



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

F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Instructions for Mailing an Application for OPT Employment Authorization to the USCIS

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 wet ink.** No e-signatures! Make sure you are using the correct edition.
- 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).

Recommended Form: [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: NFB 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, & 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 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.