AAU Post-Completion OPT Guide
We strongly encourage you to read the OPT Tutorial from START to FINISH as you are responsible to follow policies and procedures related to OPT, employment and your F1 status!
Overview

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2) Collecting your Documents
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What is PC-OPT?

- Stands for Post-Completion Optional Practical Training
- Short-term work authorization for 12 months after program completion
- Purpose is to gain job experience in your major field of study
- Employment may occur anywhere in the US
- It is a benefit of the F1 status, it is *not a separate visa type*
When is PC-OPT Available?

- PC-OPT is available once per higher degree level
  - Example 1: student completes coursework for B.F.A., is eligible
  - Example 2: student had PC-OPT following B.F.A. degree, has completed coursework for M.F.A. degree, is eligible for a second time
  - Example 3: student completed B.F.A. degree and used PC-OPT, then completed coursework for A.A. degree after B.F.A. degree, student is not eligible because the second degree is lower than the first degree
What is the Eligibility for PC-OPT?

- You must complete your academic program
- You must maintain F1 status for at least one academic year
- M.F.A. students must complete all required degree units but are not required to have completed their thesis
- A job offer is *not* required to apply for PC-OPT
- Students in the personal enrichment program (PEUG) do *not* qualify for PC-OPT
1) Understanding PC-OPT

When should I apply for PC-OPT?

• Your **window of time to apply** is 90 days before to 60 days after the program completion date

• The program completion date is the last day of class in your final semester

![PC-OPT Application Window Diagram]
When should I apply for PC-OPT?

- USCIS averages 90 days to process your PC-OPT Application Packet so it is best to apply as early as possible within your Application Window to avoid employment delays.
When should I apply for PC-OPT?

- Important: USCIS must [receive](#) your PC-OPT Application Packet and accept it for processing [before](#) the end of the PC-OPT Application window or you will be denied.
How long is my PC-OPT?

- PC-OPT is for 12 months of work authorization
- However, your PC-OPT grants you 14 months of legal F1 visa status
  - 12 months work authorization
  - 2 months grace period after last day of PC-OPT

Legal F1 visa status total: 14 months
1) Understanding PC-OPT

How do I maintain my PC-OPT?

- Secure employment directly related to your major
- Work a minimum of 20 hours per week
- Immediately report all employment and personal changes and updates to AAU
- Keep total unemployment time under 90 calendar days
How do I know what jobs I’m eligible for?

• Employment must be directly related to your degree program.
• If you are able to clearly explain how your major is related to your job responsibilities, you can accept the job. If you cannot, then chances are the position does not fit your major.
• Examples:
  – Degree in Interior Architecture & Design: Cannot work at Starbucks as a Barista, but can work at Starbucks designing the interior of stores.
  – Degree in Animation with focus in 3D Modeling: Can accept any form of employment directly related to Animation and Visual Effects, such as composting, texturing, etc.
What kind of jobs can I accept?

- USCIS is not concerned with your salary, so your job can be paid or unpaid
- All the following types of employment are valid:
  - Regular full-time/part-time positions
  - Internship
  - Freelance/Independent contracting
  - Project work (doesn’t include school projects or assisting a friend with a thesis project)
  - Volunteering with non-profit, church or charity organization
  - Self-employment with a valid business license
  - Employment through agency or consulting firm
What are the hours per week requirements?

- You must work at least 20 hours per week
- If you have a variable work schedule, you should average to 20 hours per week each month
- This requirement includes freelance/independent contracting and project work
- Examples:
  - 1 part time job of 20 hours per week
  - 2 part time jobs averaging 20 hours per week, both jobs must be related to your major
Unemployment during PC-OPT?

• Yes, USCIS allows you to be unemployed for up to 90 cumulative calendar days (that includes weekends) anytime throughout the 12 months of your PC-OPT.

• It is your responsibility to track your unemployment time and you should use any form of tracking system you are comfortable with.
What if I exceed 90 days unemployment during PC-OPT?

• You will be considered out of status. Therefore, you must do either of the following before the end of the 90 days:
  – Depart the US and inform the International Office
  – Apply for a change of status with USCIS
  – Maintain your F1 status by continuing your education in the US
    • At AAU and obtain a change of level I-20
    • At another school and obtain a transfer I-20
How do I report employment during PC-OPT?

