Here are some important notes from the Spring 2022 MS information session:

- You may submit your post-completion OPT application beginning February 7th.
- The OPT application can be submitted via mail or electronically. Duke Visa Services can assist you with completing forms and assembling application documents. You should keep the original versions of your visa documents and submit copies for the application.
- To obtain a recommendation letter for your application, MS students may request one from me by emailing me at kelsey.liddle@duke.edu. Before recommendation letters can be provided you must first apply for graduation in DukeHub.
- The official graduation date for Spring 2022 graduates is May 8, 2022.
- The earliest start date MS students can list on the EAD is May 9, 2022. PhD students may have more flexibility with their start date based upon their dissertation defense date. You cannot begin work until you have received the EAD.
- Students with an F-1 visa have a 60-day grace period after graduation where they may stay in the U.S. without being employed or enrolled in an academic program. The last day of this grace period for Spring 2022 graduates is July 7, 2022.
- The latest you may apply for post-completion OPT is within the 60-day grace period. Visa Services recommends not waiting until the very end of the grace period to submit your application.
- It may take 3-4 months for your application to be processed, so use your best judgment to decide when you will apply.
- USCIS must receive your OPT application within 30 days from when your visa advisor signs your I-20.
- You must be physically present in the U.S. to apply for OPT.
- You must have completed 2 consecutive semesters of full-time study in the U.S. to be eligible for OPT. If you go on a leave and are outside the U.S. for 5 months or more, you will need to complete 2 more semesters of full-time enrollment to become eligible for OPT.
- Even if you arrived to the U.S. late in the semester, as long as you were enrolled full-time for that semester it may be counted toward your OPT eligibility.
- Use a bank check or a money order to pay the application fee rather than a personal check if mailing your application. If submitting the application electronically you may pay with a debit or credit card.
- Duke Visa Services recommends visiting FedEx for the 2 photos required for the application.
- You do not need to have a job offer to apply for OPT. However, if you receive OPT and are not employed within 90 days of your EAD start date, your OPT will be revoked.
- Once you do receive a job offer, your employer will need to provide a description of your job and how it relates to your field of study. Details on what information the employer needs to provide are available on the Duke Visa Services website.
- Your employer can help with your I-9 form. Duke Visa Services cannot help with this unless you are working for Duke.
- You may work for more than one employer on OPT, but you must continue to comply with employment reporting to Duke Visa Services.
- All employment under post-completion OPT must be at least 20 hours per week.
- All engineering MS students are eligible for the 24-month STEM extension because all MS programs have STEM-related CIP codes. Applications for the STEM extension should be submitted before the EAD end date.

- Your degree program's CIP code is noted on your I-20.
- Duke Visa Services recommends maintaining evidence of each job you do through OPT, such as job title, employer name, employment dates, etc.
- You should update your address information after leaving Duke through the Duke Visa Services website, not through DukeHub. You will need to update your address within 10 days of your employment start date.
- Applications are not processed more quickly if you list an earlier start date. The OPT application process cannot be expedited.
- If you are interested in only applying for the H-1B visa and not OPT, you can work with your employer to apply.
- You may list Duke Visa Services' office address as the mailing address in your OPT application. This is recommended if you know that you will move after you submit your application.
- While your OPT application is pending you can remain in the U.S., but that time will be deducted from the 12 months allotted for work through OPT. If you leave the U.S. before your OPT begins, you will need your EAD and a valid visa to re-enter.
- Visa Services recommends visiting the website https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/ if you would like a guide to filling out forms.
- The visa advisor for CEE MS and PhD students is Francois Masuka, francois.masuka@duke.edu.
- The visa advisor for BME, ECE, MEMS and MatSci MS and PhD students is Pamela Billie, pamela.billie@duke.edu.

Thank you,
Kelsey

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