

While You Are On Post-Completion OPT

While you are on post-completion OPT, your F-1 status continues as does the F-2 of family members *(if applicable)*. Gordon-Conwell continues to maintain your I-20 and SEVIS record, and you are subject to the requirements for lawfully maintaining F-1 status as a student pursuing authorized practical training. During this time, you are required to stay in contact with your F-1 student advisor at Gordon-Conwell, especially **to immediately report any of the following:**

Employment/Employer Changes

- ✓ You must notify your advisor of any changes pertaining to employment. Though your EAD is not employer specific, allowing you to change employers at any time, you are still required to report changes to your advisor within 10 business days of the change. This timeframe will help you avoid situations where a Department of Homeland Security official may determine you to be out of status. When you contact your advisor, be prepared to provide the name and address of your new employer, and a formal employment offer letter for your student file, if requested.
- ✓ During post-completion OPT; F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Therefore, you may accrue an aggregate of ***no more than 90 days of unemployment*** during any post-completion OPT. (Unemployment does not include weekends and holidays; instead, it refers to weeks or months during which you do not actively have a job.) If you lose your OPT job, you must find another one soon, so that you do not have more than 90 days of total unemployment during your 12 months of OPT.

Periods of Unemployment

- ✓ While on post-completion OPT, you are only allowed a maximum of 90 days of unemployment. Unemployment time is counted each day during the OPT dates indicated on the EAD. Periods of up to 10 days between the end of one job and the beginning of the new job will not be included in the calculation for time spent unemployed. If you exceed the allowable period of unemployment while on post-completion OPT, you are considered to have violated your status.
- ✓ If you have a job offer that begins more than 90 days after your OPT begins, you will exceed your allowable unemployment time and will be out of status. If you travel outside of the U.S. while unemployed, the time spent outside the U.S. will count as unemployment against the 90 day limit. However, if you travel outside of the U.S. while employed either during a period of leave authorized by an employer, the time spent outside the U.S. will not count as unemployment.

Address Changes

- ✓ You must notify your advisor of any changes to your address within 7 business days. This information must be updated in SEVIS. The consequences of failing to update your address can be severe.

Social Security Numbers

- ✓ If you do not already have a Social Security Number (SSN), you will be required to have one for tax reporting purposes. You may apply for a SSN after you have received the EAD card and the begin date on the card has been reached. On your first day of employment, you will be asked to complete employment paperwork. If you do not yet have your SSN, you may write "applied for" in the space where the SSN is to be provided. Once you receive the Social Security Card in the mail, provide the number to your employer. If you already have a SSN, do not apply for a new one.

Documenting OPT Employment

- ✓ You must keep full documentation of all your employment. You may be asked to provide proof that you are employed and/or that your employment is in your field of study. Specifically, you should maintain evidence of the position held, proof of the duration of that position, job title, contact information for your supervisor or manager, and description of the work. If it is not clear from the job description that the work is related to your degree, you must obtain a signed letter from the employer's hiring official, supervisor, or manager stating how your degree is related to the work you performed. Keep this information in your personal records and with you if you travel outside the U.S. and plan to re-enter.

Travel Outside of the U.S. and Reentry

- ✓ Please review the information form, "OPT Travel Information Form." For information regarding international travel while on OPT, contact your advisor for updates and to request the required travel signature on page 2 of your most recent I-20. If your F-2

dependents travel outside the U.S. and re-enter without you, they should carry their own original documents along with photocopies of all the documents you are required to carry for reentry to the U.S., including a letter from your employer verifying your employment.

Leaving the U.S. Permanently During OPT

- ✓ You must notify your advisor if you plan to leave the U.S. permanently. Failure to do so will result in the accidental accrual of unemployment and complications with accurately maintaining your I-20 and SEVIS record.

Ending OPT Early

- ✓ In order to maintain your F-1 status, you must contact your advisor if you choose to end OPT for the following reasons:
 - **Abandoning OPT:** If you decide to abandon OPT employment before the end date of your EAD and leave the U.S., you must notify your advisor so that your SEVIS record can be terminated. Gordon-Conwell will terminate your SEVIS record effective the date you indicate you plan to leave the U.S. or the date you notify us, whichever is later.
 - **Starting a new program at another institution:** If you decide to apply to an academic program at another seminary, college, university, or other SEVP approved institution, once you are admitted to that program you must notify the F-1 student advisors at both the transfer-in school and Gordon-Conwell. After you complete the necessary transfer procedures at both institutions, Gordon-Conwell will transfer your I-20 to the new institution so they may issue a new I-20 for you. In this case, remember that authorization for OPT is not transferable; your OPT authorization ends on the transfer release date. If you wish to postpone transferring until you complete OPT, be sure to request that the release date be set for a date after your OPT ends. You can request the transfer release date to occur during the 60-day grace period following post-completion OPT, if you chose to complete your OPT before transferring.
 - **Admission to Gordon-Conwell for a new degree program:** If you are admitted to a new degree program at Gordon-Conwell, you will need to complete the *Application for I-20/Visa Certificate* in order to be issued a new I-20. The issuance of this new I-20 does not end your OPT immediately. Rather, your OPT is terminated as soon as you enter the U.S. with the new I-20 for Gordon-Conwell, or you check-in with Student Life Services for the new program, whichever is earlier. Either one of these events will activate your SEVIS record for the new degree program and thus, deactivate your old SEVIS record used while on OPT. This means that if you chose to begin your new program with your new I-20, you must immediately stop employment regardless of the EAD completion date.

Change of Status During OPT

- ✓ Please notify your advisor if you are approved for a change of status (no longer F-1 visa status) while on OPT. If you change your immigration status (e.g. from F-1 to H-1B, F-2, J-1, R-1) during OPT, your OPT eligibility ends on the effective date of the USCIS action notice. In this case, any unused OPT time is lost, as you cannot have both F-1 OPT status and another status at the same time.

OPT Dates and Transfers to Other Schools

- ✓ You must notify your advisor if you would like to transfer your SEVIS record to another school. It is not uncommon for F-1 students to return to school in the U.S. after completing a year of OPT. However, F-1 students are not allowed to begin a full-time program of study while on OPT. If you have been admitted to a full-time degree program before or during OPT, you will be required to discontinue the remaining portions of your OPT before you can begin at that school. If you are admitted to a school other than Gordon-Conwell, **you need to apply for a transfer of your F-1 status to the new school before the end of the 60-day grace period following your OPT end date.** When you decide to leave one school to attend another, your record is electronically transferred to that new school on a certain "release date" you have chosen. If you are on OPT, consider the following factors in determining the best F-1 transfer release date:
 - After the release date has passed, you are not allowed to continue working on your OPT, even if your EAD has not expired.
 - The transfer release date must be no earlier than 5 months before your program start date at the new school and no later than 60 days after the expiration date on your EAD.
 - If you request a release date in the future, you may continue working on OPT as long as your EAD has not expired.
 - If the time period between your OPT end date and the start date of your new school will be more than five months, please meet with your DSO to discuss further options.