OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) WORKSHOP

CLARK UNIVERSITY
FIAT LUX
MDCCCLXXXVII

CLARK
UNIVERSITY

WHO ARE WE?

- International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO)

- Corner House, 2nd Floor
  - Located to the corner of Charlotte and Woodland Streets
  - 142 Woodland Street (if using GPS)

- [Clark University Campus Map](#)

What is OPT

- Optional Practical Training
  - Benefit only of F-1 visa
  - Employment for up to 12 months (usually after graduation)
  - Requires application to USCIS

OPT Details

- Apply to get experience in your field after you complete your program
- Apply up to 90 days before your program end date and up to 60 days after
- Full-time work authorization
- USCIS application fee (amount subject to change from USCIS)
  - Premium Processing is available for an additional fee to USCIS
  - More information available here: https://www.uscis.gov/forms/all-forms/how-do-i-request-premium-processing
- $100 Clark OPT record maintenance fee (even if you are a STEM major)

OPT APPLICATION PROCESS

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OPT Application Process

- When should I apply?

**Program End Date
(in your final semester)**

90 Days

60 Days

**Choose OPT
Start Date**
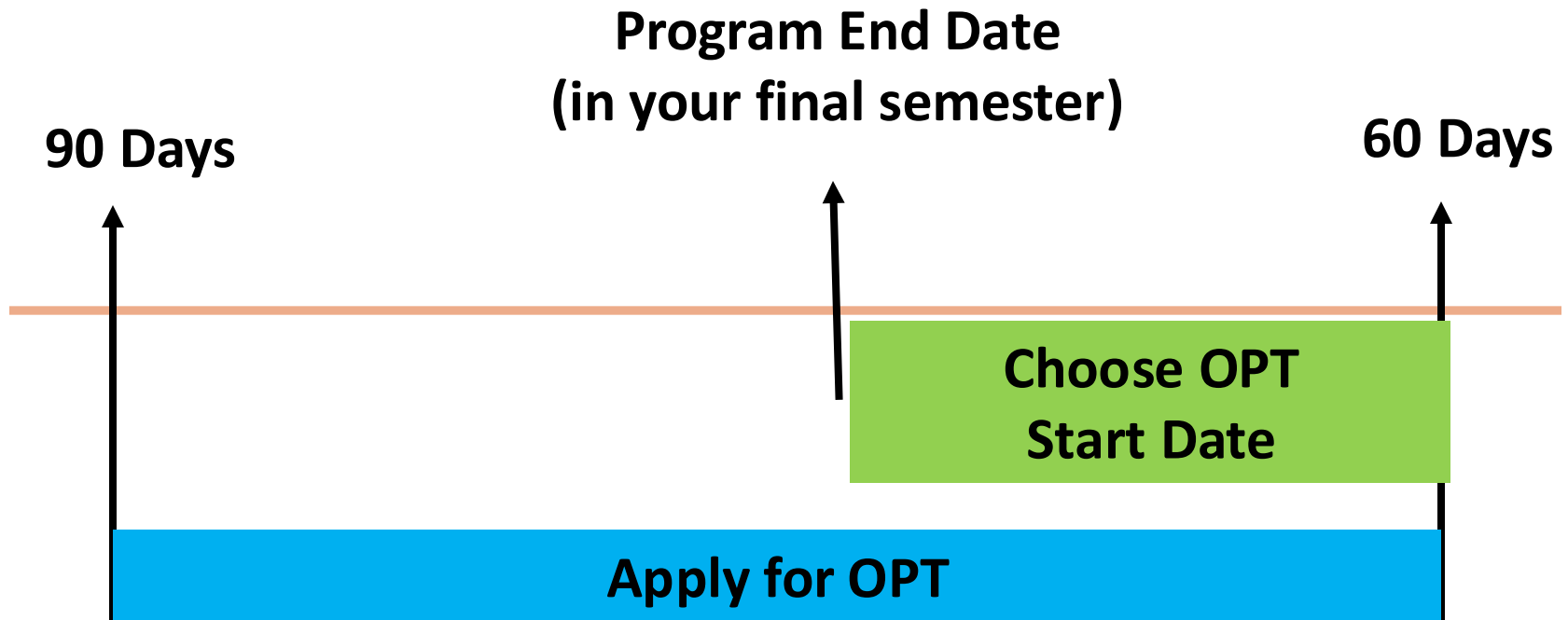
Apply for OPT
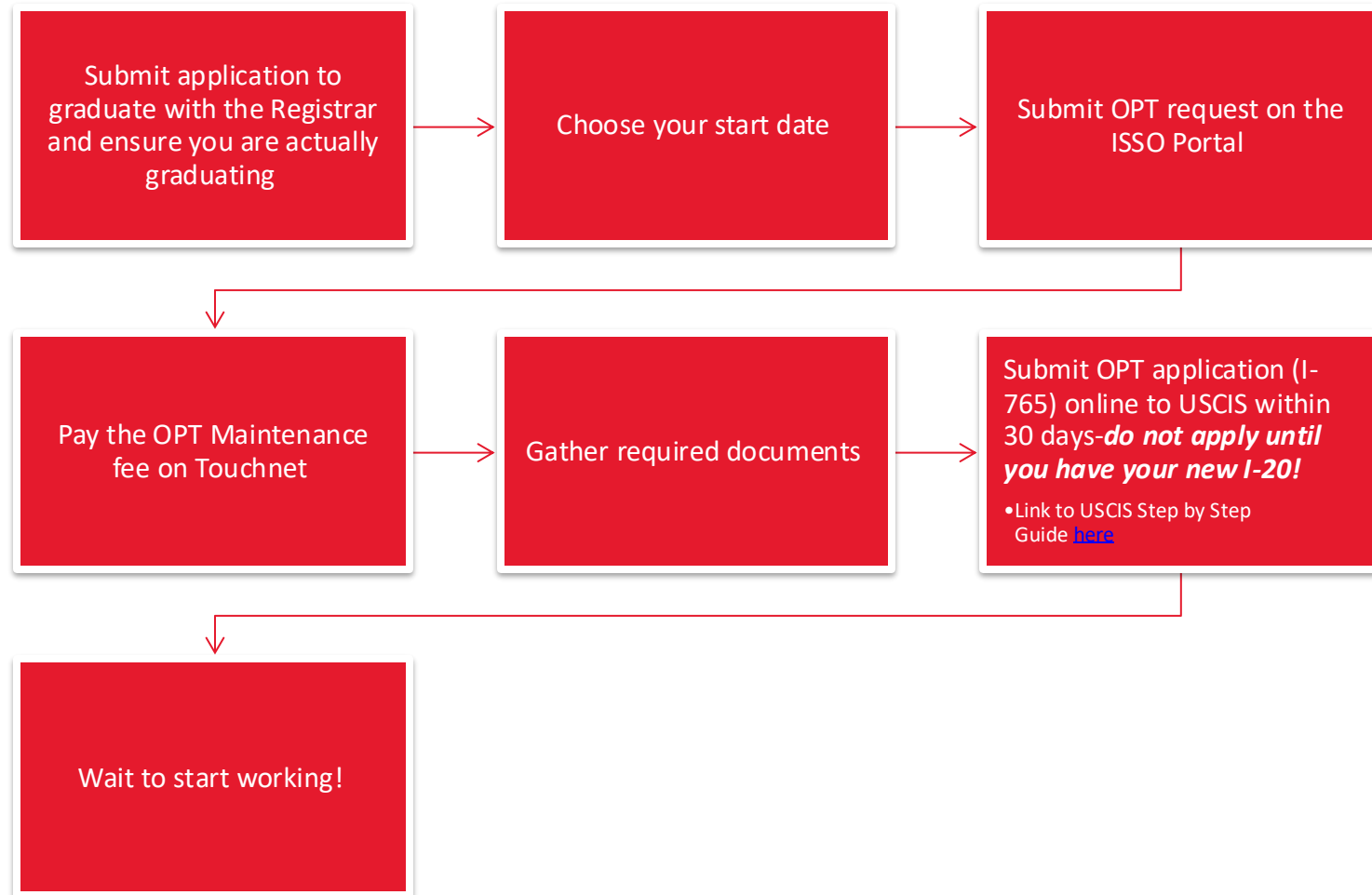
OPT Application Process

Things to keep in mind when applying for OPT:

