Optional Practical Training Application Checklist

OPT is a work authorization granted to F-1 students for employment in their field of study (their major). Most students use it for post-graduation employment.

Learn About OPT

_____ Attend an OPT Session for the current semester, or watch a session recording.

_____ Schedule an appointment with an ISSP advisor (optional). Ask application questions during your appointment.

Prepare Your Documents

To make the process of submitting your online application easy, please have the **electronic files** for these documents ready before you begin.

Acceptable file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF or TIFF.

_____ OPT I-20. Request this in iStart, using the *OPT I-20 Request* form. Your OPT dates will be listed on page 2 of your I-20. Print, sign and scan your OPT I-20. **Your OPT application will be denied without this!**

_____ I-94 record ("Get Most Recent I-94"). If you last traveled to the US by land, this will be in your passport instead, and you should scan a copy **front** and **back**, even if blank. You do not need to upload your travel history.

_____ Copy of passport identity page(s) showing your biographical info and expiration, valid 6 months in future.

_____ Two identical passport-style photographs, sized 2 inches by 2 inches. Review photo requirements.

_____ Credit or debit card for payment for the $470 online application fee. Application fee is higher if applying by mail.

Additional Materials for Some Applications

_____ Copies of I-20s with previously authorized CPT or OPT.

_____ Copy of previous EADs (work authorization card), front and back.

Additional Materials for STEM Extension Applications

_____ Official W&M transcript (or other school's transcript, if applicable), showing completion of your STEM degree.

_____ Form I-983. Complete with your employer. Submit through iStart, with *OPT STEM Extension I-20 Request.* See ISSP's Tips for Completing the Form I-983 page for more details about completing the form.

Applying for OPT Online

Timing

Your OPT application must be received by USCIS:

- Within **30 days** of when ISSP issues your OPT I-20, or before the end of your grace period, whichever is sooner.
- If you are currently on OPT and are applying for an OPT STEM extension, it must be received within **60 days** or before your original OPT expires, whichever is sooner.
- If your OPT application is received by USCIS later than these dates, it will be automatically denied.

Create or Log into Your USCIS Account

- Follow instructions for [creating a USCIS Online Account](#) or log in to your [USCIS account](#) if you already have one.
- Click on "MyUSCIS"
- Select "File a Form Online" and choose "I-765 - Application for Employment Authorization".
- Follow the instructions and complete each step in the order they are presented to you.

Questions asked on the I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

As you navigate the sections of the online I-765 application, follow these tips to complete and submit your application.

<mark>While we are available to discuss the OPT process with you, you are ultimately responsible for what you submit to USCIS, and the results.</mark>

What is your eligibility category?

- For post completion OPT (OPT to be used after graduation), select **(c) (3) (B)**
- For OPT STEM Extension, select **(c) (3) (C).** The STEM extension only applies if you are currently on OPT. If you have just graduated and are not yet on OPT, you will select **(c) (3) (B)**, even if your field is a STEM field.

(c) (3) (C) STEM OPT Eligibility Category

- Complete this section **only** if you are applying for OPT STEM Extension.
- To be eligible, you must have completed a degree on the [STEM Designated Degree Program](#) List at William & Mary or another U.S. institution hat is accredited and SEVP-certified. More details [here](#).
- **Degree.** Enter the SEVIS degree name as it appears on your I-20 and the "CIP" code (a six-digit number). This information is found under major listed on the first page of your I-20. (Example: Physics, 40.0801)
- **Employer's Name as listed in E-Verify & E-Verify Company Identification Number.** Your employer can provide you with this information**.**

What is your reason for applying?

- For post-graduate OPT application, select "Initial permission to accept employment."
- For OPT STEM Extension, select "Renewal of my permission to accept employment."

What is your current U.S. mailing address?

- This is where your EAD (OPT card) will be mailed. The post office cannot forward immigration mail, so if you list your address and move, you must change your address on the [USCIS website](#).
- **In Care of Name:** If you are mailing to a friend, list their name.
- **Is your current mailing address the same as your physical address?** If mailing to a friend, say "no" and list your current physical address.

