



OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Part 1: Eligibility and Intro to OPT

International Studies Office
Issp.virginia.edu

OPT Mini-Series

Section 1: Eligibility & Intro to OPT

Section 2: OPT Checklist

Section 3: How to Complete I-765

Section 4: Application Requirements


Section 5: Responsibilities During OPT





What is OPT?

Allows for off-campus work authorization for F-1 students in their primary field of study.

- Students do not need an offer letter to apply for OPT.
 - Students must be in full-time F-1 status for at least one academic year.
 - Apply in your final semester of study no more than 90 days before your program end date.
- 

OPT and CPT Usage

- If you used 1 year or more of full-time **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**, during your current degree level, you do not qualify for OPT.
- Part-time CPT should not count towards OPT disqualification.
- Heavy CPT usage (part-time or full-time) may result in additional scrutiny of your OPT application. Be prepared to provide evidence of all prior CPT I-20s, as well as the academic work related to your CPT.

Types of Qualifying Employment

During your 12-month OPT period, OPT employment must be a minimum of 20 hours per week in a job directly related to your degree program. It is the student's responsibility to demonstrate relationship between coursework and employment. Here are types of employment permitted:

- Paid employment
- Multiple employers
- Work for hire (commonly referred to as 1099 employment)
- Self-employed business owner (must obtain proper business licenses)
- Employment through an agency
- Volunteers or unpaid interns (Post-Completion OPT only. Not eligible for OPT STEM Extension)

OPT Start Date

- Your OPT start date is the date that your 12 months of work authorization begins.
- OPT start date must be *within the 60-day grace period* after the program completion date.
- The requested start and end dates will be noted on page 2 of your new OPT I-20
- The end date will be 1 year from your start date (i.e. July 2, 2021 to July 1, 2022)

IMPORTANT: Once USCIS receives your OPT application, it is not possible to change your OPT start and end dates.

OPT Timeline



Tip: Apply early. Average processing time is 3-5 months.

Tip: When selecting your OPT start date, don't select holidays or weekends.

Application Process Overview

1. Review our F-1 OPT webpage and our tutorial
2. Initiate the OPT Request Process through [ISSP Connect](#). Submit only 1 request. You can return to an incomplete application by logging onto ISSP Connect. Remember to click on the 'submit' button when you have completed the application.
3. You will receive an email when your OPT I-20 has been uploaded to your application. Log onto [ISSP Connect](#) and retrieve your I-20 from the Documents section of your OPT application.
4. OPT I-20 and full OPT application must be submitted **online** to USCIS no later than 30 days after the OPT I-20's issue date.

OPT Mini-Series

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Section 3: How to Complete I-765

Section 4: Application Requirements (Part 2)

Section 5: Responsibilities During OPT





OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Part 2: OPT Checklist

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OPT Application Checklist

- U.S. Passport Photos taken within the past 30 days.
- USCIS Fee of \$410. Always check USCIS webpage for any fee changes.
- Original Form I-765.
- OPT I-20 issued by ISO within the past 30 days.
- Copy of valid passport biographical page
- Copy of latest F-1 visa stamp
- Printout of electronic I-94 record, or copy of paper Form I-94
- Copies of all previous I-20s (from UVA and previous schools, if applicable)

Passport Photo Requirement

2 X 2 Photo Of You

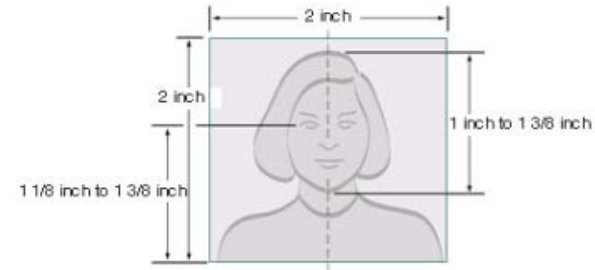
Upload a recent color photograph of yourself to the USCIS portal that measures 2 inches by 2 inches, with your face measuring 1 inch to 1 3/8 inch from your chin to the top of your head. Your eyes should be between 1 1/8 inch and 1 3/8 inch from the bottom of the photo.

Make sure your whole face is visible, you are facing the camera directly, and the background is white or off-white. Your head must be bare, unless contrary to your religious beliefs.

If you need help understanding the photo requirements or want to resize, rotate, or crop your photo, you can use to the Department of State's [photo composition tools](#).