- You are required to report all changes in employment within 10 days of their occurrence to the International Office.
- You can update any changes in employment online by completing the OPT Reporting Form: [http://www.academyart.edu/aau-forms/international-admissions/opt-reporting-form](http://www.academyart.edu/aau-forms/international-admissions/opt-reporting-form)
- The International Office will receive an email with your new employer information and report any updates to SEVIS.
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6) Frequently Asked Questions
2) Collecting your Documents

What documents will I need?

1. OPT I-20 (from AAU, mail photocopy only)
2. I-765 (from USCIS, mail original)
3. G-1145 (from USCIS, mail original)
4. 2 Passport Photos
5. Photocopy of 1-94
6. Photocopy of visa page
7. Photocopy of passport page
8. Photocopy of all previous I-20’s
9. Photocopy of any previous EADs
10. Personal Check, Cashiers Check or Money Order
Where do I get my PC-OPT I-20?

- Fill out the Online OPT I-20 Request Form at: [http://www.academyart.edu/aau-forms/international-admissions/opt-i-20-request-form](http://www.academyart.edu/aau-forms/international-admissions/opt-i-20-request-form)

- The AAU International Office will then generate and issue your official I-20 within three (3) business days

- You will need to visit the International Office in person to pick up your OPT I-20
ATTENTION

Pick up your PC OPT I-20 AFTER receiving an email from the International Office confirming that your PC OPT I-20 was issued!
How do I do I fill out the online OPT I-20 Request Form?

• Enter expected completion date, which is the last day from the semester you complete all your course requirements.
• The requested OPT start date must be within 60 days of your expected program completion date at AAU.
How do I pick my Start Date for the OPT I-20?

- The earliest you can start your PC-OPT is one day after your program completion (one day after the last day of the semester).
- The latest you can start your PC-OPT is 60 days after your program completion.
What do I look for when I pick up my OPT I-20?

• Your requested employment start and end date must be indicated on the second page of your I-20. Make sure the OPT start date on your I-20 is correct.
• You must sign the first page of your OPT I-20.
• USCIS must receive your application within 30 days of the day your I-20 was issued.
• After you mailed your application and submitted it to USCIS for processing, it is not possible to change your OPT start date.
ATTENTION

Be sure to sign your I-20 on the first page!
What are the passport photo requirements?

• For more detailed information go to: [http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/photos/photo-composition-template.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/photos/photo-composition-template.html)
• Take your picture in front of a white background.
• Do NOT wear a white shirt.
• You shirt must be in color.
• Take picture at Walgreens or Kinkos.
What about the check/money order?

- Use a money order or cashier’s check (can be purchased at banks, post offices and some grocery stores)
- Use a personal check
- Fill it out like this
- USCIS application fee is $410

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Four hundred ten dollars and 00/100

Date here

Your signature here
ATTENTION

When using a personal check, make sure your bank account is still open and $410 are in the account!
3) Preparing your PC-OPT Packet

Where do I get my Form I-765 and G-1145?

- You can download both forms on the USCIS website:
  
  http://www.uscis.gov/i-765

- You can either complete both forms online and print them out or you can print them out and write in them.
- Please sure to use the most current USCIS version of the I-765.
How do I complete Form I-765?

- Complete this Form either with black or blue pen and write clearly.
- If this is your first time to apply for work authorization with USCIS, check here.
- Your last name and first name must match your passport information.
- Put the address your EAD card should be mailed to once it has been issued. The address must be valid for 3 months. If you plan to move, use a friends or relatives address instead (c/o: John Smith).
How do I complete Form I-765?

• Leave blank if you do not have a SSN
• This is your 11-digit I-94 admission number
• Check “no”, if you have never applied for a work authorization with USCIS before
• This is the date you arrived in the US, not left your country
• Usually the first airport you arrived in the US
• Usually F1 (sometimes H4, B2 or other, if you did a change of status in the US)

8. Marital Status
   - Married
   - Single
   - Divorced
   - Widowed

9. Social Security Number (Include all numbers you have ever used, if any)

10. Alien Registration Number (A-Number) or Form I-94 Number (if any)

11. Have you ever before applied for employment authorization from USCIS?
   - Yes (Complete the following questions.)
     Which USCIS Office?
     Dates
     Results (Granted or Denied - attach all documentation)
   - No (Proceed to Question 12.)