What is your Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record Number (if any)?

- Enter the admission number on your [most recent I-94 arrival record](#).
- If you last entered the U.S. in 2013 or earlier, or if you entered through a land border, you will have an I-94 card which is usually stapled in your passport.

When did you last arrive in the United States?

- The date when you last entered the U.S., usually the date stamped on your passport, or listed in your I-94 record. You are only eligible to apply for OPT from within the U.S.

Place of Arrival

- Airport or land border where you entered the U.S. and where the immigration officer stamped your passport.

Status at Last Arrival

- Scroll down and select "F1 - Student, Academic Or Language Program"
- However, if you entered the U.S. in another status (e.g., F-2), then applied to change your status to F-1, enter the previous status here.

What is your current immigration status or category?

- F-1 Student (if it's something other than F-1, you are not eligible for OPT).

What is your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Number (if any)?

- Listed on your I-20, in the upper right corner, beginning with "N".
- If you have previously used another SEVIS number, you will provide that information in the "Additional Information" section

What is your A-Number?

- If you used OPT previously, this is typically listed on your OPT card as your USCIS #.

What is your USCIS Account Number?

- If this is your first online application to USCIS, you will not have a USCIS Account Number yet. Select "I do not have or know my USCIS Online Account Number". If you filed an online application before and know your USCIS Account Number, please enter it here.

Social Security Number

- If you do not have a Social Security Number and would like one, you can request this, but be aware that your SSN may arrive after your OPT card; sometimes they do not arrive at all and you will need to apply for your SSN at a Social Security Administration office.

Evidence

Please read the instructions carefully in this section and upload the required digital documents.

- **Form I-20**
    - **Print, sign, scan, and upload the new OPT I-20 that ISSP issued to you**.
    - Your OPT dates will be listed on page 2 of your I-20.
    - Your OPT I-20 must be issued within the **past 30 days** (60 days for people already on OPT applying for a STEM extension).
    - **Your OPT application will be denied if you do not submit an appropriate OPT I-20!**
    - If your OPT is denied, your application fee will not be refunded.

Additional Information

- Enter information about any previous SEVIS records you have had, such as if you attended another university, or were previously authorized for CPT or OPT.

- Previous SEVIS IDs:
    - Section – Select "About You"
    - Page – Select "Your immigration information"
    - Question – Select "What is your SEVIS number?"
    - Additional Information – Suggested format:
        - Indicate your previous SEVIS ID (N00..) and the program start and end date of your previous I-20(s).

- For previous CPT:
    - Section – Select "Evidence"
    - Page & Question – Select "Previously authorized CPT or OPT
    - Additional Information – Suggested format:
        - Employer Name; Part time or Full time; SEVIS ID; Start date – End date; Degree level (Bachelors, Masters, or PhD). You can find your CPT details on page 2 of your CPT I-20.

- For previous OPT:
    - Section – Select "Evidence"
    - Page & Question – Select "Previously authorized CPT or OPT
    - Additional Information – Suggested format:
        - Part time or Full time; SEVIS ID; Start date – End date; Degree level (Bachelors, Masters, or PhD)

Review and Submit

- Your application must be submitted within **30 days** of when we issue your OPT I-20 (60 days for people already on OPT applying for a STEM extension), or before the end of your grace period, whichever is sooner. Do not submit your application if it is outside this timeframe. Contact an ISSP advisor for assistance.
- Verify that all information is correct, then digitally sign and submit your application.

- You may save a copy of your I-765 application by downloading a draft case snapshot provided in the online application portal.

Pay the Application Fee

- Pay the required online application fee of $470 (debit or credit card payment recommended). Application fee is higher if applying by mail.
- **Once you pay the fee, there can be no changes to your application.** The application fee will not be refunded if you withdraw your application or if your application is denied.

Premium Processing (Optional)

- There is an option to expedite the processing of your application, by applying for Premium Processing for an additional fee.
- You can apply for Premium Processing at the same time you apply for OPT or apply at a later date. Your application processing time will be shortened to 30 business days (about 6 weeks) at the time you submit the premium processing request.