

# Optional Practical Training (OPT) Checklist

You must now submit your request for work permission to United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS). USCIS will review your application and, if approved, issue an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Processing time for OPT applications may take anywhere between two to four months. There is no guarantee of approval of the OPT application. The OPT application process and maintenance of status while on OPT is the responsibility of the F-1 student. International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) provides guidance about OPT but is not responsible for delays, rejections, or denials by USCIS.

## **Filing Deadlines:**

**All OPT applications must be filed within 30 days of the date the OPT recommendation is entered in SEVIS by the DSO.**

-Pre-Completion-applications may be submitted to USCIS as early as 90 days prior to being enrolled full-time for one full academic year.

-Post-Completion- applications can be submitted to USCIS up to 90 days before the program end-date and up to 60 days after the program end-date.

## **Online Application process:**

After receiving the new I-20 with the OPT recommendation from ISSS, students must create or log into their existing myUSCIS account - <https://myaccount.uscis.gov>. Once logged in, navigate to File a Form and select "Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)". It is the student's responsibility to complete the Form I-765 application fully and accurately in accordance with USCIS instructions.

Please note that the USCIS online system guides you through what supporting documentation you must include and which section it should be uploaded. All documents must meet the filing requirements outlined by USCIS to ensure successful uploads within the system. Please be sure that all pictures or scans show the required information clearly. Additionally, you must be physically present in the U.S. at the time you file the application.

Pre-completion OPT category is (c)(3)(A)

Post-completion OPT category is (c)(3)(B)

**You must have electronic copies of the following documents ready to upload when filing the Form I-765 online through myUSCIS:**

- Recent 2 x 2 passport style photo; (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/how-apply/photos.html>)
- Most recent Form I-94; ([www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94))
- Page 1 & 2 of new I-20 with the OPT recommendation with your ORIGINAL (ink) signature on page 1;
- Government-issued identity document showing your picture, name, and date of birth (i.e passport, visa);
- Any previous I-20s produced for the purposes of recommending CPT or OPT at an any degree level;
- Any previous EAD card (if applicable).

## **Filing Fee:**

The filing fee for the I-765 is \$410 and can be paid via credit card or direct bank withdrawal under the "Review and Submit" section of online USCIS system.

**DO NOT PAY BEFORE APPLICATION IS FULLY COMPLETED AND REVIEWED. Payment officially submits application to USCIS.**

### **Maintaining status:**

- Reporting requirements: Once your OPT is approved you submit your first update and include a copy of your EAD. You must confirm validity of the following every six months from the start date of your EAD card: legal name, residential/ mailing address; employer name and address and status of employment experience. If there is a change to any of the above information before your 6-month update is due, you must report this change to ISSS within 10 days. You can find the OPT Update form online: <http://www.k-state.edu/issss/students/f1/opt.html>. Please be sure ISSS also has a copy of your most recent EAD.
  - SEVP will send you an email once your OPT is approved to set up an account for an SEVP Portal for reporting. The SEVP Portal is optional.
- Job/Employment requirements:
  - May not exceed 90 days of unemployment during the 12-month period.
  - Employment must be in a position related to your field of study.
    - You must provide a short explanation as to how your employments relate to your field of study. See below for examples taken from the SEVP Policy Guidance: Practical Training-Determining a Direct Relationship Between Employment and Student's Major Area of Study (<https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/optDirectlyRelatedGuidance.pdf>)
    - Bachelor's degree in Business: I work full time as a Loan Officer at a mortgage company, Happy Homes, where I meet with clients and evaluate, authorize and recommend approval of loan applications. On a daily basis, I use the knowledge I gained in my credit analysis, sales and marketing classes that I took as part of my major program of study.
    - Master's degree in Music: I am working at a hospital playing the harp in patient rooms. I also conduct hands-on harp beginner workshops for long-term patients. On average, I work at the hospital 35 hours a week. My duties directly utilize the skills and knowledge I acquired from my coursework and degree in music therapy.
  - Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns, where this practice does not violate any labor laws. The work should be at least 20 hours per week for students on post-completion OPT. A student should be able to provide evidence, acquired from the student's employer, to verify that he or she worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.

### **Travel Issues:**

Keep in mind the guidelines below while on Post-completion OPT. If you have filed for a change of status to H1-B, travel can be risky, and you should consult the individual or immigration attorney who filed the H1-B petition for any travel questions.

- Once you have completed your program and you have received the official Receipt Notice, you can leave the U.S. and re-enter only to resume or begin work in F-1 status as long as you have:
  - Valid passport
  - Valid F-1 visa (If your F-1 visa will NOT be valid, then you must apply for a new one at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad.)
  - I-797 Receipt Notice
  - I-20 with travel signature within the last 6 months.
- Once you have completed your program, you have received approval for OPT AND you have your EAD, you can leave the U.S. and re-enter only to resume or begin work in F-1 status as long as you have:
  - Valid passport
  - Valid F-1 visa (If your F-1 visa will NOT be valid, then you must apply for a new one at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad.)
  - OPT EAD (Employment Authorization Document)
  - I-20 with travel signature within the last 6 months.
  - Proof of employment

### **Resuming Study:**

If you plan to enroll in a new program as a full-time student, you must consult with your advisor in ISSS as to how your OPT authorization may be impacted as well as the necessary paperwork.