12. Date of Last Entry into the U.S., on or about (mm/dd/yyyy)

13. Place of Last Entry into the U.S.

14. Status at Last Entry (B-2 Visitor, F-1 Student, No Lawful Status, etc.)

Example: San Francisco

F1 Student
How do I complete Form I-765?

- Write “F1 Student” here
- This is the code for the PC-OPT
- Do not enter anything in number #17, it only applies to STEM applicants
- Do not enter anything in number #18, it only applies to H4 visa status

3) Preparing your PC-OPT Packet
3) Preparing your PC-OPT Packet

How do I complete Form I-765?

- Sign here (between red lines *only*)

- Don’t sign here!

Certification
I certify, under penalty of perjury, that the foregoing is true and correct. Furthermore, I authorize the release of any information that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services needs to determine eligibility for the benefit I am seeking. I have read the “Who May File Form I-765?” section of the instructions and have identified the appropriate eligibility category in Question 16.

Applicant’s Signature __________________________

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy) __________________________

Telephone Number __________________________

Signature of Person Preparing Form, If Other Than Applicant
I declare that this document was prepared by me at the request of the applicant and is based on all information of which I have any knowledge.

Preparer’s Signature __________________________

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy) __________________________

Printed Name __________________________

Address __________________________

______________________________

Form I-765 11/04/15 Y
How do I complete Form G-1145?

- Your name on the form must match the name in the passport

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**Paperwork Reduction Act**

An agency may not conduct or sponsor an information collection and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated at 3 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions and completing and submitting the form. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Regulatory Coordination Division, Office of Policy and Strategy, 20 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20529-2140. OMB No. 1615-0109. Do not mail your completed Form G-1145 to this address.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Family (Sur) Name</th>
<th>Applicant/Petitioner Full First Name</th>
<th>Applicant/Petitioner Full Middle Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your First Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>E-mail Address</td>
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<td>Your email address</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile Phone Number (Text Message)</td>
<td>Your phone number</td>
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What about the OPT I-20?

- Make sure your OPT I-20 is signed by AAU and you.
- Make sure you mail your I-20 within 30 days of the Date I-20 was issued.
- Make sure the OPT Start Date on the second (2) page is correct.
- Make a photocopy of your OPT I-20 and all previous I-20’s.
ATTENTION

USCIS must receive your OPT application within 30 days of I-20 issuance, otherwise your application will be denied!
What about my F1 visa and passport?

• Make a photocopy of your F1 visa, if applicable.
• Make a photocopy of your passport biographic page with photo.
• Your passport must be valid.
What about my I-94?

• Your I-94 will be either:
  - 1) a white card stapled in your passport like this
  - or -
  - 2) a digital form that you can download online from the following link:
    https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home

Note: If you have the I-94 stapled in your passport, you must include a copy of the back and front of your I-94.
What about previous I-20’s and EAD’s?

- You must include a photocopy of all your previous I-20’s. If you no longer have all your previous I-20’s then only include the most recent ones.
- The photocopy of your PC OPT I-20.
- If you previously received CPT, you must include a photocopy of all your I-20’s with the CPT authorization.
- If you were issued an EAD before, because of previous OPT or Economic Hardship work authorization, you must include a photocopy of the back and front of your previous EAD.
Where do I mail my documents?

• If the address on your Form I-765 is in California, mail your application to the USCIS Phoenix Lockbox:
  – For Regular mail (USPS):
    • USCIS, PO Box 21281, Phoenix, AZ 85036
  – For Express mail (FedEx or UPS):
    • USCIS, Attn: AOS, 1820 E Skyharbor Circle S, Suite 100, Phoenix, AZ 85034
• If the address on your Form I-765 is outside California, look at this website to confirm which mailing address you should use:
  – http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses
  – You will either mail your application to the Dallas or Phoenix Lockbox. The Lockbox addresses are noted on the bottom of the website.
When do I mail my documents?

- USCIS must receive and accept your application for processing within 30 days of the issuance of your OPT I-20.
- It is highly recommended to mail your application packet as soon as possible to avoid a denial of your application.
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<td>5</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Frequently Asked Questions</td>
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</table>
How long does it take to get my EAD?

- USCIS will process your application within approximately three (3) months.
- If you receive a Request for Evidence (RFE), USCIS will stop processing your application until you submitted the requested documents. Receiving an RFE will delay your application and it may take a total of four (4) months to receive your EAD. Please come to the International Office when you receive an RFE.
5) Waiting for your Approval & EAD

What is the authorization process?