- The ISSO recommends filing online
- Once you select a start date and your application is processing, you _cannot_ change it.
- You MUST be physically inside of the United States when USCIS receives your OPT application – you cannot apply from outside the country
- Application processing can be 90 days or more
- You **cannot work** until you have your EAD card and your start date passes.
- If you wait until the very end of your 60-day grace period to apply, you may not be approved for the full 12 months of OPT.
- **USCIS must receive your OPT application within 30 days OPT recommended I-20 issuance**

OPT Application Steps

Submit application to graduate with the Registrar and ensure you are actually graduating → Choose your start date → Submit OPT request on the ISSO Portal

Pay the OPT Maintenance fee on Touchnet → Gather required documents → Submit OPT application (I-765) online to USCIS within 30 days-*do not apply until you have your new I-20!*

- Link to USCIS Step by Step Guide [here](#)

Wait to start working!

OPT Application Process

- How do I choose my OPT start date?
  - If you have a job lined up, you will want your OPT start date to correspond with your anticipated start date.
  - If you are looking for a job, a later start date will give you more time for your search.
  - You **cannot** start working prior to the start date of your OPT.
  - Your OPT start date will be the date you select or the date your application is approved, whichever is later.
  - OPT end date will be 12 months after the start date but not later than 14 months after your program completion date.

Clark Optional Practical Training Request
Log into the ISSO Portal

LOGIN

Welcome to Clark University's ISSO Portal!

Please login to access your user profile, update your SEVIS record and request benefits of your immigration status.

New / Enrolled Students
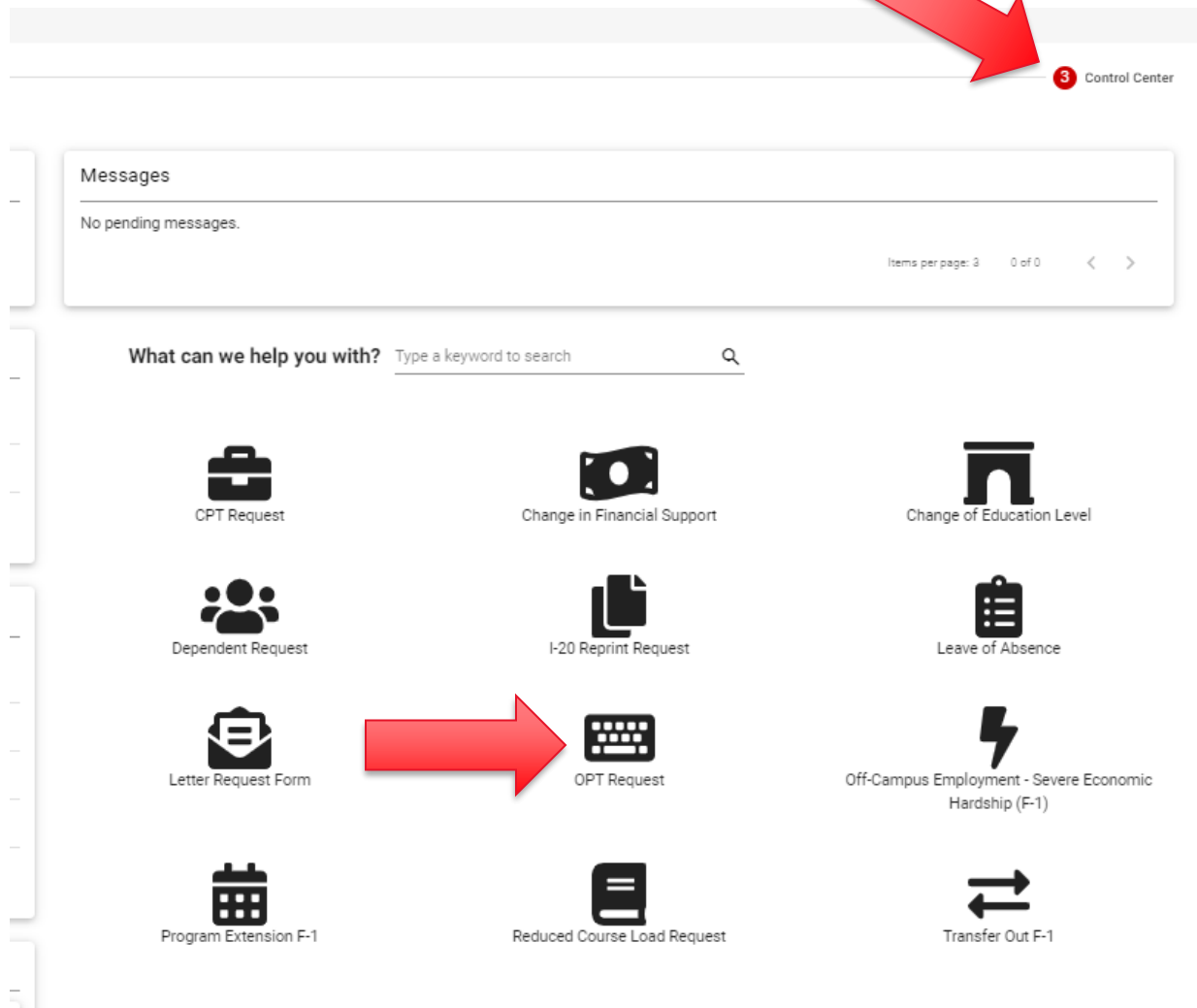
OPT / STEM / AT Students

