International Studies Office
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9AM-12Noon & 1-4PM

F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING
Instructions for Submitting an Application for OPT Employment Authorization to the USCIS

You are required to receive an updated Form I-20 with OPT issued on the 2nd page before submitting your application online at USCIS. You can obtain your OPT I-20 by submitting an OPT Request on ISSP Connect.

OPT APPLICATION PACKET CHECKLIST FOR ONLINE USCIS APPLICATION

☐ $410 non-refundable application fee paid online.

☐ A color passport-sized photo taken within the last 6 months to reflect your current appearance. Do not use old photos that you previously used for your passport or visa application as they will get rejected.

- Use the Department of State's photo composition tool.

☐ Completed Form I-765 submitted through the USCIS portal. Double check you have uploaded all required documents before submitting your I-765 through USCIS.

☐ One original new Form I-20 endorsed for OPT provided to you by the ISO.
Don't forget to sign your OPT I-20 in wet blue ink before uploading to your USCIS application.

☐ Copy of identification page of passport and any validity pages.

☐ Copy of your I-94 OR copy of both sides of I-94 card.

☐ Copy of visa **or** I-797 change of status approval notice indicating F-1 status.

☐ Copies of all Forms I-20 you have been issued for CPT or OPT.

☐ Copies of all previous employment authorization cards (if any).

FILING TIPS

➢ **Your OPT application must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the advisor's signature date** in the "School Attestation" section of pg. 1 of your OPT I-20 request and no later than 60 days after the program end date indicated on your I-20, whichever occurs first.

➢ Clear **color** copies of your immigration documents are highly recommended.

➢ **The EAD will be sent to the address indicated on Form I-765. Note that the USCIS will not forward your card to a different address.**

- o **It is strongly suggested that you place an address that will be accessible at least 5 months from your date of OPT submission.** If the mailing address you entered on your I-765 is no longer valid, and have not yet obtained your Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card), you must update your address information in the USCIS Online Change of Address System. For USCIS inquiries and status requests, please use the USCIS online tools, or call the National Customer Service Number at 1-800-375-5283.

REMINDERS, RULES, & RESONSIBILITIES

➢ **Following the completion of your program on Form I-20, you cannot work anywhere (including on-grounds) until the valid OPT EAD is in your possession.** You can only work pursuant to OPT while the EAD is valid.

➢ **Unemployment for an aggregate period of greater than 90 days during the initial period of OPT will result in a loss of status.**

- ➢ USCIS currently adjudicates most applications in about 3-5 months.
- ➢ You will continue to require a signature on page 2 of Form I-20 if you wish to travel outside of the U.S. Travel signatures are valid for six months.
    - ○ You must bring a valid passport, valid visa, OPT I-20, OPT EAD and proof of employment.
    - ○ Make sure your F-1 visa will be valid upon re-entry from foreign travel during OPT. If not, please apply for a new F-1 visa before attempting readmission to the U.S. during OPT.
- ➢ If you wish to begin a new degree program, consult the ISO office to begin a change of level or transfer procedure. OPT work authorization is terminated when your SEVIS record is transferred to a new school and/or you begin a new program of study at a new degree level.
- ➢ If you are in a STEM eligible degree program and wish to apply for the OPT STEM Extension, please review our OPT STEM instructions.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- ➢ You will receive an email from the Student Exchange Visitor Program (do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov) with information about creating a SEVP Portal account. Monitor your account for the SEVP email.
    - ○ You must report any changes in address, employment and contact information within 10 days through the SEVP Portal or by placing an OPT Employment Update request in ISSP Connect. Either method is fine, but please only use one.
    - ○ If you wish to obtain a new OPT I-20 with your employer information, please submit an "I-20 Reprint Request" on ISSP Connect.
- ➢ **If you will no longer continue OPT,** please email our office at issp@virginia.edu so we may properly complete your F-1 SEVIS record.