• 2 weeks
  – Within two weeks of submitting your application to USCIS, you will receive a text message and/or email with your receipt number. Receiving a receipt number confirms USCIS accepted your application for processing.

• 6 weeks
  – Within six weeks of submitting your application to USCIS, you will receive a letter, named Notice of Action. This confirms that USCIS has the correct mailing address on file for you. Check if your name and date of birth is correct.

• 12 weeks
  – Within 12 weeks of submitting your application to USCIS, you will receive an Approval Notice and within a few days afterwards you will receive your EAD.
What happens after I received my EAD?

• After you received your EAD, make sure your name is spelled correctly, your Date of Birth and OPT start/end date is correct.
• If something is incorrect, contact the International Office for next step.
• If your EAD is correct, you can apply for your Social Security Number and report your employment.
What if I do not get an email/ text message with a receipt number?

- If this is the case, you either forgot to mail Form G-1145 or your application was rejected and mailed back to the address on your Form I-765.
- If your application packet is returned back to you, please contact the International Office to request a new Form I-20 with a new OPT recommendation. (Remember USCIS must receive your application and accept it for processing within 30 days of issuing your OPT I-20)
What if I do not receive a Notice of Action?

• If you do not receive a Notice of Action within 6 weeks of submitting your application, but you received an email/text message with your receipt number, chances are that USCIS has the incorrect mailing address on file for you.
• If this is the case, you must call the USCIS Customer Service Hotline and confirm your mailing address.
• You can call USCIS at: 1-800-375-5283
• When calling USCIS you must have your receipt number on hand.
What if I do not receive my EAD?

- If you do not receive your EAD within 12 weeks of submitting your application, but you received an email/text message and approval notice, you should contact the International Office.
- It may be that there is a processing delay or your EAD was processed and mailed out, but for some reason you did not receive it.
- The International Office will then contact our USCIS Liaison Officer to inquire about the status of your application and work with you on the next steps.
What if I get a Request for Evidence (RFE)?

- Sometimes students will receive a blue letter, named Request for Evidence. This means that USCIS is asking for more documents. For example:
  - Updated passport pictures
  - Your signature on the I-765
  - You forgot to sign your I-20 or forgot to submit documents
  - You were previously authorized for CPT or OPT and did not submit a copy of your I-20 with the CPT or OPT authorization

- If you receive an RFE, please contact the International Office at AAU.
What if I move and need to change my address while my application is still pending?

• USCIS does not forward any mail.
• Before moving to your new address, you must contact USCIS and update your old address to the new one.
• You can update your address in two ways:
  – Call the Customer Service Hotline: 1-800-375-5283
  – Update your mailing address online: http://www.uscis.gov/addresschange
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Where can I check the status of my application?

- You can check your application status online at: https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard/CaseStatus.do
- You will need your receipt number to check the status.
- Your application will remain in “initial” status for a while. Remember the authorization process and that the average processing time is 90 days. If you have approached the 90 days and your status is still “initial”, contact the International Office.
Can I travel outside the US on PC-OPT?

- Make sure to have all the necessary re-entry travel documents before your departure.
- Do not enter the US in a status other than F1, unless you are willing to give up your OPT.
- Time spent outside the US while on OPT will count towards your 90 days of unemployment, unless you are on a paid vacation, company approved leave or business trip as part of your employment.
- While OPT is a legitimate benefit of your F1 status, students who have to apply for a new F1 visa, must consider the risk of being denied and not being able to re-enter the US to continue their OPT.
6) Frequently Asked Questions

Can I travel outside the US on PC-OPT?

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<tr>
<th>Before Program Completion &amp; Before Getting EAD</th>
<th>After Program Completion &amp; Before Getting EAD</th>
<th>After Program Completion &amp; After Getting EAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • OPT I-20 with a valid travel signature on the third page.  
• Valid passport – must be valid for at least 6 months into the future  
• Valid F1 visa  
• Print out of Semester Registration from your Student Self Service Account to confirm enrollment | • OPT I-20 with a valid travel signature on the third page.  
• Valid passport – must be valid for at least 6 months into the future  
• Valid F1 visa  
• USCIS Notice of Action to confirm pending OPT application  
• Letter from Employer is strongly recommended | • OPT I-20 with a valid travel signature on the third page.  
• Valid passport – must be valid for at least 6 months into the future  
• Valid F1 visa  
• Valid EAD  
• Letter from Employer or contract confirming employment |
Do I have to apply for a new F1 visa when on PCOPT?

