OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)
APPROVAL AND REPORTING

ONCE OPT IS APPROVED

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO NEXT?

- ☐ Log in to myoiss.msu.edu and **upload a copy of your Approval Notice and Employment Authorization Document (EAD card).**
- ☐ **Be employed for a minimum of 20 hours per week**. There is no maximum number of hours per week that a student can work while on OPT. Employment can be paid or unpaid. You may work more than one job at a time but all employment must be directly related to your program of study.
- ☐ **Report employment** in the SEVP Portal within 10 days of any change.
- ☐ **Report any address or phone number changes** in the MyOISS Portal (myoiss.msu.edu) within 10 days of the change.
- ☐ **Do not begin working until** you have received the EAD and the start date as listed on the EAD has arrived.
- ☐ **Do not exceed more than 90 days of unemployment.** F-1 OPT students are permitted a maximum of 90 days of unemployment, students who exceed the 90 day unemployment limit begin to accrue unlawful presence which may jeopardize access to future US immigration benefits, including readmission to the US.

WHAT ARE MY EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS WHILE ON OPT?

- ☐ Any employment you engage in while on OPT **must be directly related to your major**. OISS advisors are unable to determine your degree relevancy or confirm that your job is directly related; determining the relevancy is up to you.
- ☐ Employment must be **a minimum of 20 hours per week**. There is no defined maximum number of hours one may work while on Post-Completion OPT.
- ☐ Employment can be **paid or unpaid** as long as unpaid work does not violate labor laws.
- ☐ You may work for **multiple employers** as long as all employment is directly related to your major.
- ☐ **Most types of employment are allowed**, including, but not limited to: regular paid employment; short term employers/gigs; postdoc positions; work for hire/1099 employment; self-employment.

WHAT IS MY STATUS WHILE ON OPT?

OPT is not a different immigration status. OPT is a benefit available to students with F-1 status and you will remain in F-1 status during OPT.

CAN I TAKE CLASSES WHILE ON OPT?

You may not take classes toward an educational or professional objective, such as a degree or certificate program.

You are allowed to take classes that are avocational or recreational in nature, if the experience is really and truly “just for fun”, and as long as the classes will not result in an educational or professional objective.

If you wish to start a new program of study, you will either need to change your level (if pursuing a new program at MSU) or transfer your SEVIS record (if attending a different university). Doing so will forfeit the rest of your OPT and you must stop working.

REPORTING EMPLOYMENT / SEVP PORTAL

WHAT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS DO I HAVE WHILE ON OPT?

It is your responsibility to report employment and address updates through the SEVP Portal.

Failure to report employment and address updates in a timely fashion can have negative consequences on your F-1 status.

- ☐ Update your US address through the SEVP Portal
- ☐ Update your employment information through the SEVP Portal
- ☐ In the Employment Remarks section in the SEVP Portal you must detail the following:
  - ☐ Your degree and level (Example: Bachelor's degree in Economics)
  - ☐ Employer name (name of the company - not your supervisor or owner)
  - ☐ Job title
  - ☐ Program of study
  - ☐ Number of hours per week
  - ☐ List of job duties
  - ☐ Brief explanation of how the job is directly related your program of study

Below are some examples of how to report your employment in the SEVP Portal:

Example #1:
Bachelor's degree in Business. I work full time (25 hours minimum a week) as a Loan Officer at a mortgage company called Happy Homes. At Happy Homes, I meet with clients and evaluate, authorize and recommend approval of loan applications. On a daily basis, I use the knowledge I gained in my credit analysis, sales and marketing classes that I took as part of my major program of study.

Example #2:
PhD in Electrical Engineering. I work full time (30 hours minimum a week) as an Electrical Engineer at ABC Corp. At ABC Corp, I analyze client requirements for electrical systems and provide them with cost estimates of such systems. My work requires understanding of electrical circuit theory which I studied in-depth at Michigan State University.

WHAT IS THE SEVP PORTAL?

The SEVP Portal is an important tool that allows F-1 students on OPT to meet their legal reporting requirements.

WHEN WILL I GET ACCESS TO THE SEVP PORTAL?

On or near the EAD start date as listed on your EAD you will receive an email from do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov to create your SEVP Portal Account.

Allow up to 7 days after the start date listed on your EAD to receive the email.

If you cannot find the email, login to myoiss.msu.edu, select F-1 Optional Practical training and submit the SEVP Portal Reset eForm. Check your spam/junk folders before submitting the eForm to OISS.

WHAT DO I DO IF I GET LOCKED OUT OF MY SEVP PORTAL ACCOUNT?

If you get locked out of your SEVP Portal you will need to log in to MyOISS, select F-1 Optional Practical Training on the left and submit the SEVP Portal Reset eForm. OISS requires 8-10 business days to process all requests.

TRAVEL

OISS can NEVER guarantee re-entry to the U.S.. Admission to the U.S. is up to the discretion of the CBP officer at the port of entry.

TRAVEL ONCE OPT IS APPROVED

We recommend traveling with:

- [ ] Passport (valid for at least 6 months after date of return to the US)
- [ ] Valid F-1 visa
- [ ] OPT I-20 with valid travel signature (less than 6 months old at time of re-entry)
- [ ] EAD, the "not valid for re-entry" notation on the EAD means that the EAD alone is not sufficient for re-entry, you must have other documentation as well
- [ ] Offer letter or letter from your employer

HEALTH INSURANCE

WHAT HEALTH INSURANCE OPTIONS DO I HAVE WHILE ON OPT?

After you graduate from MSU, there is no requirement for you to continue to carry health insurance. However, the cost of medical care in the United States is so high that it is very risky to be inside the country without health insurance coverage.

We highly recommend that you obtain coverage for your entire OPT period.

- [ ] If you are employed full-time during OPT, you might receive health insurance as a benefit of your employment.

  NOTE: U.S. employer-issued health insurance policies often do not cover medical evacuation or repatriation, which are essential coverages for any non-citizen living in the U.S. Please email ihealth@msu.edu for information on how to buy an inexpensive policy to meet these needs.

- [ ] If you do not receive employee health insurance, you should obtain your own health insurance. You can continue to purchase MSU Student Health Insurance during OPT if you wish. You can enroll at https://students.care26.com/login.

- [ ] If you would prefer to use a different plan, please email the OISS Community Health Program at ihealth@msu.edu to obtain a list of alternative plans that can be used during OPT. **Please note that no alternative plan offers the same high level of coverage offered by MSU's Student Health Insurance Plan.**

AFTER OPT ENDS

HOW LONG CAN I STAY IN THE U.S. AFTER MY OPT END DATE?

Students who maintain their visa status while on OPT will receive a 60-day grace period starting the day after OPT expires. Only students who complete OPT and do NOT exceed the 90-day unemployment limit receive the 60-day grace period. Before the 60-day grace period is over, students must:

- [ ] Depart the U.S.
- [ ] Be approved for a change of status from F-1 to another visa status
- [ ] Receive a new I-20 to pursue a new academic program at MSU
- [ ] Transfer your SEVIS record (I-20) from MSU to another SEVP-certified institution
- [ ] Apply for the OPT STEM Extension (if eligible)

WHAT IS THE OPT STEM EXTENSION?

F-1 students with degrees in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) may be eligible for a 24-month extension of their Post-Completion OPT.