File requirements

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, or PNG
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator's certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file





USCIS Fee

- You will be able to pay electronically through [pay.gov](https://www.pay.gov) as you go through the online USCIS application portal.

Check your OPT I-20 for accuracy

1. Check your Educational Level (i.e. PhD candidate decides to graduate with a Masters)
2. Program End Date
3. Student Attestation
4. School Attestation: USCIS must receive your application within 30 days of the “Date Issued” date on Page 1, not the travel signature date.
5. OPT Start and End Dates
6. You will receive a new travel signature at the time you request your OPT I-20

OPT I-20

UVa OPT I-20 (all pages):

- Must be received by USCIS within 30 days of DATE ISSUED on page 1
- Original must be signed by an ISO advisor
- Original must be signed by the student at the bottom of page 1.
- The requested OPT start and end dates will appear on page 2.

SEVIS ID: N			
SURNAME/PRIMARY NAME	GIVEN NAME	CLASS F-1 ACADEMIC AND LANGUAGE	
PREFERRED NAME	PASSPORT NAME		
COUNTRY OF BIRTH	COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP		
DATE OF BIRTH	ADMISSION NUMBER		
FORM ISSUE REASON CONTINUED ATTENDANCE	LEGACY NAME		
SCHOOL INFORMATION			
SCHOOL NAME University of California at Berkeley University of California at Berkeley	SCHOOL ADDRESS Berkeley International Office, Berkeley, CA 94720		
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR ADVISOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR ADVISOR	SCHOOL CODE AND APPROVAL DATE SIR214020612018 27 JANUARY 2018		
PROGRAM OF STUDY			
EDUCATION LEVEL DOCTORATE	MAJOR 1 Political Science and Government, General 45.1001	MAJOR 2 None 50.0000	
NORMAL PROGRAM LENGTH 48 Months	PROGRAM ENGLISH PROFICIENCY Required	ENGLISH PROFICIENCY NOTES Student is proficient	
PROGRAM START DATE 21 JANUARY 2014	PROGRAM END DATE 18 DECEMBER 2015		
FINANCIALS			
ESTIMATED AVERAGE COSTS FOR 12 MONTHS		STUDENT'S FUNDING FOR 12 MONTHS	
Tuition and Fees	\$ 30,903	Personal Funds	\$ 0
Living Expenses	\$ 18,000	Dept. Support	\$ 48,903
Expenses of Dependents (0)	\$ 0	Funds From Another Source	\$ 0
Other	\$ 0	On-Campus Employment	\$ 0
TOTAL	\$ 48,903	TOTAL	\$ 48,903
REMARKS			
SCHOOL ATTESTATION			
I certify under penalty of perjury that all information provided above was entered before I signed this form and is true and correct. I executed this form in the United States after review and evaluation in the United States by me or other officials of the school of the student's application, transcripts, or other records of courses taken and proof of financial responsibility, which was received at the school prior to the submission of this form. The school has determined that the above named student's qualifications meet all standards for admission to the school and the minimum English proficiency required to pursue a full program of study as defined by 8 CFR 214.2(b)(6). I am a designated school official of the above named school and am authorized to issue this form.			
SIGNATURE OF: Scholar Advisor	DATE ISSUED 05 October 2018	PLACE ISSUED Berkeley, CA	
STUDENT ATTESTATION			
I have read and agreed to comply with the terms and conditions of my admission and those of any extension of stay. I certify that all information provided on this form refers specifically to me and is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I certify that I seek to enter or remain in the United States temporarily, and solely for the purpose of pursuing a full program of study at the school named above. I also authorize the named school to release any information from my records needed by DHS pursuant to 8 CFR 214.5(g) to determine my nonimmigrant status. Parent or guardian, and student, must sign if student is under 18.			
SIGNATURE OF: NAME OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN	SIGNATURE	DATE	
		ADDRESS (city/state or province/country)	

Copy of Passport and Visa

Government ID

- You must upload a copy of a government-issued identity document (such as a passport) showing your picture, name, and date of birth; a birth certificate with photo ID;
- A visa issued by a foreign consulate; or a national ID document with photo and/or fingerprint. The identity document photocopy must clearly show your facial features and contain your biographical information.