• If you are traveling outside the US and your F1 visa is expired, you must obtain a new F1 visa before your return.
• To apply for a new F1 visa, you must have the following documents:
  – Valid OPT I-20 with a travel signature that is not older than 6 months
  – Valid passport – must be valid for at least 6 months into the future
  – Valid EAD
  – Valid Letter of Employment
  – Current Financial Support Documents
  – Visa Renewal Letter from the International Office at AAU
  – Official Transcript from AAU
  – Any other documents required by the US consulate/embassy
How do I apply for the Social Security Number?

• Upon receipt of your EAD you will be eligible to apply for your Social Security Number (SSN) at the Social Security Administration Office.

• To apply for the SSN you must have:
  – Valid OPT I-20
  – Valid passport
  – Valid EAD
  – F1 visa (can be expired)
  – I-94
  – For more information about the SSN: http://www.ssa.gov/
Do I need to pay US taxes?

• You are required to file a tax return although you are not a US citizen.
• When employed, taxes are usually automatically taken out of your paycheck unless you are doing contract or freelance work or you are a self-employed business owner. In this case, no taxes will be taken out of your paycheck and you must pay taxes when filing your tax return.
• AAU does not advise on taxes, but for more detailed information, please visit:
  – http://www.academyart.edu/students/my-academy/student-resources/international-student-resources
What do I do, if I did not receive an email/text message with my receipt number, but my check was cashed?

- If your check was cashed, but you did not receive a receipt number, you should contact the International Office immediately and provide a copy of your bank account confirming that the money was taken out of your account. The International Office will then contact our USCIS Liaison Officer.
What are my options after PC-OPT?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depart the US and Return Home</th>
<th>Apply for a Change of Status with USCIS</th>
<th>Apply for 24 Months STEM Extension</th>
<th>Continue your Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The day after your last day of OPT, your 60 day grace period will begin. During the grace period you will not be allowed to work, however, you may travel throughout the US and prepare your departure before your return home. | You may decide to apply for a change of status from F1 to another status with USCIS. You may do so while on OPT or during your 60 day grace period. When applying for a different status, you must ensure to be in valid F1 status. | If you completed your degree STEM qualifying major, you will be eligible for the 24 Months STEM Extension. For more qualification details, review the Info Sheet and STEM tutorial on the Int’l Student Website. | If you want to continue your studies in the US, you can do so by:  
• Obtaining a Change of Level I-20 from AAU  
• Transferring out to another school and obtaining a transfer I-20. |
What do I do to apply for a Change of Status while or after PC-OPT?

- Start by taking a look at the USCIS website: [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)
- Consult with an immigration attorney. For referrals, contact the International Office or look at AILA: [http://www.ailalawyer.com/](http://www.ailalawyer.com/)
- Visa types most commonly used by AAU students after OPT:
  - H1B (Specialty Occupation, Employer Specific)
  - O1 (Individuals with Extraordinary Ability or Achievement, Employer Specific):
    - [http://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-workers/o-1-individuals-extraordinary-ability-or-achievement/o-1-visa-individuals-extraordinary-ability-or-achievement](http://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-workers/o-1-individuals-extraordinary-ability-or-achievement/o-1-visa-individuals-extraordinary-ability-or-achievement)
  - TN (NAFTA Professionals from Canada or Mexico)
  - Permanent Residency through family or employment
    - [http://www.uscis.gov/greencard](http://www.uscis.gov/greencard)
How can I request a transfer to another school during or after PC-OPT?

• Contact the International Office and submit the following documents:
  – Copy of your Acceptance Letter to your new school
  – Transfer Release Form from your new school

• The International Office will process your request within 3 business days.

• Note: The moment your SEVIS record is release to another school, your OPT will end. If you have already completed your OPT, your SEVIS record must be released before the end of the 60 day grace period.
Can I take classes while on PC-OPT?

• You can take personal enrichment classes at AAU while on PC-OPT, but you cannot take degree seeking classes.

• If you plan to pursue another degree and take degree seeking classes, you have two options:
  – Wait until the end of your OPT and receive a new I-20 to continue your studies during the 60 day grace period.
  – Discontinue your OPT and receive a new I-20 to continue your studies.