



Optional Practical Training (OPT) Request Form Instructions

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is the opportunity to apply knowledge gained in your program of study to off-campus work in your major field. OPT is authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Eligibility Requirements:

- You do NOT need to have a job offer in order to apply for OPT.
- You must have been a full-time student for at least one academic year in the US.
- You must currently be in F-1 status.
- You must be in good academic standing and be making normal progress toward finishing your degree.
- You must not have used more than 12 months of OPT in the past at your current degree level
- You may not pursue a new course of study while on OPT.
- Employment may be paid or unpaid

Types of OPT

- Pre-Completion OPT (Before program end date)
 - Part-time while classes are in session (20 hours or less per week)
 - Full-time or part-time during vacation breaks
- Post-Completion OPT (After program end date)
 - Granted on a full-time basis only (over 20 hours per week)

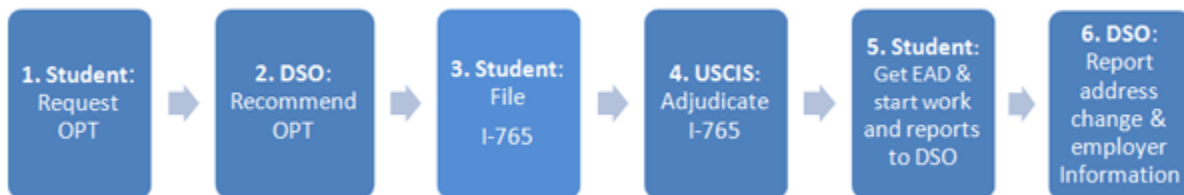
OPT Length

You can get a maximum of 12 months of OPT for each degree level you complete.

All previous periods of OPT at the same level are deducted from the 12-month total. Part-time OPT is counted at half-rate. **Example:** Four months part time OPT is subtracted from total as two months

Students on post-completion OPT must report job information within 90 days of being on OPT. If you don't report your employment or find a job within that time, your OPT will automatically end.

OPT Application Process:

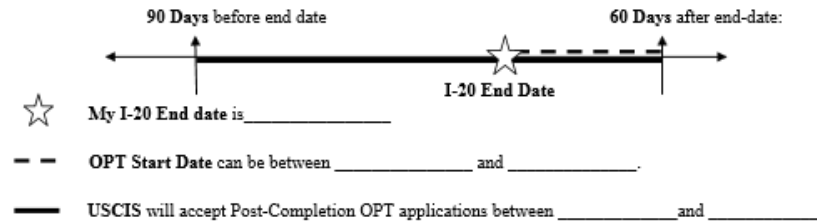


Application Timeline:

- Your OPT start date can be between **the day after** your program end date and **60 days after** program end date.
- You can **apply** for OPT no earlier than **90 days before** your program end date, until **60 days after** your program end date
- You must submit your application to USCIS within 30 days after ISS recommends OPT in SEVIS. (Item 10 on page 1 of your OPT recommendation I-20)

You must indicate OPT start and end dates on your OPT request form. (See timeline below for help)

Post-Completion OPT Timing Chart



Status Maintenance during OPT

- You are still in F-1 status while on OPT
- You can work only **AFTER** USCIS approves your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and during the EAD validity periods
- You may engage only in work directly related to your major or course of study
- If you are in post-completion OPT, you may not be unemployed more than 90 days
- You must report any changes to your employment, address, and/or name within 10 days
- If you plan to study after completion of OPT, you can have your SEVIS record transferred. You must contact ISS during the 60 day grace period following the OPT end date.
- If you change your status, provide evidence of the new status to ISS to update your SEVIS record appropriately.

