

Caltech

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

International Student Programs (ISP)

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

- Approval to work full time in the US for up to 12-months in a position directly related to your field of study.
- An extension of your F-1 status:
 - When you are on OPT, you are in F-1 status
 - Allows you to remain in the US until end of OPT + additional 60 day grace period
 - When you travel and re-enter the US on OPT, you re-enter in F-1 status
- Basic Eligibility:
 - Maintained F-1 status during the past year
 - Timely filed application with US Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS)
 - (Graduate Students) – have advanced to candidacy
 - (Undergraduate Students) – complete program of study
 - Job offer is **Not** required

Timing of Application

- Apply as early as **90-days** before “Program Completion”
- Apply as late as **60-days** after “Program Completion”
- How to define “**Program Completion?**”
 - Undergrad Students
 - Commencement Day (06/16/2017)
 - Last Day of the Term if Winter or Fall
 - Graduate Students
 - Defense date **or** the last date of term in which you defend

No Employment “Gap”

GRADUATE STUDENTS

- ◆ From TA/ RA to Post-Doc at Caltech without missing a paycheck
- ◆ Start your new job the day after your program completion date

Best Practices

- Apply 90-days BEFORE your program completion date
- Request the EARLIEST start date

03/16/2017 = OPT Application Mailed

06/16/2017 = Program Completion Date

06/17/2017 = Requested OPT Start Date

Employment “Gap”

ALL STUDENTS

- ◆ From student – to job seeker – to hopeful employee
- ◆ Give yourself extra time to find the job you want

Process

- Apply 90-days BEFORE you want to START working
- Request the LATEST allowable start date (within 60-days of completion)

06/16/2017 = **Program Completion Date**

* (03/16/2017 - 08/08/2017) = OPT Application Mailed *

08/15/2017 = Requested OPT Start Date

Remember – CANNOT work during this 2-month gap

Employment Authorization Document (EAD)



Completing the Application at ISP

Visit ISP during walk-in hours **1:00 – 4:00 PM**

Schedule an appointment with an ISP advisor outside of walk-in hours

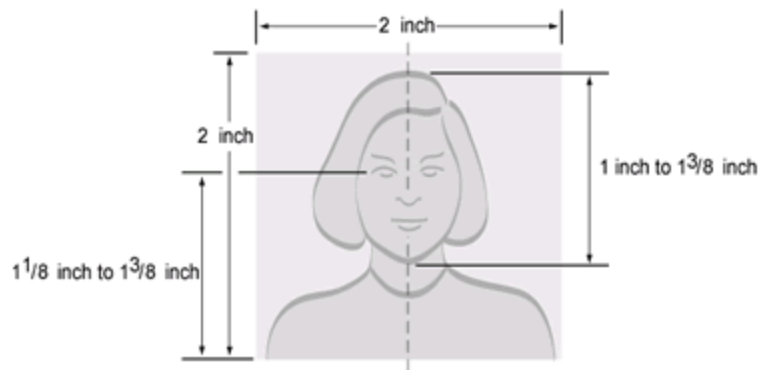
- A typical appointment takes 20 minutes

Bring the following to your OPT application appointment:

- Check for **\$410**, made payable to “Department of Homeland Security”
- Valid Passport
- I-94 (*print [online](#) record or is stapled to your passport*)
- Any previous Employment Authorization Documents (**EAD**)
- Any previous I-20s if participated in Curricular Practical Training (**CPT**)
- 2 Recent and identical U.S. passport [photos](#)
- ISP mails the application to USCIS

Application Process

- U.S. Passport Photo Guidelines
 - Frame subject with full face, front view, eyes open
 - Make sure photo presents full head
 - White or off-white background
 - No shadows on the face or background



Examples of correct passport photos

USCIS Receives Your Application

- Receipt Notice from USCIS
 - Arrives at ISP within 2 - 3 weeks after application is mailed to USCIS
 - ISP will notify you by email
 - ISP will retain the Receipt Notice
 - Contains the Receipt Date – the date on which USCIS began processing your application
 - Contains a Receipt Number, or “WAC” number, specific to your application
 - Track your case status online: <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard.do>

EAD Mailed to ISP

- Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
 - Issued within 90-days of Receipt Date
 - ISP will notify you by email
 - ISP will keep EAD until you collect it
 - Contains the authorized employment start date/end date
 - You may only be employed on OPT during the dates listed on your EAD
 - EAD states “Not Valid for Re-Entry” – this means that the EAD ***alone*** does not grant you authorization to re-enter the U.S. (**I-20, F-1 visa, and passport are still needed**)
 - Should be kept safe with your passport (not in your wallet)
 - Only need to present the EAD on your first day of employment and at the U.S. border