Scholars / Departments

Navigate to your Control Center and Click on OPT Request

and follow the steps in the request

Your Documents-Your Responsibility

- **It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that immigration documents are correct and contain all necessary information.**
- Be sure to check your immigration document for any possible errors or missing information.
    - CIP Code, Program End Date, OPT Recommendation is present, I-20 is signed, OPT Requested dates are listed, Signature of DSO is present, etc..
- **It is your responsibility to ensure your immigration documents are correct and completed in full prior to submitting your documents to USCIS**
- Please contact our office at isso@clarku.edu if you feel that your immigration documents are incorrect.

Example OPT Recommendation on I-20

REMARKS

Practical Training is recommended in the field of ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

SCHOOL ATTESTATION

I certify under penalty of perjury that all information provided above was entered before I signed this form and is true and correct. I executed this form in the United States after review and evaluation in the United States by me or other officials of the school of the student's application, transcripts, or other records of courses taken and proof of financial responsibility, which were received at the school prior to the execution of this form. The school has determined that the above named student's qualifications meet all standards for admission to the school and the student will be required to pursue a full program of study as defined by 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6). I am a

EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATIONS

TYPE	FULL/PART-TIME	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
POST-COMPLETION OPT	FULL TIME	REQUESTED		

CHANGE OF STATUS/CAP-GAP EXTENSION

AUTHORIZED REDUCED COURSE LOAD

CURRENT SESSION DATES

CURRENT SESSION START DATE	CURRENT SESSION END DATE

TRAVEL ENDORSEMENT

This page, when properly endorsed, may be used for re-entry of the student to attend the same school after a temporary absence from the United States. Each

Email Correspondence

- Must provide a non-Clark email address to the ISSO:
  - After your complete request is reviewed and graduation has passed, the ISSO will update your user profile in the ISSO Portal to reflect this email as your new username for login. The ISSO will also update the email address on file with SEVIS to the email address you provide below.

- Important updates sent to students on OPT:
  - You will continue to receive emails from the ISSO after graduation re: immigration topics and programming events.

Required documents

- Two digital properly-formatted, passport-style photos taken in the past 30 days

- Scan of most recent <u>I-94</u>

- Scan of the biographical information page from your unexpired passport

- Scan of your most recent F-1 visa

- Scan of all previously issued I-20s (especially CPT I-20s)

- Scan of any previously issued Employment Authorization Document (EAD), front and back

- I-765 Application Fee payable using electronic payment

Online OPT Application Process

After I submit my application online, what happens?

- When you submit your Form I-765 online, you will get a receipt notice and receipt number immediately.

- After that, you will be able to see other notices in the documents tab, like your biometrics appointment notice (if required), any RFE, or a decision letter.

- USCIS will also mail hard copy notices to you, and to your attorney if you have one.

- In your account profile, you can sign up to receive automatic case updates via email or text message, so you will know when USCIS has added a document to your account.

OPT Application Process

- What happens after my OPT is approved?
  - You will receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) after your application is approved. Check for accuracy!

