## Travel Risk While on OPT

### Case Scenario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Scenario</th>
<th>What is My Status</th>
<th>Can I Travel and Re-enter the U.S.?</th>
<th>What Documents are Required for Travel?</th>
<th>What Level of Risk is Involved for Re-entry to the U.S.?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Post-Completion OPT application has been submitted to USCIS but not yet approved. I-20 program end date is in the future. | As an enrolled student you are in F-1 student status until your I-20 program end date. | Yes, you are still an F-1 student (who is enrolled) because your I-20 ends after your re-entry date. | - Valid I-20 signed for travel (within 6 months)  
- Valid F-1 visa  
- Valid passport  
- Proof of enrollment  
- If received, OPT receipt and/or EAD card | GO  
Re-entry to the U.S. is at the discretion of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). We cannot guarantee re-entry. However, you can minimize problems by planning to re-enter the U.S. a few weeks prior to your I-20 end date. |
| Post-Completion OPT application has been submitted to USCIS but not yet approved. I-20 program end date is in the past. | You are on an extension of your F-1 student status. | Maybe. Check with ISP for more details. | - Valid I-20 signed for travel (within 6 months)  
- Valid F-1 visa  
- Valid passport  
- Employment/job offer letter on company letterhead, if available  
- If received, OPT receipt and/or EAD card | CAUTION  
Re-entry to the U.S. is at the discretion of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) immigration officer. We cannot guarantee re-entry. |
| EAD (OPT card) is approved* | You are in F-1 OPT student status. | Yes | - EAD (OPT card)  
- Valid I-20 signed for travel (within 6 months)  
- Valid F-1 visa  
- Valid passport  
- Employment/job offer letter on company letterhead, if available | GO  
You have all the necessary conditions to travel. Entry to the U.S. will be decided by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). |
| EAD (OPT card) is approved* | You are on an extension of your F-1 OPT student status. | Maybe. 8 CFR 214.2 (f)(13)(ii) "Return to Resume Employment" | - EAD (OPT card)  
- Valid I-20 signed for travel (within 6 months)  
- Valid F-1 visa  
- Valid passport  
- Employment/job offer letter on company letterhead, if available | CAUTION  
You need to be cautious as you do not have a job to return to. Entry to the U.S. will be decided by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). |
| EAD (OPT card) is approved* | You are in F-1 OPT student status. | Yes | - EAD (OPT card)  
- Valid I-20 signed for travel (within 6 months)  
- Valid F-1 visa  
- Valid passport  
- Employment/job offer letter on company letterhead, if available  
- Additional documents required for renewing your F-1 visa | CAUTION  
You need to be cautious. You are on an extension of your F-1 student visa status. It is up to the discretion of the U.S. consulate/embassy where you apply to grant you a student visa. Re-entry to the U.S. will be decided by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). |

### NOTE

Traveling with an EAD (OPT card) only is never sufficient for re-entry; the EAD only shows employment eligibility.

### IMPORTANT!

If your EAD is approved and is being mailed to you, you must have it in your possession before you re-enter the US. Traveling with the idea that a friend or relative can mail the card to you outside the U.S. is not recommended.

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For STEM OPT, see p. 2

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## Travel Risk While on STEM OPT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE SCENARIO</th>
<th>WHAT IS MY STATUS</th>
<th>CAN I TRAVEL AND RE-ENTER THE U.S.?</th>
<th>WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE REQUIRED FOR TRAVEL?</th>
<th>WHAT LEVEL OF RISK IS INVOLVED FOR RE-ENTRY TO THE U.S.?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submitted STEM OPT application. I-20 program end date has passed. STEM EAD (OPT card) not approved and has not been received in the mail.</td>
<td>You are in F-1 OPT pending student status.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Travel is not recommended.</td>
<td>STOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working on Post-Completion OPT. STEM OPT Extension application is pending and Post-Completion OPT end date is in the past.</td>
<td>You are in F-1 OPT student status.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Travel is not recommended.</td>
<td>STOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM OPT EAD approved and I am currently working.</td>
<td>You are in F-1 OPT student status.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><strong>EAD (OPT card)</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Valid I-20 signed for travel (within 6 months)</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Valid F-1 visa</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Valid passport</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Employment/job offer letter on company letterhead, if available</strong></td>
<td>GO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM OPT EAD approved and I am currently working. I will be renewing my F-1 visa while I am abroad.</td>
<td>You are in F-1 OPT student status.</td>
<td>Maybe. 8 CFR 214.2 (f)(13)(ii) &quot;Return to Resume Employment&quot;</td>
<td><strong>EAD (OPT card)</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Valid I-20 signed for travel (within 6 months)</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Valid passport</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Employment/job offer letter on company letterhead, if available</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Additional documents required for renewing your F-1 visa</strong></td>
<td>CAUTION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### WARNING
- Re-entering the U.S. in a status other than F-1 (e.g. tourist) will invalidate both F-1 status and OPT authorization.
- If your F-1 visa is nearing its expiration date, you might want to consider renewing it. Renewing a visa while on OPT is risky.

### NOTE
Traveling with an EAD (OPT card) only is never sufficient for re-entry; the EAD only shows employment eligibility.

### IMPORTANT!
If your EAD is approved and is being mailed to you, you must have it in your possession before you re-enter the US. Traveling with the idea that a friend or relative can mail the card to you outside the U.S. is not recommended.

*Updated Oct 2022*