File requirements

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator's certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file

Copy of I-94

The I-94 can be:

- An **electronic I-94**. Visit www.cbp.gov/i94 to access and print your record
- A **paper I-94 card** stapled into your passport. Include a copy of both sides, even though the back side may be blank.
- A copy of an **I-797 Change of Status Approval Notice** which includes a new I-94

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Securing America's Borders

Most Recent I-94

Admission (I-94) Record Number : 2123456789

Most Recent Date of Entry: 2017 March 06

Class of Admission : F1

Admit Until Date : D/S

Details provided on the I-94 information form:

Last/Surname : _____
First (Given) Name : _____
Birth Date : _____
Passport Number : _____
Country of Issuance : _____

[Get Travel History](#)

▶ Effective April 26, 2015, DHS began automating the admission process. An alien lawfully admitted or paroled into the U.S. is no longer required to be in possession of a preprinted Form I-94. A record of admission printed from the CBP website constitutes a lawful record of admission. See 8 CFR § 1.4(d).

▶ If an employer, local, state or federal agency requests admission information, present your admission (I-94) number along with any additional required documents requested by that employer or agency.

▶ Note: For security reasons, we recommend that you close your browser after you have finished retrieving your I-94 number.

Electronic I-94 Record

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. Customs and Border Protection

CBP Form 1-94

Departure Record

Admission Number: 123456789 01

18. Family Name: _____
19. First (Given) Name: _____ 20. Birth Date (DD/M/YYYY): _____
21. Country of Citizenship: _____

SEP 13 2006
ADM
J1 D/S

CBP Form 1-94

Paper I-94 (front)

Warning: A nonimmigrant who accepts unauthorized employment is subject to deportation.

Important: Retain this permit in your possession, **do not surrender it when you leave the U.S.** Failure to do so may delay your entry into the U.S. in the future. You are authorized to stay in the U.S. only until the date written on this form. To remain past this date, without permission from the Department of Homeland Security authorities, is a violation of the law.

Surrender this permit when you leave the U.S.:

- By sea or air, to the transportation line;
- Across the Canadian border, to a Canadian Official;
- Across the Mexican border, to a U.S. Official.

Students planning to reenter the U.S. within 30 days to return to the same school, see "Arrival-Departure" on page 2 of Form I-20 prior to surrendering this permit.

Record of Changes

Part: _____ Departure Record

Date: _____

Carrier: _____

Flight # / Ship Name: _____

Paper I-94 (back)

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OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Part 3: How to Complete I-765

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I-765

IMPORTANT: The ISO would like to review your I-765 prior to you completing your application online. Download the [I-765](#) from the [USCIS website](#). Use the current version. It's best to download the form just before mailing the application since USCIS updates it frequently.

How to fill out Form I-765

- Review I-765 instructions on [USCIS webpage](#)
- Page 3, #27 use code (c)(3)(B) for Post-Completion OPT
- Answer all questions fully and accurately.
- If a question does not apply to you, type or print “N/A” or “None”
- Print and complete all pages.
- Contact ISO with any questions.

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OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Part 4: OPT Application Requirements

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The Application Deadline

- You must submit your online OPT application to USCIS **no later than 30 days** after the OPT I-20 issue date on page 1.
- Additionally, USCIS must receive your application before the end of your 60-day grace period.
- Track the status of your application through the USCIS portal.

We recommend that you apply early.

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status
OMB NO. 1653-0038

SEVIS ID: **N**

SUBNAME/PRIMARY NAME	GIVEN NAME	CLASS F-1 ACADEMIC AND LANGUAGE
PREFERRED NAME	PASSPORT NAME	
COUNTRY OF BIRTH	COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	
DATE OF BIRTH	ADMISSION NUMBER	
FORM ISSUE REASON CONTINUED ATTENDANCE	LEGACY NAME	

SCHOOL INFORMATION

SCHOOL NAME University of California at Berkeley University of California at Berkeley	SCHOOL ADDRESS Berkeley International Office, Berkeley, CA 94720
INTERNATIONAL TO CONTACT UPON ARRIVAL International Student & Scholar Advisor	SCHOOL CODE AND APPROVAL DATE SPRO14F00215000 27 JANUARY 2015

PROGRAM OF STUDY

EDUCATION LEVEL BACCALAUREATE	MAJOR I Political Science and Government, General 45.1002	MAJOR II None 03.5000
NORMAL PROGRAM LENGTH 48 Months	PROGRAM ENGLISH PROFICIENCY Required	ENGLISH PROFICIENCY NOTES Student is proficient
PROGRAM START DATE 21 JANUARY 2014	PROGRAM END DATE 18 DECEMBER 2015	

