

How do I maintain my F-1 status while on OPT?

1. You must bring, scan or fax a copy of your OPT card to the OIA within 10 days of receiving it.
2. You must be employed for at least 20 hrs/week. You can volunteer or freelance for a company as long as it's in your field of study.
3. You must notify the OIA of the following changes within 10 days:
 - Change of Address
 - Change of Name
 - Change of Citizenship
 - Begin/End or Change of Employment
 - Name of Employer and Address
4. You must get a travel signature on the I-20 for which you were recommended the OPT. We cannot sign your I-20 to travel, until we see the OPT card. NO EXCEPTIONS!

FAQs

1. Do I have to report back to school that I have found a job in the first three (3) months?

Yes, you need to report to the OIA or your employment. The government now has processes in place to see if you have or have not reported to us. You also need to report to us if you are unemployed. If you're unemployed for an aggregate of 90 calendar days, you are considered out of status. We at the OIA won't terminate you but the Department of Homeland Security will. So please do what is asked of you because the government has a mechanism for enforcing the rules that have already been explained to all international students in F-1 status.

2. Can a job be full-time or part-time, freelance, internship and/or volunteer?

Yes, so long as you work in your field of study and for at least 20hrs per week. However, you should not volunteer for a position where an individual is usually paid. This would be illegal for your employer to do. You should also keep track of when you work, how many hours per week etc. You should report each employer and if it's more than one, then you should simply report the more important employer and that shall be the one reported in SEVIS. You should keep the other data in your file.

3. If I have an internship which finishes in these three (3) months, am I qualified to stay in the U.S. until the end of the OPT which is supposed to be a ONE YEAR period?

If you work for three (3) months and then are unemployed for three (3) months, you will be out of status. Basically, the purpose of the OPT is for you to get experience in your field of study. However the reality of the situation is that many students just remain in the USA and don't work. It's not true that all don't work, but for those who don't work, the new attitude is that they should go home: hence the new regulations.

4. Do I have two (2) more months to stay in the US if I couldn't find work opportunity in three (3) months?

If you've been out of work for 3 months (90 days) there is no grace period for leaving. From what the rules state, you should do one of the following immediately:

- Leave the country or
- Change to another status or
- Transfer your F-1 status into a new full time program of study

For more guidance on the new rules go to: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students/>