

**Slide 1:**

Welcome to the online post-completion OPT tutorial presentation. Before you start, please make sure you go to the ISSS office to obtain a post-completion OPT packet. This on-line tutorial is designed for students to obtain general post-completion OPT application information. If you have questions after this workshop, please contact your ISSS advisor for further clarification.

**Slide 2:**

During this presentation, we will go over the following key points. First, what is Optional Practical Training. Second, how to choose your post-completion OPT start date and end date. Third, how to apply for post-completion OPT, including how to complete the application process. Last but not least, we will discuss rules on unemployment and travel while you are on post-completion OPT.

**Slide 3:**

OPT is a benefit of the F-1 visa category that allows 12 months of work authorization in your field of study. Student can receive OPT one time at each degree level. Meaning you can receive 12 months OPT one time at the bachelor's level, one time at the Masters level, and one time at the doctoral level. You can only apply for OPT again when you move up to a higher degree level. For example, if you have OPT at the Master's level, then you would not be able to go back to a Bachelor's level and apply for OPT again. You would only be eligible for OPT again if you were in a Doctoral level program.

There are three types of OPT. One is pre-completion OPT, or OPT that takes place during your degree program. The other type is post-completion OPT, or OPT that begins after you finish your degree program. The last one is a 24 month OPT extension after your 12 month post-completion OPT that only certain USF majors are qualified to apply. This is often called the STEM extension for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics majors. STEM OPT application has different requirements, so please contact your ISSS advisor if you need more information.

All post-completion OPT is full-time, meaning students need to work over 20 hours per week to maintain their F-1 status on post-completion OPT. We will talk more about the employment requirement later in the presentation.

**Slide 4:**

In order to be eligible for post-completion OPT, you need to have been in status for at least two consecutive semesters before your OPT begins. Even though most students are eligible to apply for OPT earlier, many students save their 12 months of post-completion OPT to use after their program of study.

The whole post-completion OPT application process takes about three to four months. You do need to plan ahead to utilize post-completion OPT and this is another reason why students tend to save their post-completion OPT after they complete their program.

All employment on post-completion OPT needs to be in your field of study. It is up to students to determine what type of work is in their field of study and not something that ISSS can tell you. However, the best guidance we can provide is if it is related to your course work and you are applying what you learned from your degree, then it is likely considered to be in your field of study. Your professors can be a good resource to help you determine this as well.

### **Slide 5:**

This slide shows the timeline during your last semester at USF. For Post-Completion OPT, there is a 60 day period in which you can begin. Date A is the program completion date, which ISSS will base on the date that is listed in the form from your advisor. We will talk more about how to obtain this form later in the presentation. You can choose to start your Post-Completion OPT, as early as one day after your program completion date (Date C in the slide), or as late as 60 days after your program completion date (date D in the slide). Keep in mind that the 90 days unemployment starts on your EAD card OPT start day. If you apply at the end of your 60 days grace period, you need to prepare to lose your 90 days unemployment since it will take three to four month for USCIS to approve your application.

You have a 5 month period in which you can apply for Post-Completion OPT. USCIS will not accept an application submitted more than 90 days before your program completion date. The earliest date (Date B in the slide) that you can mail your Post-Completion OPT application will be 90 days before your program end date. Date D on the slide is also the last day that USCIS can receive your application

After your one year Post-Completion OPT, you will have a 60 day grace period. You can stay in the U.S during these 60 days, transfer to another U.S institution, or change your immigration status within the grace period.

Many students struggle with choosing a Post-Completion OPT start date. If you have begun the job search process before applying for Post-Completion OPT and are fairly confident that you will find a job within the first few weeks after graduation, we advise that you choose a start date that is right after your program end date. Doing so will avoid you receiving a job offer but, not being able to start work until your Post-Completion OPT start date. If you have not had time to apply for jobs or are afraid your job search may take some time, we recommend that you choose a later Post-Completion OPT start date that is closer to the end of the 60 day period. This will allow you more time to prepare your resume, apply for jobs and go on interviews without accruing unemployment days. If you are not sure what your job search experience will be, it is usually safe to pick a start date somewhere in the middle of the 60 day period. Keep in mind that once offered a job, an employer generally will only wait 2-3 weeks to have you start working before they revoke the offer. If you still have questions about choosing your start date, you may schedule an appointment with your ISSS advisor to discuss your situation in further detail.