FINANCIALS

ESTIMATED AVERAGE COSTS FOR: 12 MONTHS	STUDENT'S FUNDING FOR: 12 MONTHS		
Tuition and Fees	\$ 30,800	Personal Funds	\$ 0
Living Expenses	\$ 18,000	Dept. Support	\$ 48,800
Expenses of Dependents (0)	\$ 0	Funds From Another Source	\$ 0
Other	\$ 0	On-Campus Employment	\$ 0
TOTAL	\$ 48,800	TOTAL	\$ 48,800

REMARKS

SCHOOL ATTESTATION

I certify under penalty of perjury that all information provided above was entered before I signed this form and is true and correct. I executed this form in the United States after review and evaluation in the United States by me or other officials of the school's admissions, transcripts, or other records of courses taken and proof of financial responsibility, which was received at the school prior to the admission of this student. The school has determined that the above named student's qualifications meet all standards for admission to the school and the student is authorized to pursue a full program of study as defined by 8 CFR 214.2(f)(8). I am a designated school official of the above named school and am authorized to sign this form.

SIGNATURE OF: _____, International Student, _____ DATE ISSUED: 03 October 2015 PLACE ISSUED: Berkeley, CA

STUDENT ATTESTATION

I have read and agreed to comply with the terms and conditions of my admission and those of any extension of stay. I certify that all information provided on this form (unless specified in one and is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I certify that I wish to enter or remain in the United States temporarily, and solely for the purpose of pursuing a full program of study at the school named above. I also authorize the named school to release any information from my records needed by DHS pursuant to 8 CFR 214.5(g) to determine my nonimmigrant status. Parent or guardian, and student, must sign if student is under 18.

SIGNATURE OF: _____ DATE: _____

NAME OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN SIGNATURE ADDRESS (city/state or previous country) DATE

ICE Form I-20 (3/31/2015) Page 1 of 3

Submitting your application to USCIS

Create your account at <https://my.uscis.gov/> to submit your OPT application.

Remember to request OPT I-20 from ISSP Connect first!



The screenshot shows the myUSCIS website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services logo on the left, the text "U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services", and "Resources" and "Sign In" dropdown menus on the right. Below the navigation bar is a large banner image of a blue sky with white clouds, featuring the "myUSCIS" logo in white. Underneath the banner, there are two main sections. The first section is titled "myUSCIS makes immigration simpler" and includes a list of features: "Up-to-date information about the application process for immigration benefits;", "Tools to help you prepare for filing and help finding citizenship preparation classes; and", and "Information to help explore your immigration options." Below this list is a blue "Sign up" button. The second section is titled "Try us on mobile" and includes the text "You can use myUSCIS anytime and on any device."

Official website of the Department of Homeland Security [Here's how you know](#)

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Resources | Sign In

myUSCIS

✓ myUSCIS makes immigration simpler

myUSCIS provides a personalized account to help you navigate the immigration process. On myUSCIS, you will find:

- Up-to-date information about the application process for immigration benefits;
- Tools to help you prepare for filing and help finding citizenship preparation classes; and
- Information to help explore your immigration options.

Sign up

📱 Try us on mobile

You can use myUSCIS anytime and on any device.

I-797 Notice of Action & USCIS Case Tracking

- You will receive an I-797 receipt notice online at USCIS.
- You can also use your receipt number to check your case status
- <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus>

CASE STATUS ONLINE

Use this tool to track the status of an immigration application, petition, or request.

Enter a Receipt Number ?

CHECK STATUS

[PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT](#)

- You can track the status of your OPT application with your receipt number on your I-797. **DO NOT LOSE YOUR I-797.** Make a copy for your records and keep in a safe place.
- Verify your name, date of birth and address on your I-797 receipt notice. If incorrect, please contact the USCIS service center listed on your I-797.

Application Problems – RFE or Rejection/Denial

Request for Evidence (RFE)

If there is a problem with your application, USCIS may send you a notice by mail. An RFE does not mean that your application has been rejected. It simply means that you need to send in additional documents before your EAD can be issued. Getting an RTI will delay the processing of your application. Contact the International Studies Office immediately so we may assist you with your application.

Rejection/Denial

In some cases, if too many items are missing from your application, USCIS will return the entire application to you. If this happens, you must make the corrections and send the application before the end date of your 60-day grace period. Contact the International Studies Office immediately so we may assist you with your application.

To avoid delays, review your application materials carefully for completeness and sign all the forms before mailing to USCIS.

