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

Enclosed are two Forms I-20 endorsed for OPT employment authorization. You will file one I-20 with the U.S. government, as instructed below, and use the second I-20 to document your continued eligibility for F-1 status. Please print, sign and date both I-20 Forms. The next step is for you to file an application for employment authorization with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services by FedEx or UPS. You will not need to make a personal visit to the USCIS.

Please refer to the OPT tutorial for detailed instructions regarding the materials and information needed to apply for OPT.

OPT APPLICATION PACKET CHECKLIST FOR USCIS

☐ $410 non-refundable application fee paid by personal check or money order to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”.
  a. For credit card payment, complete Form G-1450. Make sure the card has enough money as USCIS will reject your application if card is declined.

☐ Two identical color passport-sized photos taken within the past 30 days.
  a. Write name and SEVIS number on back of photos with pencil or felt pen.

☐ Completed and signed Form I-765. Sign in blue ink.

☐ One original new Form I-20 endorsed for OPT provided to you by the ISO. Don’t forget to sign your OPT I-20!

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

☐ Print out of your I-94 OR photocopy of both sides of I-94 card.

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

☐ Photocopies of all Forms I-20 you have been issued.

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

OPTIONAL: Form G-1145 - Use this form to request a text message and/or email when USCIS accepts your form.

Visit USCIS to view filing location based on your mailing address. If using a Virginia mailing address, send your complete application by courier (Federal Express, USPS Priority/Express, or UPS) to:

USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121, Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

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.

- Do not send your original passport.
Clear **color** photocopies of your immigration documents are highly recommended.

- If you are not filing using a Virginia mailing address, I-765 filing address are available on the [USCIS website](https://www.uscis.gov).
- Keep your tracking number when mailing your OPT application.
- Use your receipt number to check your [case status online](https://www.uscis.gov).
- **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.**
  - If you move from the U.S. address you entered on your I-765 and are no longer receiving mail, 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](https://www.uscis.gov). For USCIS inquiries and status requests, please use the [USCIS online tools](https://www.uscis.gov), or call the National Customer Service Number at 1-800-375-5283.

### REMINDERS, RULES, & RESPONSIBILITIES

- **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 three months, but processing may take longer.
- 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. For travel abroad during post-completion OPT, be prepared to present your EAD card (if approved) or application receipt notice (if not approved) and an employment letter.
- If traveling, make sure your F-1 visa will be valid upon re-entry during OPT. If not, please apply for a new F-1 visa before attempting readmission to the U.S. during OPT. Ensure your passport is valid for at least six months beyond the date you will re-enter the U.S.
- **You must continue medical insurance coverage throughout your F-1 status including the time that you have OPT and during any grace periods.**
- 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](https://www.uscis.gov), please visit our [F-1 24-Month STEM OPT Extension page](https://www.uscis.gov) to learn how to apply.

### REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- You will receive an email from the Student Exchange Visitor Program ([do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov)) with information about creating a [SEVP Portal account](https://www.sevis.fm). 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](https://www.sevis.fm).
  - If you wish to obtain a new OPT I-20 with your employer information, please email a completed [I-20 request form](https://www.sevis.fm).
- **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.