Optional Practical Training Checklist

OPT is a work authorization granted to F-1 students for employment in their field of study (their major). Most students use it for post-graduation employment. Processing typically takes several months, though this depends on USCIS.

- **Attend an** [OPT Session](#) for the current semester, or watch a session recording.
- **Request an OPT I-20 in** [iStart](#), using the [OPT I-20 Request](#) form. Your OPT dates will be listed on page 2 of your I-20. **Your OPT will be denied without this!**
- **Schedule an appointment** with an ISSP advisor (recommended). Ask application questions during your appointment.

**Materials Needed**

- Application for Employment Authorization ([Form I-765](#)), online version or paper version (to be mailed)
- I-94 record (“Get Most Recent I-94”), accessible online. If you last traveled to the US by land, this will be in your passport instead, and you should copy (or scan) **front** and **back**, even if blank.
- Copy/Scan of passport identity page(s) showing your biographical info and expiration, valid 6 months in future
- OPT I-20. Request this in [iStart](#), using the [OPT I-20 Request](#) form. Your OPT dates will be listed on page 2 of your I-20. **Your OPT will be denied without this!**

**Additional Materials for Online Applications**

- Scan of 1 color passport style photo, sized 2 inches by 2 inches
- Payment of $410, by credit/debit card or bank transfer

**Additional Materials for Paper/Mailed Applications**

- e-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance ([Form G-1145](#)), typed.
- 2 color passport style photos, sized 2 inches by 2 inches
- Check or money order for $410, made payable to US Department of Homeland Security, or Authorization for Credit Card Transactions Form ([Form G-1450](#)), typed. Confirm fee amount before mailing by checking [USCIS](#).

**Additional Materials for Some Applications**

- Previous EADs (work authorization card), front and back
- If you changed status to F-1 within the US: Copy of the I-797 notice showing your change of status to F-1

**Additional Materials for STEM Extension Applications**

- Official W&M transcript (or other school’s transcript, if applicable), showing completion of your STEM degree
- Form I-983. Complete with your employer. Submit through [iStart](#), with [OPT STEM Extension I-20 Request](#).
I-765 Tips

Print and mail the I-765 form, or submit the I-765 online.

While we are always happy to discuss your OPT application, use your judgment in whatever you submit to USCIS, as this is ultimately your responsibility.

Timing

- Your OPT application must be received by USCIS (online or by mail)
  - Within **30 days** of when we issue your OPT I-20, or before the end of your grace period, whichever is sooner.
  - If you are currently on OPT and are applying for an OPT STEM extension, it must be received **within 60 days** or before your original OPT expires, whichever is sooner.
  - If your OPT application is received by USCIS later than these dates, it will automatically be denied.

Common information asked on the I-765

Form Type

- I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

Reason for employment

- For post-graduate OPT application, select “Initial permission to accept employment.”
- For OPT STEM Extension, select “Renewal of my permission to accept employment.”

Your U.S. Mailing Address

- Your mailing address. The post office cannot forward immigration mail, so if you list your address and move, you must change your address on the USCIS website.
- **In Care Of Name**: If you are mailing to a friend, their name.
- **Is your current mailing address the same as your physical address?** If mailing to a friend, say “no” and list your current physical address.

Alien Registration Number

- If you did OPT previously, this is typically listed on your OPT card as your USCIS #.

Social Security Number

- If you do not have a Social Security card and would like one, you can request this, but be aware that your SSN may arrive after your OPT card; sometimes they do not arrive at all.

I-94 number (if any)

- Your I-94 number is the 11 digit number printed on your I-94 card in your passport (if you last entered the US in 2013 or earlier, or if you entered through a land border) or online record (available at “Already Visiting and Need Proof”).
Date of Your Last Arrival

- The date when you last entered the U.S, usually date stamped on your passport, or listed in your I-94 record.

Place of Your Last Arrival

- Airport or land border where you entered the U.S. and the immigration officer stamped your passport.

Immigration Status at Your Last Arrival

- If you entered the U.S. in another status (e.g., F-2), then applied to change your status to F-1, enter the previous status here. Otherwise, enter F-1 student.

Your Current Immigration Status or Category

- F-1 Student (if it’s something other than F-1, you are not eligible for OPT).

SEVIS Number

- Listed on your I-20, in the upper right corner, beginning with “N”.