EAD Card Reminders

- You **cannot start** work until the start date on the card has been reached

- Once your OPT begins, you must report any address and employer changes within 10 days of any change

What happens if I don't graduate?

- Sometimes circumstances change
- Contact the ISSO right away
- We will advise based on your individual situation
- Questions the ISSO will ask:
  - Did you already submit your application?
  - Was your application approved?
  - Did you receive your card?

THE RULES WHILE ON OPT

OPT Regulations

- During OPT, you are still in F-1 status!

- You can qualify for OPT once at every academic level (Bachelors, Masters, PhD)

- Clark University ISSO is still your sponsor for the duration of your OPT.

- If you get/change jobs or move, you are required to update the SEVP student portal (you will receive activation email when your OPT starts).

- You must provide all updates in the SEVP Portal within 10 days

OPT Employment Guidelines

- Employment *must* be **related to your major field of study**.

- Post-completion OPT is <u>always</u> **full-time**. Any single job or combination of jobs should total **more than 20 hours per week**.

- Employment must be suitable for someone of your degree level

* You can work multiple jobs – <u>ALL</u> jobs must be related to field of study.

OPT Regulations

- There is a 90 day limit on unemployment!
  - You are allowed to be unemployed for up to 90 days during your OPT.
  - Unemployment can be at any time during your OPT – can't accrue more than 90 total days during the year.
- Different activities count as employment for OPT:
  - Regular, paid employment
  - Multiple short-term employers
  - Work for hire (consultant, 1099 employment)
  - Self-employed (start a business)
  - Employment through an agency
  - Volunteer work or unpaid internship

OPT Regulations

- How will they know if I'm working or not?

  - You are required to report your employment information to the SEVP Portal while you are on OPT

  - In addition to reporting your employment, you should keep personal records of all of your employment during OPT:

    - Position held and dates

    - Job title

    - Contact info of supervisor/manager

    - Description of the work

    - If connection to field of study isn't obvious, get a signed letter from supervisor explaining how degree is related to work.

OPT Regulations

- Reporting your employment <u>is critical</u>!
- SEVIS has the functionality to auto-terminate records for students who have not reported employment information.
  - You report employment within 10 days of getting or changing employment which is updated on your SEVIS record.
  - *We will not have the ability to correct records if you forget to report employment.*

OPT Regulations

- What happens when my OPT ends?
  - You have a 60 day grace period at the end of your OPT. During that time you can:
    - Return to your home country
    - Enter a new degree program at Clark
    - Transfer to another US University to start a new degree program
  - You can also change to a new status
    - One common example is when your employer sponsors you for H-1B.

OPT Regulations

- STEM OPT
  - 24-month extension to OPT
  - Check [eligibility for STEM OPT](#)
  - You must submit an application BEFORE your current OPT expires
  - You can apply up to 90 days before your current OPT expires
  - Make sure your STEM OPT employer uses E-Verify
  - The ISSO offers STEM-OPT and Life after OPT workshops

Travel while on OPT

- Travel within the U.S.

  - Carry your I-20, passport, visa and OPT card with you. Should carry proof of employment where possible

  - Vacation time allowed by your job <u>does not</u> count towards unemployment.

  - Please remember if you travel out of the US and your F1 visa has expired you will need to renew your F1 visa before reentering the US.

Travel while on OPT

- Travel outside of the US
  - Bring these documents with you:
    - Passport with valid visa
    - Printout of your most recent I-94 information
    - EAD (OPT card)
    - I-20 with the OPT recommendation on it
          Travel signature on P. 2 should be new within 6 months
    - Proof of employment
- If you don't have proof of employment, entry back into the US is not guaranteed!
- Travel outside the US while OPT is pending is not recommended
- Talk to an ISSO advisor before traveling! The ISSO can never guarantee reentry into the US

Social Security Number

- If you don't have an SSN, you can now get one as part of your OPT application.

- It will typically be mailed to you 2-3 weeks after your OPT approval if you did not receive one previously

QUESTIONS? VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [HTTPS://WWW.CLARKU.EDU/INTERNATIONAL-STUDENTS-SCHOLARS/](https://www.clarku.edu/international-students-scholars/)

ISSO Contact Info:
ISSO@clarku.edu
508-739-7362

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