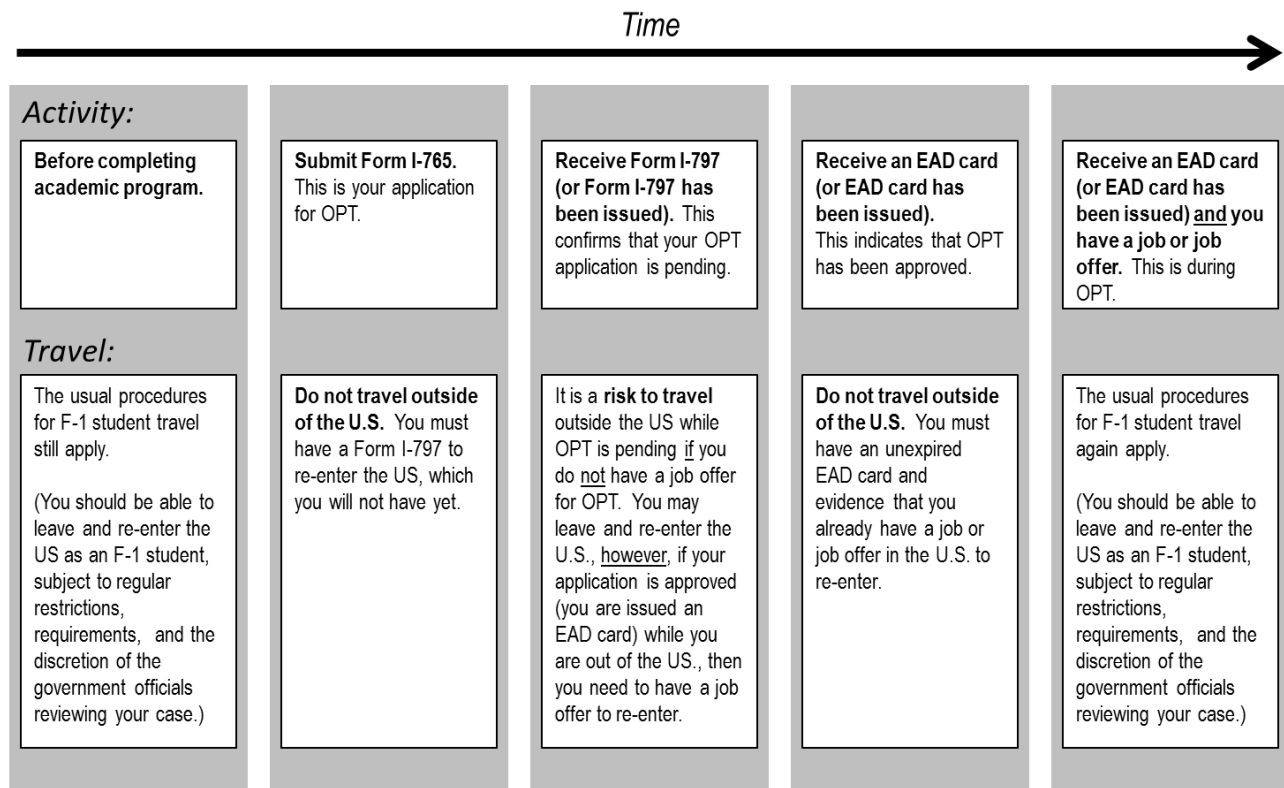


Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Travel

This travel advisory applies only to F-1 students who have applied for or have been approved for Optional Practical Training (OPT) by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and want to leave and re-enter the U.S. *after the completion of their academic program.*

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
F-1 Student Information

Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Travel



Before the completion of your academic program, the usual procedures for F-1 student travel still apply. **After** completion of your academic program, the guidance for travel is related to whether OPT has been approved yet.

When OPT is Pending

Students who have submitted an application for OPT (have mailed the Form I-765) but whose EAD card has not yet been issued (application not yet been approved by USCIS) **should be able** to leave and re-enter the U.S. to resume the search for employment. While your OPT application is pending, you are not required to have a job or job offer for re-entry to U.S.

In order to have the best chance of re-entering the U.S. without problems when your OPT is pending, you should be sure you have the following documents:

- I-765 receipt notice (Form I-797)
- Passport (valid for six months after you plan to re-enter the U.S.)
- Valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport (does not apply to Canadian citizens)
- I-20 (with a travel signature no older than six months*)

You **need to wait** until you receive the I-765 receipt notice (Form I-797) which confirms that USCIS has received your application for OPT (form I-765) and that your application is pending. If you have applied to OPT, but you have not received the receipt notice (Form I-797) yet, you are governed by F-1 student regulations, and may **not** be able to reenter after the time period of your academic program.

If you need to apply for a new F-1 visa when your post-completion OPT application is pending, you should also be sure to have your I-765 receipt notice (Form I-797) in addition to the usual documents required for a visa application.

When OPT is Approved but You Do Not Have a Job

If a student who has an EAD card *but does not* have a job or a job offer leaves the US during the post-completion OPT period, OPT is terminated (forfeited). Border officials might not allow someone in this situation to re-enter the U.S. You may not be able to re-enter the U.S. as an F-1 student. Thus, students who do not have a U.S. job or a U.S. job offer but who plan to leave and re-enter the U.S. after their EAD card has been issued are taking a risk.

You cannot travel during OPT and reenter unless you are coming back to an actual job.

When OPT is Approved and You Have a Job (“During OPT”)

If your post-completion OPT has been approved (EAD card has been issued by USCIS) *and* you have a job or a job offer, you **may** leave and re-enter the U.S. in order to begin or resume employment.

After USCIS has issued an EAD card for post-completion OPT, in order to have the best chance of re-entering the U.S. without problems, you should be sure you have **the following documents**:

- Unexpired EAD card
- Evidence that you already have a job in the U.S. or that you have a job offer.
- Passport (valid for six months after you plan to re-enter the U.S.)
- Valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport (does not apply to Canadian citizens)
- I-20 (with a valid travel signature no older than six months*)

Your evidence of a job or job offer should be a letter from your employer indicating that you currently hold a job (or are offered a job and will accept it) in your field of study and will be returning to the U.S. to resume employment

If you need to apply for a new F-1 visa, you should also be sure to have your EAD card and evidence that you already have a job in the U.S. or that you have a job offer in addition to the usual documents required for a visa application.

After OPT

You are entitled to a 60-day grace period beyond the last day of training indicated on your EAD. You may not work during your 60-day grace period. You will need to notify your International Advisor in Student Life Services if you plan to start or transfer to another school after OPT.

* Regulations state that during post-completion OPT, the travel signature should be no older than six months. The International Center recommends while on post-completion OPT that you get a valid travel signature every six months. Source: 8CFR214.2(f)(13)(ii)