

IMPORTANT UPDATE!

REGARDING PROGRAM COMPLETION DATE AND POST-COMPLETION OPT FOR GRADUATE LEVEL F-1 STUDENTS

(Posted by ISSS March 1, 2009)

F-1 OPT regulations allow for full time OPT to begin during the regular academic term (fall or spring semester) prior to completion of the academic program if the student has completed all required coursework and is enrolled only in thesis, dissertation, or equivalent hours.

However, SEVP has now specified that if the full time OPT begins prior to the end date of the degree program noted on the I-20, then it will be considered **Pre-Completion** OPT and it must be completed prior to the degree end date.

The OPT will be considered **Post-Completion** if the requested start date is after the degree end date noted on the I-20.

Therefore, graduate students who have completed all course work except as noted above and who wish to begin full time OPT prior to the anticipated degree completion date shown on the I-20 and then plan to continue with the OPT after degree completion will need to submit two OPT applications and pay two separate application fees – one for the period prior to completion and one for the period following completion.

When the ISSS advisor prepares the I-20 for the OPT application, the program end date on the I-20 will be adjusted to reflect the degree completion date indicated by the academic advisor on the OPT recommendation form. Every consideration should be taken into account by the student and the academic advisor to reflect as accurately as possible the semester in which the degree will be completed in order to comply with the coinciding definition of OPT authorization explained above.

Note: The above interpretation is current as of the posting date. The regulations and related governmental interpretations are subject to change.

G:\ISSS\FORMS\F-1 FORMS\Grad Pre-Post Completion OPT Guidance.doc

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