An F-1 student on Optional Practical Training (OPT) is considered an F-1 visa holder involved in gaining practical experience through employment in the United States. The International Services Center is responsible for providing services, tracking F-1 students on Optional Practical Training and providing updates on their status through the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

Important Note: USCIS regulations state that such travel abroad (home country or another country) can only take place if the individual will be returning to the United States to “resume authorized employment.” Therefore, travel may be problematic if the student does not have a job offer or if the student’s F-1 visa has expired.

The following conditions are considered to range from advisable to not advisable while traveling on OPT:

1. If your OPT application is pending approval, and you are still in the process of completing your program (end date on I-20 has not been reached), then you may travel as long as you return within a few weeks of your program completion date or end date on I-20. Please ensure that:
   - You have a travel signature endorsed by your immigration adviser on your I-20
   - Your passport is valid for at least six months after re-entry date
   - Your visa is valid

2. If your OPT was approved and you have received your EAD card and you have employment, then you may travel. To re-enter the U.S., please ensure that:
   - You have a travel signature on your I-20 that is less than six months old
   - Your passport is valid for at least six months after re-entry date
   - Your visa is valid
   - You have a letter from your employer listing employment dates and verifying that you can resume employment upon your return

3. Travel is not recommended if you have not received your EAD card and do not have employment. You may be denied re-entry to the U.S. If you insist on traveling, please contact an ISC immigration adviser for further guidance.

4. If your visa is expired, you will need to apply for a new visa to re-enter the U.S. You may be subject to more scrutiny by a U.S. consulate when you are on OPT. It is important to establish that your purpose in the U.S. is still temporary even though you have completed your studies.