How to choose your OPT Start and End Dates

90 days prior to your completion date

Completion Date

Start date

60-day grace period

WINDOW TO APPLY FOR POST-OPT

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You can submit your documentation to ISSO up to 90 days prior to your completion date

If you are a Bachelors OR Masters Project/Coursework student – your completion date is typically the last day of finals. Masters thesis and PhD candidates must work with their thesis advisor to determine an appropriate defense date. Thesis students should read more about completion dates [here](#).

You can also apply for Post-OPT during the 60-day grace period, though this is not recommended, as it takes up to 3 months for USCIS to adjudicate OPT applications. Make sure to only submit your Post OPT app once you are confident that you will successfully complete. If you submit a Post OPT application and then do not finish, it will jeopardize your OPT.
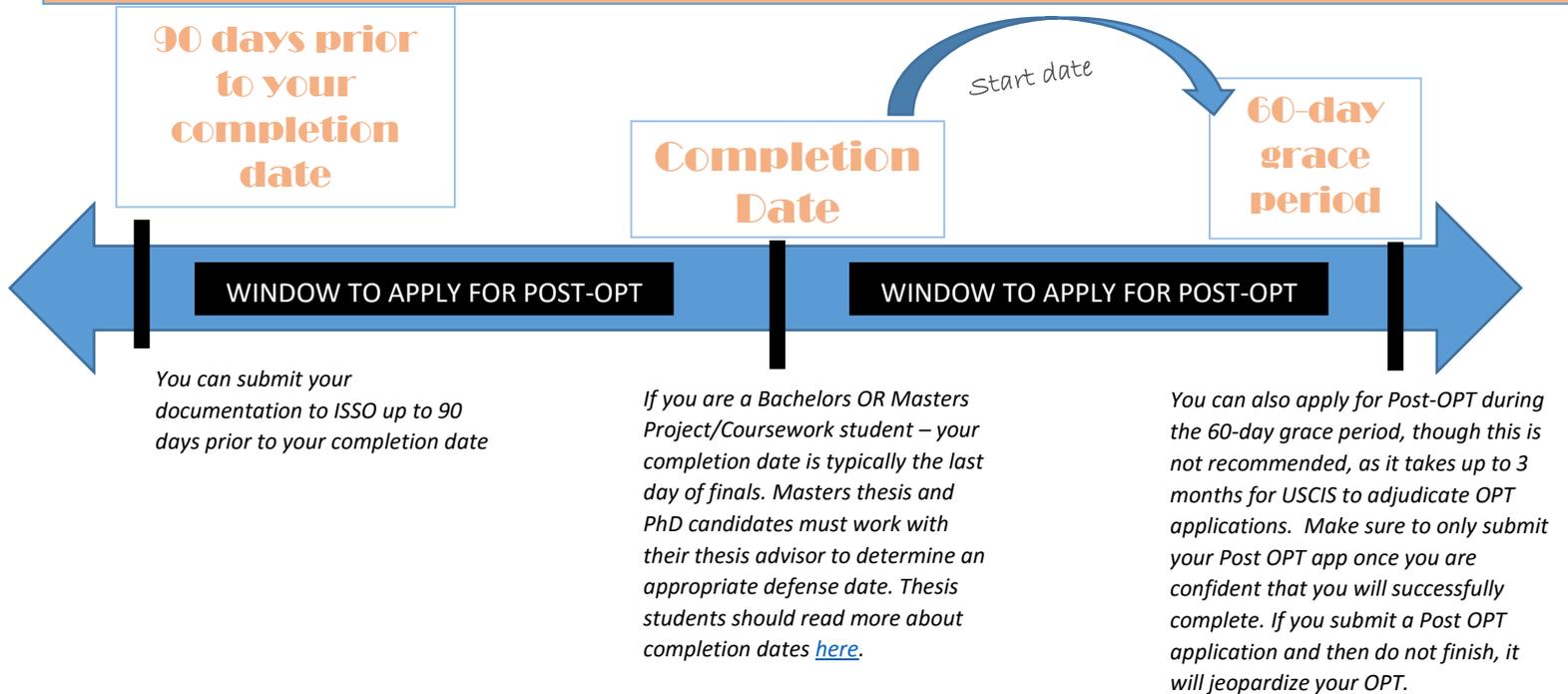
THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHILE APPLYING FOR POST-OPT & CHOOSING A START AND END DATE:

-You cannot travel outside of the United States with a pending petition with USCIS

-Your end date should be 365 days from your start date UNLESS you used Pre-OPT, which would be deducted from your 12 months of Post-OPT (part-time Pre-OPT gets deducted ½ time)

-The sooner you apply, the more flexibility you have with a start date that best fits your case

-You cannot change the start dates once you submit the application – choose wisely!

-It can take UP to 90 days to receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD)

-You cannot work until you receive the EAD and until the start date listed on the EAD is current

-You cannot apply for Post-OPT if you have a pending Pre-OPT application with USCIS. You will need to wait until you receive your Pre-OPT EAD.

-Something to consider: Are you already looking for a job in your field and commensurate to your degree level? How long do you anticipate it will take for you to secure a full-time position? If you have already secured employment, have you discussed when you will begin with your employer? How long is it taking others in your field to secure OPT employment? You should take all of these questions into consideration.

-Remember that you can only have a TOTAL of 90 days of unemployment while on Post-OPT. The unemployment clock starts from the effective date of the EAD. It is critical that you report all OPT employment change (start, finish, concurrent, etc.) to ISSO within 10 days. If there is no employment record in SEVIS after 90 days from the start date of the EAD, your SEVIS record could automatically terminate, leaving you out of status.

-Check the OPT video, [HERE](#), then read through the OPT Guide to obtain the proper documents to submit to ISSO through an electronic eform, [HERE](#)

- Keep your name listed on your mail box at all times. USCIS cannot legally deliver the EAD unless your name is on the mailbox.