



Optional Practical Training Application Checklist

Eligibility:

- 1) Must have completed a full course of study each semester. Download form here:
<http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf> SEVIS instructions for Form I-765 :
<http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765instr.pdf>**
- 2) F-1 status for at least one academic year. If you have fallen out of status and been reinstated to F1 Student Status, you cannot apply until after 2 semesters have been completed. (No exceptions.)**
- 3) Student must apply before their 60 day grace period ends (but will affect the length of OPT).**

FOLLOWING:

- Completed I 765. In item #16 on the form enter (c)(3)(B)
(This indicates to the USCIS that you are applying for Optional Practical Training.)**
- Copies of current I-20 and all previous I-20's.**
- Valid Passport, identity pages (color copy)**
- VISA (color copy)**
- Photocopy of I 94 (front and back)**
- Photocopy of last EAD (work permit) if available/applicable. Both front and back of card need to be copied. (color copy)**
- Two recent passport sized color photos (need to be on a white background with a picture that shows your entire face.)**
- Photocopy of new I-20 that will be generated upon completion of the process.**
- \$380.00 check or money order made payable to:
United States Citizenship and Immigration Services**

SEND ALL DOCUMENTS TO:

If Mailing Using U.S. Postal Service:

USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

If using a courier service (FEDEX or EXPRESS MAIL)

USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034

Note: USCIS will notify the student of the decision. If employment is authorized, USCIS will issue the student an EAD card (work permit). The student cannot begin employment till the EAD card is obtained. Employment authorization will be granted in 1-year intervals up to the expected date of completion or graduation. Off-campus employment based on economic hardship can only be renewed by USCIS and only if the student continues to maintain lawful immigration status and good academic standing. If the application is denied, USCIS will indicate the denial and the decision may not be appealed. \$380.00 is non-refundable.

There are several important rules and procedures that must be followed after applying for Optional Practical Training (OPT) employment authorization. Complying with these rules and procedures is necessary to maintain lawful F-1 immigration status. Please review carefully each item below.

- **Thirty-day filing deadline:** I understand that my OPT application must reach the USCIS Service Center no later than 30 days after my ISSO advisor signs the OPT recommendation on my new Form I-20.
- **Failure to complete program requirements:** I understand that if I fail to complete all the requirements of my program, I must request an extension of my Form I-20 prior to the program end date found in item #5 of my latest I-20. I know that this may invalidate or otherwise effect the OPT authorization.
- **Submission of EAD to the ISSO:** I understand that I must bring my OPT Employment Authorization to the International Student Services Office so that it may be copied and the approval recorded (if out of town, color scan and email).
- **Working in my major field of study:** I understand that any employment I accept, or another OPT activity in which I participate, must be directly related to my major field of study and must be commensurate with my current level of education. I know that I should keep records that will verify this.
- **Reporting requirements:** I understand that in order to maintain my immigration status while on OPT, I must:
 - Notify the ISSO of my new address within ten days if I should move residence. I can do so by updating my address on the SMSU website, instructions here <http://www.smsu.edu/campuslife/registrationrecords/Index.cfm?Id=2210> or by sending an email to Don Robertson at don.robertson@smsu.edu.

- Report OPT location/employer name and address, efforts to seek employment, and interruptions in employment. I understand I am required to report the name and address of my OPT location/employer. If I stop working, I must report that there has been an “interruption in employment”. I can report this by contacting Don Robertson at don.robertson@smsu.edu.
- **Periods of unemployment during post-completion OPT:** I understand that I may not accrue more than 90 days of unemployment during my post-completion OPT period. I will keep thorough and accurate records of my job search, employment or other OPT activities, and periods of unemployment. I am also able to volunteer at least 20 hours a week at a position that is related to my program.
- **Traveling outside the U.S.:** I understand that if I travel outside the U.S. without the following items, I will experience difficulty when returning and could, in fact, be prohibited from re-entering the U.S. I realize that travel outside of the U.S.A. always carries a risk that I will not be able to re-enter.
 - Valid passport
 - F-1 visa in my passport that will be valid on the day I plan to return to the U.S. If I do not have a visa that will be valid for my return, I will obtain one at a U.S. consulate or embassy while outside the U.S.
 - Travel signature on my Form I-20 that is less than six (6) months old.
 - OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD, also known as “OPT Card”)
 - Letter from my employer to prove that I have a job or OPT activity to resume when I return to the U.S. or an offer letter to show that I will begin a job/activity upon my return to the U.S.
- **Sixty-day “grace” period after OPT:** I understand that I am permitted a period of 60 days to remain in the U.S. following the end date on my OPT EAD. I may *not* work during this period unless my immigration status is changed to a classification that permits employment, or my employer has submitted a timely filed petition to change status to H-1B to begin on October 1st following my OPT end date that would enable me to take advantage of an extension of my OPT authorization under “cap-gap” regulations. I can also use this time to transfer my F-1 status to another school, apply for a change of status, process a level change to begin a new program of study, or to depart the U.S. (which I must do no later than the sixtieth day).
- **Limits on future periods of OPT:** I understand that I am eligible for only one 12-month period of OPT per education level (e.g., bachelor’s, master’s, Ph.D., etc.). I understand that in limited situations, I may be eligible to apply for a 24-month extension of my OPT authorization, and that I must apply for the extension prior to the end date of my initial OPT period (<https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/stem-opt>).
- **Cancelling my application:** If extraordinary circumstances warrant it, I can attempt to cancel my OPT application only if the application has not yet been adjudicated (approved) by the USCIS Service Center. I will work with my ISSO advisor if cancellation becomes necessary.
- **OPT start and end dates:** I am responsible for choosing the employment dates below which will be recorded in the ISSO’s recommendation on my Form I-20. I know that I will not be able to change them should the dates become incompatible with a future offer of employment. I also understand that I cannot extend OPT beyond 12 months even I have not worked for the entire OPT period, unless I qualify the STEM OPT extension.
- **Beginning employment:** I know that I may *not* begin work until I have the OPT EAD (card) in my possession and the start date of the EAD has been reached. To do so constitutes unauthorized employment and a violation of my F-1 status.