The Employment Authorization Document (EAD)

- Review card to make sure the information is accurate. If not, contact an ISO advisor.
- Present your EAD to employers as proof of your legal work authorization in the United States.
- The EAD is a required document for entry to the U.S. during OPT.



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OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Part 5: Responsibilities During OPT

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Your Responsibilities During OPT

1. Reporting Requirements
2. Employment Requirements
3. Travel Documents for Re-entry
4. Applying for an F-1 Visa on OPT

SEVP Portal

- The Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has its own “[SEVP Portal](#)” for students on OPT and OPT STEM. You will receive an email with instructions on how to create an account.
- You are required to report any changes in address or employment through the portal within 10 days of change.
- If you are unable to access SEVP Portal, please report employment on ISSP Connect using the “OPT Employment Update” form.

Sign In

Attention: Only students who have OPT approved may use the SEVP Portal. You must create an account and set a password before using this log in page. Go to [Portal Help](#) for more information.

Email

Password

[Login](#)

[Reset Password](#)

Login page for the [OPT Portal](#)

Beware of scams! SEVP will never ask you for payment to register for the SEVP Portal.

Employment Requirements

- You must work a minimum of 20 hours per week in a position related to your field of study.
- **You cannot exceed more than 90 days of unemployment while on OPT.** Days of unemployment prior to your EAD start date do not count towards the 90 days of unemployment. It is your responsibility to keep record of your employment history and any periods of unemployment.

Travel Documents for Re-entry to United States

Documents	Before Completing Program and Before EAD Issuance	After Completing Program and Before EAD Issuance	After Completing Program and After EAD Issuance
Valid Passport	✓	✓	✓
Valid F-1 visa stamp (if applicable)	✓	✓	✓
OPT I-20 with valid travel endorsement signed within 6 months by an ISO Advisor	✓	✓	✓
Evidence of continued enrollment (e.g. Enrollment Certificate)	✓		
Evidence of financial support	Strongly recommended	Strongly recommended	Strongly recommended
OPT Receipt: I-797 Notice of Action		✓	✓
Job offer letter from employer		Strongly recommended	✓
EAD (Employment Authorization Document)			✓

Travel Tips

- **Avoid long absences from the US during the OPT period. Time spent outside of the US while unemployed by a US employer counts toward your 90 days of unemployment.**
- **Attempting to re-enter the U.S. close to the expiration date of your OPT can be risky.**
- **You must not enter the U.S. in a status other than F-1. This may result in the loss of your OPT eligibility.**

Travel after Program Completion, but before OPT Card is received

- **There is a higher risk associated with travel and return while your OPT is pending after the program completion date. If there are any problems with your application, you may not be able to respond to USCIS in a timely manner, which could delay processing of your EAD.**
- **If your OPT application is denied while outside the US, you will not be able to re-enter the US in F-1 status and will not be able to reapply.**

Applying for F-1 Visa on OPT

If you are traveling abroad and your F-1 visa has expired, you must obtain a new F-1 visa before returning to the U.S. When going to your visa interview, bring the documents below.

- **Valid Passport**
- **Valid I-20 with travel endorsement from UVA ISO Advisor within the past 6 months from the date of return to U.S.**
- **Unexpired EAD Card**
- **Job offer letter or proof of current employment directly related to your field of study**
- **Evidence of sufficient funds (e.g. a bank statement, a letter from sponsor or a job offer letter)**

Options After Post-Completion OPT



Further Education

OPT is granted once per degree level. OPT STEM can be granted twice, but only once per degree level. Outside of employment, you can remain in the United States by pursuing a new degree program.



OPT STEM Extension

If you are in a STEM program, you are eligible for an additional **2 years** of employment. Apply **90 days** before your OPT authorization expires. Visit issp.virginia.edu for more information.



Change Your Status

Examples: Change of status to H1b through employer, or change of status to F-2 through spouse. Contact an immigration attorney to learn more about other visa types to remain in the United States.



Depart the United States

After OPT authorization ends, you are permitted **60 days** to remain in the United States, after which you must depart or change your status.

Resources

ISO Website

- <https://issp.virginia.edu/f-1-optional-practical-training-opt>

ISSP Connect

- [Connect.issp.virginia.edu](https://connect.issp.virginia.edu)
- OPT Application
- Make an appointment with an ISO Advisor

USCIS Website

- <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>

Email

- issp@virginia.edu