

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application Process

- **First**, complete the “Optional Practical Training (OPT) Request Form,” and bring it to your International Student Advisor. Bring an offer letter from your employer if you have secured a job offer already (optional). For this meeting with your International Student Advisor, please bring all the necessary forms below for your advisor’s review. During this meeting, your advisor will update your I-20 in SEVIS with an OPT request and then print you a new, updated I-20 which notes that you are seeking OPT authorization.

- **Second**, prepare your **complete “Application Packet”** for submission to USCIS (the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services), and mail it to USCIS before the deadline. You need to submit to USCIS these items:
 - New I-20**: Photocopy of your new I-20, which you just obtained from your International Student Advisor. This will include the updated OPT request on page 2. *MUST CONTAIN YOUR SIGNATURE.*
 - Completed I-765 Form (original)**: To complete this form, see “Tips for Successfully Completing the I-756.”
 - Payment**: Check or money order for \$410.00 payable to “Department of Homeland Security”
 - Photos**: Two passport photos. In pencil on the back of the photos, lightly write your LAST NAME (in CAPS) and First Name (not in CAPS).
 - I-94**: Print your I-94 card. You may retrieve using the following link: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>
 - Passport**: Photocopy the identity page of your passport.
 - Previous I-20s**: Photocopy any previously issued I-20s, including I-20s from any other schools.
 - Previous EADs**: Photocopy any previously issued Employment Authorization Documents (EADs).

We recommend sending your application by certified mail. Mail your application to the following address:

By Mail:
USCIS
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

By Express Mail or Courier Service:
USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Highway 121
Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

IMPORTANT DEADLINE:

Your complete application for post-completion OPT must be received by USCIS before the end of your 60-day grace period, which comes after your program end date.

Please note that you may submit your application for OPT to USCIS as early as 90 days before your program end date. Once you receive the new I-20 with OPT recommended, you must submit within 30 days.

- **Third**, you should wait for USCIS to approve your application for OPT. In most cases, it will take the USCIS approximately **2-3 months to process your application**. Your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will be mailed to the address on the I-765 (USPS will not forward this mail so please use an address that will not change). You may not begin employment before you receive your EAD from USCIS, even if the start date you requested has passed. Working before your OPT has been authorized by USCIS constitutes illegal employment and will jeopardize your legal status in the U.S.

- **Fourth**, you may begin work only after receiving your EAD card.

Before you apply for OPT

Before you apply for OPT, you must have been enrolled in your degree program for **at least one full academic year** and must be in **valid F-1 status** at the time of application. While it is recommended that you secure a job or have a job offer before applying, you **can apply for OPT without a job or job offer**. However, it is important that you consider the job prospects you do have and whether you are confident you will be able to secure employment. It is always best either to have a job offer or a firm job prospect at the time of application because periods of OPT cannot be withdrawn once approved. Remember that the maximum amount of time granted to work in F-1 OPT status is 12 months per degree level. For students with a secured position at the time of application, please ensure that you have **an offer letter** from your prospective employer stating the following:

1. Employer's name and address
2. Your name and position title
3. A brief description of what you will do in this position
[This is used to make sure the job is related to your degree.]
4. That you will be working 20 or more hours per week ("full time") [This is a requirement for post-completion OPT.]
5. Your supervisor's name and signature
6. The date your employer issued the offer letter

Tips for successfully completing the I-765 Form (if you have never applied for OPT before):

- **First**, download the form here: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
- **Second**, complete the form, using the following tips.

Above line 1: Under "I am applying for," put a check mark next to "Permission to accept employment."

Line 1: Spell out your **last name in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS**. However, your first name should be spelled out with only the first letter in caps (e.g. SMITH, John)

Line 3: Use a mailing address that will not change. Many students are in transition when they apply for OPT. It is important to give the government an address that will not change anytime during next few months. This can be your address if it will not change. It can also be a friend or your church. You may also use the following address:

GCTS International Office
130 Essex Street
South Hamilton, MA 01982

Line 4: As written on your Form I-20

Line 9: Leave blank if you do not yet have a number. Although a Social Security Number is not required as part of the OPT process, you must apply for one when you have secured employment. You may apply for a Social Security Number as early as 30 days before you will begin employment.

Line 10: This is your I-94 number or Alien Identification Number. You may retrieve using the following link:
<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>

Line 11: Complete this line only if you have applied for OPT before (or TN visas or previous H-1B visas). Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and on-campus employment do not apply, so you can check "NO" if you have only done CPT and on-campus employment.

Line 12 and 13: This information is found on your I-94 card.

Line 14 and 15: Write "student".

Line 16: Indicate whether you wish to pursue Pre or Post Completion Optional Practical Training

- "(C) (3) (A)"- Pre-completion practical training (this means OPT while you are also taking classes)
- "(C) (3) (B)"- Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (this means OPT after you graduate – most GCTS students)

Certification: sign and date