

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application Process

Before you apply for OPT

Before you apply for OPT, you must have been enrolled in your degree program for a 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best either to have a job offer or a firm job prospect at the time of application because periods of OPT cannot be withdrawn once approved.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. Indication of whether you will be working full time or part-time
4. Your supervisor's name and signature
5. The date your employer issued the offer letter

Applying for OPT

To apply for OPT, you must meet with your adviser in Student Life Services to begin the application process. For this meeting, bring all the necessary forms below for your adviser's review. During this meeting, your adviser will update your I-20 in SEVIS with an OPT request and then, help you prepare your packet for submission to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Vermont Servicing Center. The following list includes the items you need to submit to USCIS:

- _____ Payment: Check or money order for \$380.00 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.
- _____ Completed I-765 Form (original): To complete this form, see "Tips for Successfully Completing the I-756" below.
- _____ Current I-20: Photocopy (pages 1 and 3) of your new SEVIS I-20, which will include the updated OPT request on page 3. **THE COPY YOU SUBMIT MUST CONTAIN YOUR SIGNATURE.**
- _____ Previous I-20s: Photocopy any previously issued I-20s, including I-20s from any other schools you have attended.
- _____ I-94: Photocopy your I-94 card, front and back. This is the small white card stapled into your passport.
- _____ Passport: Photocopy all of the identity pages of your passport.
- _____ Previous EADs: Photocopy any previously issued Employment Authorization Documents (EADs).

****Keep copies of all documents you submit for your records****

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

In most cases, it will take the USCIS approximately 2-3 months to process your application. Your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will either be mailed to the address on the I-765; or in some instances you may be required to go to a local USCIS office to pick it up. 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. **You may begin work only after receiving your EAD.**

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

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: We recommend that you use Student Life Service’s address because USCIS will not forward mail to you if you move. Also, the postal service may not deliver your card if your name is not on the mailbox.

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Attn: Assistant Director of Student Life Services
130 Essex St.
South Hamilton, MA 01982

Line 4: As written on your Form 1-20

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 and no earlier than 30 days before you will begin employment.

Line 10: This is your I-94 number listed on the white card in your passport. Include 11 digits total.

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: These are the coded you will use to indicate whether you wish to pursue Pre or Post Completion Optional Practical Training

- “(C) (3) (A)”- Pre-completion practical training
- “(C) (3) (B)”- Post-Completion Optional Practical Training