STUDENTS ON F-1 POST COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (POST OPT) OR STEM EXTENSION

It is not advisable that you travel outside of the U.S. until you have received an approved Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Although the F-1 regulations are not completely explicit on this point, it is understood that the OPT EAD card must have been issued before the student departs the U.S. This is the practice that is recommended by both International Student Advisors and immigration attorneys.

If you travel during Post OPT status or STEM OPT Status, you should contact our office during advising hours to ensure that your employment information is correctly updated on SEVIS, as well as your U.S. address. You will also need the following documentation in order to re-enter the U.S. with the proper F-1 status:

- A valid passport (valid 6 months beyond the expiration date of your EAD);
- A valid Post OPT or STEM I-20 Form, signed for travel by our office within the last 6 months;
- A valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport. If you need to renew your visa stamp while you are away from the U.S., be mindful of the fact that the U.S. Embassy or Consulate will need to be convinced of your ties to your home country and intent to return after your Post OPT time. They might also subject you to Administrative Processing as mentioned above;
- A letter from your Post OPT or STEM Employer. The letter must be on original letterhead, have an original signature and have a current date. It should include your name, title, and – more importantly – verification that you are still employed there. This letter should not include start and end dates; and
- Photocopies of the last three pay statements to further evidence your employment.

DO NOT RE-ENTER IN TOURIST “B” STATUS.

If you enter in “B” status you will cancel your F-1, Post OPT or STEM extension status and will no longer have work authorization.

GRACE PERIOD

- F-1 students have a 60-day grace period beyond their completion date of their program and also beyond the completion date of the Employment Authorization Document (EAD).
- You may not work during this 60-day grace period, but you may apply to transfer to another F-1 academic program, or apply to a different non-immigrant status, as long as you remain in the U.S. during this process.
- If you depart the U.S. during the grace period, you will be unable to re-enter in F-1 or J-1 status. You will need to have a new approved status and may need to renew or apply for a new visa stamp in order to re-enter the U.S.