Optional Practical Training
for F-1 Students

OFFICE OF
MULTICULTURAL
AFFAIRS

Webinar Content

❑ Overview/Key Terms

❑ How to Apply

❑ After the Application

❑ Employment Requirements

❑ Questions and Answers

Important Terms

- EAD: Employment Authorization Document (work card)

- USCIS   US Citizenship and Immigration Services

- I-765   Application for EAD

- RFE   Request for Evidence from USCIS

- NOID   Notice of Intent to Deny

What is Optional Practical Training?

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

"is temporary employment for practical training directly related to a student's major area of study."

Eligibility Criteria

- Must be in legal F-1 status

- Must have completed one academic year of full-time enrollment, or be within 90 days of doing so

- Have not received 12 months or more of full time CPT at your current degree level

- Completed all coursework or be able to graduate within the same semester

- **NOTE:** You do not need a job offer to apply for OPT.

Applying for Post OPT

The OPT Planning Tool is a helpful resource you should use when preparing to apply for OPT.

OPTPlanningTool-F.xlsx (live.com)

Step One

Submit an OPT Application Cover/Post Completion Form and the I-765 Application to your designated DSO. You will be informed when your I-20s for post completion OPT are ready.

- The start date of post completion OPT for fall/spring completion must fall in your **60-day grace period** (e.g. if your fall completion date is December 15, 2023, then you may select any date in the following range of December 16, 2023 through February 13, 2024).

- You can apply to post completion OPT **no earlier than 90 days before your completion date** and is the earliest that your I-20s for post completion OPT can be issued (e.g. if your spring completion date is April 30, 2024, then you may select any date in the following range of January 30, 2024 through April 30, 2024).

Step Two

Receive and sign your I-20s from your DSO and assemble your application packet to USCIS.

Send by US Mail to:

USCIS
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

Send by FedEx to:

USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business
Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has announced that F-1 students who are applying for optional practical training (OPT) authorization can file the Form I-765, "Application for Employment Authorization," online if filing under the following categories:

- Pre-Completion OPT;

- Post-Completion OPT; and

- 24-Month Extension of OPT for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) students.

Important Note!!!

Keep a copy of each part of the application for your file and send the application via certified mail so you can see the date it gets to USCIS.

The cost is generally around $5.00 or $6.00 dollars at the US Post Office for this service.

What should my OPT application to USCIS include?

- Completed and signed Form I-765 application for employment authorization document
- Check or money order payable to "Department of Homeland Security" in the amount of $410
- Two passport-size photos with your name and DOB on back taken in the last 6 months.
- Signed and updated I-20 showing OPT information on page 3
- Photocopy of passport photo page
- Photocopy of F1 visa
- Electronic I-94 printout (most recent) OR photocopy of I-94 card
- Photocopies of any previous EAD cards (front and back)

Please Note!!!!

- The post OPT application will be denied if USCIS receives it after it's been 30 days since the I-20 was printed with post OPT endorsement from the school.

- The address you put on the Form I-765 is where your card will be sent. Plan to be at this address; otherwise, write an address you will have access to for at least 4 – 5 months.

What happens after I send my OPT application to USCIS?

- No edits can be made to the request

- Receive your I-797C (receipt notice) within a few weeks

  - Check accuracy of spelling of name, date of birth, and that the receipt number SRC for tracking works on the USCIS website https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard/CaseStatus.do.

  - It is your responsibility to contact the Customer Service number if any information is incorrect.

Filing Tips from USCIS

- Form must be handwritten or typed in **black ink**

- If you make an error, please start over with a clean form. DO NOT use highlighters or correction fluid/tape

- Sign the I-765 in black ink. DO NOT TYPE YOUR SIGNATURE!!

- Per USCIS instructions: All questions should be answered unless otherwise stated in the Form I-765 instructions.

- For questions that do not apply to you:

  - Alphabetical answer: Put "N/A"

  - Numerical answer: Put "None"

Filing Tips from USCIS cont'd

- Submit COPIES unless original documents requested

- USCIS prefers single sided copies

- Submit ALL pages of Form I-765

- DO NOT USE STAPLES. Use paper clips or binder clips instead.

When should USCIS receive OPT application?

- Within 30 days of DSO issuing the new I-20

- No earlier than 90 days before program end date on OPT I-20

- No later than 60 days after program end date

Please Note!!!

- USCIS processing of EAD is 90-150 calendar days from receipt of Form I-765. You should file as soon as graduation date has been determined.

- Be sure to complete the correct edition. The edition date can be found at the bottom of the form.

If you are denied….

- …and you are still within the 60 day grace period you can re-apply

- …and you are outside your grace period, you will need to leave the US by the date provided by USCIS in the denial letter

If you receive an RFE/NOID

- RFE = Request For Evidence

- NOID = Notice of Intent to Deny

- USCIS wants more evidence about something. This is the importance of keeping copies of everything you send.

Approval Notice and EAD

- USCIS will mail you an approval notice (I-797A) and an Employment Authorization Card (EAD)

- Review the card to ensure all information is accurate and check the start and end dates of your card

- Submit a copy to your DSO and begin reporting your employment information in the SEVIS portal.

  - Per immigration regulations, detailed information about employment must be reported once the start date on your card begins: employment (or unemployment), living address, any change of status.

  - During post-completion OPT, F-1 maintenance of status is dependent upon employment

OPT Employment Requirements

- Must work 20 hours or more per week

- Job must be a position directly related to your course of study

- Job may be paid or unpaid

- Job cannot be a student worker or graduate assistant position, but can be on campus

Federal Requirement While on OPT

- Provide DSO with a copy of your EAD card as soon as its received

- Report employment within 10 days of any change via the SEVP portal

- Update your student address with DSO within 10 days of moving

- After 90 days of no employment being reported, your SEVIS record will auto terminate.

Remember…..

- It is YOUR responsibility to ensure you submit all documents required for OPT approval in a timely manner.

- It is NOT your DSO's responsibility to complete this process for you.

- **All required forms to apply for CPT and OPT can be found on the Multicultural Affairs webpage.**

- Office of Multicultural Affairs - Alabama A&M University (aamu.edu)

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