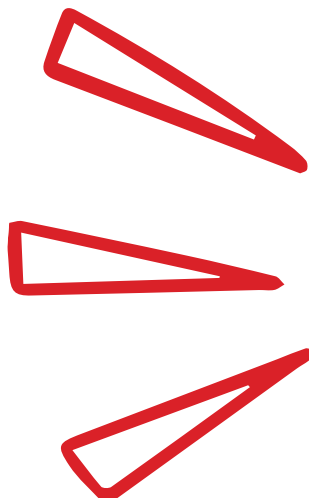
- You can take classes while on OPT but you CANNOT begin a new degree program
 - Register for courses as a “non degree-seeking” or “visiting student”
- Please contact OISS if you:
 - 1) Plan to begin a new degree program
 - This includes beginning a new program at UMBC or transferring to a new school
 - 2) Decide to end OPT early and depart the US
 - 3) Change status to another visa type (ex. H-1B) during OPT



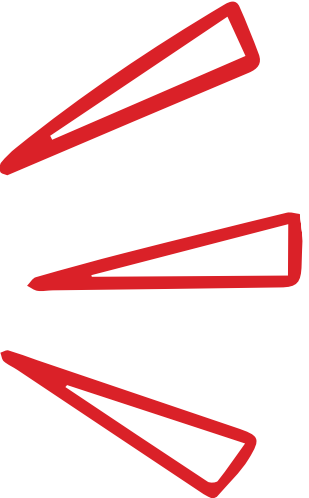


OPT Process: Step- by-Step





This is a personal application to USCIS. It is your responsibility to ensure your documentation is accurate.



Submit an Optional Practical Training Request on the ISSS Portal

1

The request includes:

- Electronic academic advisor recommendation
- Questionnaire



[International Education Services](#)[F-1 Students](#)[J-1 Exchange Visitors](#)[H-1B Employees](#)[Forms](#)[UMBC Scholar Portal](#)

Announcements

Address/Contact Info Changed?

Please update your contact information with IES. [\[View Details\]](#)

Forms

[Incoming Students](#)[Current Students](#)[Employment](#)

NEW STUDENT/SCHOLAR

- New F-1 Student I-20 and for any current F-1 status

- New J-1 Student Form DS-2019 and

- New Student Arrival entry to the U.S.

- New J-1 Scholar J-1 short-term scholar eligibility.

IMMIGRATION REQUESTS

- Change of Educational Institution
- Change of Finality of your I-20.

[Cap-Gap Extension Request](#)[Curricular Practical Training \(CPT\)](#)[Off-Campus](#)[Employment - Severe Economic Hardship](#)[Optional Practical Training \(OPT\)](#)[OPT Employment Update](#)[STEM OPT Extension](#)[STEM OPT Validation](#)[Report](#)

Sarah B Cockcroft

Request: Optional Practical Training (OPT) (F-M)

Term/Year: Request, 2026

Dates: TBA

Instructions

Please review and click on ALL sections of this page to confirm if each is applicable to you.

Note: You must file your Form I-765 through USCIS's online application system. You can find instructions for completing the I-765 online [here](#).

Please use the **I-765 Guidelines** to help you complete the form correctly.

Note: the OPT: Academic Adviser recommendation must also be requested from your academic/department adviser. The recommendation must be submitted by your academic adviser before we can review and process your application.

Once you have completed ALL sections, click the **Submit** button at the top of this page to have this record reviewed by an ISSS adviser.



Recommendations	
Requests	Completed
OPT: Academic Advisor (1 required) To apply for OPT, your academic/department advisor must verify your academic eligibility.	
Please click the link below to request this confirmation from your academic advisor in the directory search.	
- Request Electronic Recommendation	
1 or more required recommendations have not yet been requested.	☐

- You must send an electronic request to your academic/department advisor
- Your advisor will verify your eligibility for OPT.
- Click “Request Electronic Recommendation”
- Use the UMBC Directory Lookup section to look up your academic advisor.
- You should only enter your advisor’s details manually if you cannot find them



User Search



UMBC Directory Lookup:

To request a recommendation from an individual at UMBC, enter the first/last name or email address of the person in this field and click on the 'Search' button.

Keywords:

Search >

Manual Entry:

To request a recommendation from a staff/faculty member not at UMBC, enter the following information and click on the 'Add User' button.

First Name:

Last Name:

Phone:

Add User



Download Signed OPT I-20

2

- Once processed through SEVIS, we will upload your new, signed OPT I-20 to the “Attached Documents” section of your OPT application.
- Once you receive your OPT I-20 in the ISSS Portal, you **MUST** check the “Employment Authorizations” box on page 2 to be sure that a Post-Completion OPT request has been added and to verify that your chosen start date is listed
- *Failure to check this can result in your OPT application being denied by USCIS!*
- If there are any errors, contact OISS via Help Ticket



Attached Documents

The following files have been attached. Click the filename to download the attached document.