Request to Expedite OPT Processing

- If you have a job offer that requires you to begin before the standard 90-day processing time and you can demonstrate significant hardship to you or your employer, you may qualify for expedited processing by USCIS.
- To Request an Expedite
 - Need Employment Offer Letter
 - Company Letterhead
 - Requested Start date
 - USCIS OPT Receipt Notice

Contact USCIS National Customer Service Center: 1-800-375-5283

Your Responsibilities During OPT

Employment:

- Cannot accrue more than **90 days** of unemployment during approved OPT period
- Full-time employment, which is at least 20 hours/ week
- Employment related to student's degree program

Reporting Requirements:

- Must report employer name and address to ISP
- Must report any changes in employment to ISP
- Must report your local address to ISP

Email all updates to: isp@caltech.edu

Allowed Employment

- Multiple Employers
- Single Employer
- 1099 Employment (contractor)
- Self-Employed Business Owner *
- Employment through a Temp Agency or Consulting Firm

- Unpaid Employment
 - Can “work” as a volunteer or in unpaid intern positions related to your field
 - Positions need to be truly unpaid/ volunteer positions
 - At least 20 hours/ week

Travel & OPT

- **BEFORE** OPT is approved:
 - I-20
 - Passport
 - Valid F-1 Visa *
 - OPT Receipt Notice

- **AFTER** OPT is approved:
 - I-20 (signed for travel w/in the last 6 months)
 - EAD
 - Passport
 - Valid F-1 Visa *
 - Proof of employment (employer offer letter)

Going Back to School

Transferring to another school or starting a new degree at Caltech during OPT?

Starting a new program of study ***during*** your authorized OPT period

- Requires ISP to transfer/ level change to your I-20 record in SEVIS
- Ends your OPT & permission to work
- Any remaining OPT time is lost

Consult an ISP advisor before beginning a new program of study

24-Month STEM Extension of OPT

24-month STEM extension of OPT is available for students:

- Qualifying major that is included on the U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement List of eligible “STEM” majors.

Caltech majors that currently ***do not*** qualify for the 24-month extension are:

<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Division</u>	<u>Full Name (Caltech/ FSA)</u>
BEM	HSS	Business Economics and Management
Ec	HSS	Economics
En	HSS	English
H	HSS	History
HPS	HSS	History and Philosophy of Science
ISP	CIT	Independent Studies Program
PI	HSS	Philosophy
PS	HSS	Political Science
SS	HSS	Social Science

STEM Extension of OPT

Overview of STEM extension of OPT:

- *New Benefits*
 - Now 24-months
 - Two lifetime STEM OPT extensions
 - Can accrue **60 days** of unemployment on STEM OPT
(cumulative total for post-completion OPT (90) + STEM OPT (60) = 150 days)
 - Travel + Employment automatically extended 180-days upon STEM OPT filing
(require STEM application receipt from USCIS + expired OPT EAD)
- *New Responsibilities*
 - Form I-983 Training Plan Required
 - Form I-983 submitted to ISP within 10 days of any change of employer or any “material change”
 - Self evaluation of employment training reported (every 12 months) or at change of employer
 - Report Unemployment

STEM Extension Employment

Allowed:

- Sequential Employers
- At least 20 hours per week (maximum of two employers concurrently)
- E-Verified participant

Not Allowed:

- Volunteering
- 1099 or “independent contractor” or “consulting”
- Temporary agencies (3rd party employers)*

STEM Extension of OPT

Application Process

- Can apply up to 90-days BEFORE your OPT ends
- **MUST** apply prior to the end of your OPT
- **Submit Completed Form I-983 Training Plan to ISP to receive new I-20 for STEM OPT extension application process. Template available at (<https://international.caltech.edu/employment/f1/STEMprocedures>)**
- Prepare new Form I-765 (1-page application form available at www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis)
- \$410 application fee
- 2 Recent and identical passport photos
- Diploma or transcripts showing completion of all coursework
- **MUST** have an employer enrolled in E-Verify. Enter the employer name as listed in E-Verify and the E-Verify Company Identification Number
- **Student submits application directly to USCIS**

Talking with Employers about OPT

Before you go to an interview:

- Know your immigration responsibilities and options
- Know what you need from the employer
- Be ready to offer solutions
- Be ready to talk about immigration issues in a general way

Questions?

Still have questions?
Please contact an ISP advisor.

ISP is open for
Walk-In Hours
Monday – Friday
1:00 – 4:00 PM

ISP is also available by appointment
Please contact ISP if you need to schedule an appointment

isp@caltech.edu

626-395-6330

international.caltech.edu



international.
caltech.edu