Eligibility Category

- For post completion OPT (OPT to be used after graduation), enter (c) (3) (B)
- For OPT STEM Extension, enter (c) (3) (C). The STEM extension only applies if you are currently on OPT. If you have just graduated and are not yet on OPT, you will select (c) (3) (B), even if your field is a STEM field.

(c) (3) (C) STEM OPT Eligibility Category

- Complete this only if you are applying for OPT STEM Extension. If you are, enter the “CIP” code (a six digit number) and SEVIS degree name as it appears on your I-20. This information is found under your major listed on the first page of your I-20. (Example: Physics, 40.0801)
- Employer’s Name as listed in E-Verify & E-Verify Company Number. Your employer should be able to provide you with this information.

Additional Information (paper application)

- Enter information about any previous CPT or OPT you have done, or any previous SEVIS records you have had, such as if you attended another university.
- For CPT:
  - Suggested format:
    - Items a – c: Page 3, Part 2, Item 27.
    - Item d: CPT Authorizations. (as a title to the section).
    - Employer Name; Part time or Full time; SEVIS ID; Start date – End date; Degree level (Bachelors, Masters, or PhD). You can find your CPT details on page 2 of your CPT I-20.
- For OPT:
  - Suggested format:
    - Items a – c: Page 3, Part 2, Item 27.
    - Item d: OPT Authorizations. (as a title to the section).
    - Part time or Full time; SEVIS ID; Start date – End date; Degree level (Bachelors, Masters, or PhD)
• Previous SEVIS IDs:
  o Suggested format:
    ▪ Item d: Previous SEVIS IDs (as a title to the section). SEVIS ID: N00...
    ▪ Program start date – end date (from your I-20); Degree level (Bachelors, Masters, PhD).

**Mailing your OPT application (if not applying online)**
• We recommend confirming the most current mailing address on the [USCIS](https://www.uscis.gov) website; check in the *Foreign Students* section, under *(c)(3)(A)*, pre completion OPT, *(c)(3)(B)* post completion OPT, or *(c)(3)(C)* STEM extension OPT.
• We recommend paying for a mailing service with a tracking number, and tracking the delivery, as your application will be denied if it is received too late.
• Mailing addresses as of February 14, 2022 are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>U.S. Postal Service (USPS)</strong></th>
<th><strong>FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attn: I-765 C03</td>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.O. Box 805373</td>
<td>Attn: I-765 C03 (Box 805373)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, IL 60680-5374</td>
<td>131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chicago, IL 60603-5517</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OPT Payment Methods

Mailed Applications

Check

If you have a US checking account, you can typically request “starter checks” from your bank, if you do not have any.

Example:

Money Order

Available at the US Postal Office (425 N. Boundary St.), a local bank, many grocery stores or other stores such as Walmart. There is usually a small fee to purchase the money order. See instructions on how to fill out a money order.

Credit/Debit Card

If you wish to pay by credit or debit card, download the Authorization for Credit Card Transactions form (Form G-1450) from the USCIS website, and put it as your top form when mailing your packet to Immigration. Type and sign this form. International credit cards have been rejected in the past; paying with a US credit or debit card is recommended.

Online Applications

If you are submitting your I-765 online instead of by mail, you will be given multiple options to pay for your application, through pay.gov, such as credit/debit card and bank transfer.
Photo Tips

• Sized 2 inches by 2 inches

• Photo should have full head from top of hair to bottom of chin; height of head should measure 1 inch to 1-3/8 inches (25 mm to 35 mm).

• Head centered within frame (see example below).

• Eye height should be between 1-1/8 inches to 1-3/8 inches (28 mm and 35 mm) from bottom of photo.

• Plain white or off-white background.

• No distracting shadows on the face or background

• Full face, front view, eyes open.

• Natural expression, without teeth showing.

More Tips

• Check photos to make sure they follow the guidelines. Sometimes the background comes out too dark.
• Plain dark clothes usually produce better photos.
• If you are wearing glasses, it is best to take them off for the photos.
• Make sure that your ears are visible.
• Your head must be bare, unless you are wearing religious headwear.
• Some additional tips are available from the State Department.

Where can I get photos taken?

• AAA Williamsburg - 6517 Richmond Rd., 757-965-2229
  Free for AAA members. Typically produces high quality photos that typically the guidelines.
• Local pharmacies, such as CVS or Walgreens; Walmart; and other locations.