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. 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.

Keep your tracking number when mailing your OPT application.

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. 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, & 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 a job offer letter.

- 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.

- 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 and wish to apply for the OPT STEM Extension, please email issp@virginia.edu.

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.
  - If you wish to obtain a new OPT I-20 with your employer information, please email a completed I-20 request form.

- 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.