



**Rhode Island School of Design**  
Office of International Student Services

**F-1 Student Travel with Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

<b>LOW RISK</b>	<p><b>Travel Abroad BEFORE Graduation</b> F-1 Students may travel abroad and reenter the U.S. before graduation. To reenter the U.S. following travel you will need a valid passport, F-1 visa and I-20 with a current travel signature (signed within 12 months)</p>
<b>MEDIUM TO HIGH RISK</b>	<p><b>Travel Abroad AFTER graduation- OPT application pending</b> Students who have filed for OPT may travel outside the U.S. while the application is pending as long as they present the original I-797C Notice of Receipt as proof that the application was filed.</p> <p>The problem with traveling after graduation and before receiving the EAD card is that you do not know when your OPT application will be approved. Occasionally USCIS will ask for additional evidence to process your OPT application. Also, if you are out of the country when your OPT is approved, you may have someone mail the EAD card to you, <b>BUT this will not help if you do not have written confirmation of employment upon your return to the U.S.!</b></p>
<b>HIGH RISK</b>	<p><b>Travel After OPT approved, but No job + No EAD = No Entry to the U.S.</b> Students with an approved OPT application are discouraged from leaving the U.S. and returning without an EAD card and evidence of employment.</p> <p>Regulation C.F.R. 214.2 (f)(13)(ii) is interpreted to say that after OPT is approved and the EAD card issued, you can only reenter the U.S. to <b>resume employment</b>. The student must present either an official job offer or confirmation letter or evidence of freelance employment.</p>

**Our Recommendation**

If you know you will need to travel outside the U.S. soon after your graduation, apply for OPT early enough to assure receiving your EAD card before the completion of your program. In addition, obtain written confirmation of a job offer or freelance employment. We cannot guarantee that you won't have trouble reentering the U.S. with an I-797C Notice of Receipt. For the best possible experience entering the U.S., we recommend that you have:

- Valid passport
- Valid F-1 visa (if you are Canadian, you do not need a visa)
- Valid I-20 that states "OPT Authorization Approved" on page 2, with a current travel signature (within 6 months)
- EAD (OPT card)
- Job offer letter or letter confirming employment from your company or client(s)

DO NOT exit the U.S. and reenter using a B1/B2 Tourist Visa if your OPT has not yet been approved. This would result in the termination of your F-1 status and cause you to lose your OPT benefits.

***If you have ANY questions about traveling during OPT, please contact OISS. We are here to answer your questions and make sure that you feel comfortable with your decision to travel outside of the U.S.***