Traveling while on OPT

While OPT is PENDING:

Before your Program End Date: You can travel normally as an F-1 student

After your Program End Date:

- It is not advisable to travel outside the U.S. prior to receiving your EAD card and securing employment
- EAD cards will NOT be sent outside of the US and an EAD card is required for re-entry
- You can remain in the U.S. if your F-1 visa has expired. If you will travel out of the U.S. while on OPT, you must have a valid F-1 visa
- If your F-1 visa will expire before you re-enter, you must apply for a new visa at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy abroad PRIOR to your return
- After your program end date, you will need proof of employment to show you are returning to the U.S. to resume employment appropriate for OPT

Once OPT is APPROVED (You have the EAD)

If you have completed your studies AND received your EAD card: You may depart and re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status. In addition to your regular travel documents (valid passport, valid F-1 visa, I-20 with OPT recommendation and travel signature less than 6 months old), you will also need a valid EAD Card

Job offer or letter of employment verification from your current employer

NOTE: Without your EAD AND proof of employment/job offer you assume risk in re-entering the U.S. while on OPT.

If you change your mind

If after requesting an OPT I-20 from the International Student Services, you decide not to send your application to USCIS, you must notify us. Please send an email to iss@easternflorida.edu telling us that you plan to not apply for OPT and indicating the date you intend to leave the U.S. (must be within 60 days of I-20 completion date). If you do not notify us, we will be unable to adjust your SEVIS record to accurately reflect your situation.

International Student Services

1519 Clearlake Road, Building 11, Second Floor, Cocoa, FL 32922

Phone: 321.433.7341 | Email: iss@easternflorida.edu

USCIS Application Procedures

Once you've requested an OPT recommendation through International Student Services and received your new I-20, you will need to prepare and submit the following list of items to USCIS:

- [G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance](#)
- [Base Fee for I-765](#), payable to **Department of Homeland Security**. Personal check, cashier's check or money order is acceptable. If you use a personal check, please be sure to wait for the check to be cashed before closing your bank account.
- Two full-face passport-style photos. The photos must be identical and in color with a plain background. They must be no more than 30 days old when the I-765 is filed at USCIS. Put photos in an envelope. You should attach the fee and the photo envelope on top of the entire application (on the upper left-hand corner). Please do not staple the fee and the photos. Use a pencil to gently write your name and I-94 number on the back of your photo.
- Original [USCIS Form I-765](#) (completed, signed and dated legibly by you).
 - Item 3, put an address that will be valid at least until you receive the EAD card because your EAD card will not be forwarded if you move (if you use someone else's address, we recommend that you put "c/o" (meaning "care of") and the name of the person who lives at that address in item 2 of the I-765).
 - Item 10, 11, 12, 13 filled-in to represent your most recent I-94 number. If you do not have an I-94 card, you should be able to retrieve this number at www.cbp.gov/I94
 - Item 15 enter "F-1". If you have changed your status include a copy of your Form I-797 Approval Notice
 - Item 16 marked as follows:
 - (c)(3)(A) for pre-completion OPT (beginning and finishing before the I-20 end date)
 - (c)(3)(B) for post-completion OPT (beginning after the I-20 end date)
 - Verify the I-765 has a **bar code at the bottom**. Forms without it will be returned and delay the process.
 - A legible signature in the designated location. Date the I-765 on the date you mail it.
- Photocopy of the new I-20 with OPT recommendation. DSO signature must be less than 30 days old.
- Photocopies of all your previous I-20s.
- Photocopy of paper or print-out of electronic [Form I-94](#) (please click on the link for instructions).
- Photocopy of previous EAD, if applicable.
- Photocopy of most recent F-1 visa page (except Canadians) OR approval of change of status to F-1 (I-797) if applicable.
- Photocopy of your passport pages showing your biographical information and its expiration date. Keep in mind that if the photo in the passport is not clear or varies widely from your current appearance, a clear copy of another form of identification, such as a state-issued driver's license or identification card will also have to be sent.

Mailing to USCIS

The U.S. Postal Service is the only service that delivers to a P.O. Box address. Send your application through certified mail. You may need to send your application via express (next day) mail to meet the USCIS deadline. Refer to the [USCIS I-765 instructions](#) for the correct USCIS mailing address. The address you use on the I-765 will determine to which USCIS service center you mail the application.

NOTE: *Because it makes you subject to additional requirements, International Student Services does not recommend using the "e-file" option on the USCIS Website to submit your application. To avoid possible processing delays we advise the submission of paper applications by U.S. Mail.*

Make a copy of your entire application before mailing it; keep it with your mailing receipt.

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