Form I-20
(1670_001 (1).pdf)

Form I-765
(6 May 2018 e-Statement .pdf)

You can attach documents to this record by choosing the file from your drive, selecting the type of document you are attaching, and clicking on the 'Upload' button.

Choose File

No file chosen

- select document type -

Upload

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status
OMB NO. 1653-0038

SEVIS ID: N00[REDACTED] (F-1)

NAME: [REDACTED]

EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATIONS

TYPE	FULL/PART-TIME	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
POST-COMPLETION OPT	FULL TIME	REQUESTED	30 SEPTEMBER 2023	29 SEPTEMBER 2024

CHANGE OF STATUS/CAP-GAP EXTENSION



Gather Required Documents

3

- Once you receive your signed OPT I-20 in your ISSS Portal account, you can print, sign, and include that I-20 in the OPT application package submitted to USCIS
- A list of other required documents can be found on the OISS website, including:



Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USCIS
Form I-765
OMB No. 1615-0040
Expires 07/31/2022

For USCIS Use Only	☐ Authorization/Extension Valid From _____	Fee Stamp	Action Block										
	☐ Authorization/Extension Valid Through _____												
	Alien Registration Number A- <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td> </tr> </table>												
Remarks													

To be completed by an attorney or Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA)-accredited representative (if any).	☐ Select this box if Form G-28 is attached.	Attorney or Accredited Representative USCIS Online Account Number (if any)
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▶ **START HERE - Type or print in black ink.** Answer all questions fully and accurately. If a question does not apply to you (for example, if you have never been married and the question asks, "Provide the name of your current spouse"), type or print "N/A" unless otherwise directed. If your answer to a question which requires a numeric response is zero or none (for example, "How many children do you have" or "How many times have you departed the United States"), type or print "None" unless otherwise directed.

Part 1. Reason for Applying

I am applying for (select only one box):

1.a. ☐ Initial permission to accept employment.

Other Names Used

Provide all other names you have ever used, including aliases, maiden name, and nicknames. If you need extra space to complete this section, use the space provided in **Part 6**.

- This is the primary form in your OPT application, the application for employment authorization.
- **We recommend online filing through the USCIS application system, NOT filling out the PDF and mailing it to USCIS.**
- If you choose to file by mail, download the latest edition of the Form I-765 from USCIS's website: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>. NEVER use a form that a friend sends you or that you found on the website of an international student office or message board. These are often out of date.



Forms I-20

- USCIS requires OPT applicants to include certain information in the “Additional Information” section of the Form I-765.
- List any periods of CPT or OPT approved in the past and include the dates of the approval, as well as the academic level at which it was approved (e.g. Bachelor’s, Master’s, PhD)
- USCIS recommends uploading a copy of any Forms I-20 showing work authorization.
- If you ever held F-1 status with a different SEVIS ID number, you must enter it here.

OISS does NOT maintain copies of all the I-20s you’ve been issued; that is your responsibility!



I-94

- Can be found at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/home>
- Enter name exactly as it appears on your F-1 student visa
- Copy passport number and issuing country from your passport
- The “Admission (I-94) Record Number” will be entered on the I-765
- You can also view your Travel History through this site
 - The most recent entry record will also be entered on the I-765



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 :



Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Customs and Border Protection

I-94 Admission Record

Admission (I-94) Record Number :

Most Recent Date of Entry:

 January 16

Class of Admission :

 F1

Admit Until Date :

 D/S

Details provided on the I-94 Information form:

1. Last/Surname :

2. First (Given) Name :

3. Birth Date :

 July 

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 and should generally have at least 6 months of validity remaining



File Online!

4

- See detailed instructions to e-file your OPT application with USCIS:
<https://issss.umbc.edu/international-students-f-1/after-graduation/opt-and-opt-stem-information/>



I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

Getting Started ▼

About You ▼

Evidence ▼

Additional Information ▼

Review and Submit ▲

Review your application

Your application summary

Your statement

[Review the I-765 form information](#)

 [Print](#)

Here is a summary of all the information you provided in your application.

Make sure you have provided responses for everything that applies to you before you submit your application. You can edit your responses by going to each application section using the site navigation.

We also prepared a draft case snapshot with your responses, which you can download below.

 [View draft snapshot](#)

Getting Started

Basis of eligibility

What is your eligibility category?

(c)(3)(B) Student Post-Completion
OPT



Premium Processing

- In addition to the base fee of \$470
- Can be added to your USCIS application at any point in the application process
- Guarantees your application will be reviewed by USCIS within 30 days of the submission of the premium processing request
- Current Fee (as of 2/19/2026): \$1,685

**The premium processing fee will increase to
\$1,780 on March 1, 2026.**

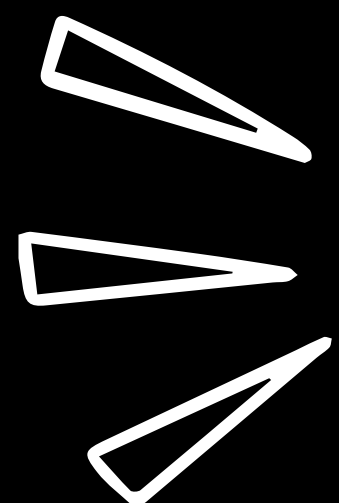


After Submitting your Application

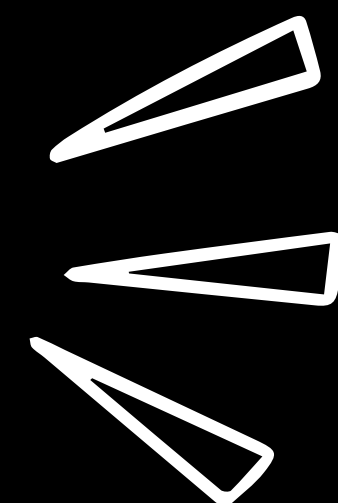
5

- If you receive a Request for Evidence (RFE), a Notice of Intent to Deny (NOID), or your application is returned to you, **you MUST notify OISS** as soon as possible so that we can help you to understand the response from USCIS and help you to resolve or refile, if necessary. Send us a copy of whatever you receive from USCIS.
- There are very **tight deadlines**, so be sure to notify OISS as soon as possible
- **Do not resubmit a denied or rejected OPT application without talking to OISS first!**





Special Topics



International Travel

- 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.
- Be sure to consult with OISS regarding any travel if you do not hold a valid F-1 visa.



MVA/DMV

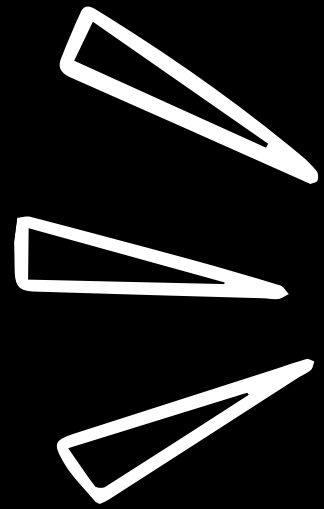
- It can be difficult to renew your driver's license or State ID Card while your OPT application is pending
- When your I-20 end date has passed but your OPT start date has not yet arrived, you may have difficulty renewing your license
- Be sure to complete the SAVE verification online before you go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



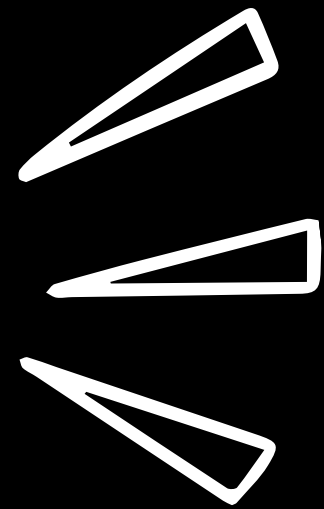
PhD End Dates

- 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 is OPT authorization before your academic program is complete and your I-20 end date arrives
- OISS 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





After OPT



STEM OPT

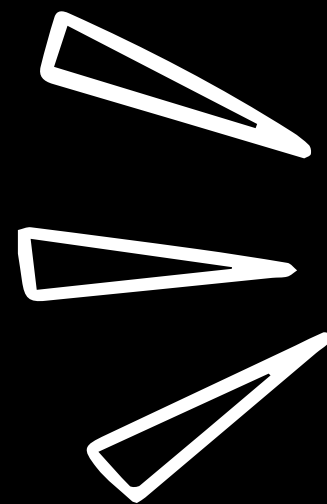
- Students in approved STEM disciplines have the option of extending their year of OPT for an additional two years
- You must submit another OPT application to USCIS before the end date of your post-completion OPT and no earlier than 90 days before that end date
- Must show you have earned your degree OR that you have a thesis pending (OISS 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 the OISS website for further information about STEM OPT



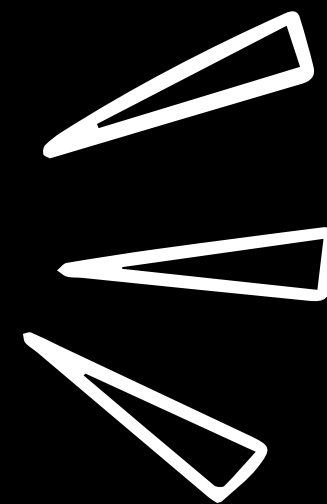
Other Options

- 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 the OISS website





Q&A



OPT Website & Workshop

Learn about
OPT, ask ISSS
any questions



1

Prepare Application

Gather ALL
required
documents



2

ISSS Review

Get new OPT
I-20 from ISSS



3

Submit Application

Mail to USCIS
or file online!



4

