OPT WORKSHOP
2021
Workshop Overview

- What Is OPT?
- Online Application Process
- Waiting on OPT Approval
- Travel
- Responsibilities While on OPT
WHAT IS OPT?

- OPT stands for Optional Practical Training
- 12 months of off-campus work authorization
- 12 months of OPT (e.g. BA, MA, PhD)
- By applying for OPT, it continues your F1 status
- No job offer needed at the time you apply
- Once OPT is approved, 90 days of unemployment
- Employment must be **directly related** to your field of study
PRE-APPLICATION PROCESS

-TIMING-

Post-Completion

vs.

Pre-Completion

Application timeline is based on Program Completion date.
When to Apply for Post-Completion OPT?

**90 days:** the earliest date USCIS will accept the application.

**60 days:** the latest date USCIS can receipt your OPT application. If your application is not receipted by this date, your application could be denied.
Choosing OPT Start Date?

OPT can begin 1 to 60 days after program completion.
Choosing OPT Start Date?

- **Program End Date**: 12/11/2021
- **90 Days Before Program Completion**: 9/12/2021
- **60 Days Before Program Completion**: 2/9/2022

OPT Start Date should be picked between 12/12/2021 – 2/9/2022.

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**PRE-APPLICATION PROCESS TIMING**

(Program Completion - Autumn 2021)
PRE-APPLICATION PROCESS TIMING
(PROGRAM COMPLETION - WINTER 2022)

Choosing OPT Start Date?

90 Days

12/12/2021

60 Days

5/11/2022

Program End Date

3/12/2022

Pick an OPT Start Date between 3/13/2022 – 5/11/2022

Choose OPT Start Date?

Program End Date

3/12/2022

5/11/2022

Pick an OPT Start Date between 3/13/2022 – 5/11/2022

90 Days

12/12/2021

60 Days

5/11/2022

Program End Date

3/12/2022

Pick an OPT Start Date between 3/13/2022 – 5/11/2022
APPLICATION PROCESS:
FILING YOUR OPT APPLICATION ONLINE

OIA Materials → USCIS Materials → Apply online
STEP 1: OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (OIA) MATERIALS

- Verification of Completion Form
- Request for F-1 OPT Work Authorization
- Online Form (use CNet Credentials to log in)
STEP 1: OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (OIA) MATERIALS

Verification of Completion Form

- **COLLEGE STUDENTS ONLY**: I verify that the above-named student will complete his/her course requirements by the end of the _______ quarter, 201__.

- **GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY**: I verify that the above-named student will complete all of his/her course requirements with the exception of his/her thesis by the end of the ____________quarter, 201__.

- **GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY**: I verify that the above-named student will complete his/her degree requirements by the end of the _______ quarter, 201__.

Signature of Adviser: __________________________ Date: __________________

Name & Title of Adviser: __________________________

Department or Division: __________________________
Welcome to the F-1 OPT Recommendation Request!

Before beginning this request, make sure to thoroughly review the OPT page, frequently asked questions, and attend an OPT workshop (if possible). Application review will take one week and you will receive the I-20 with OPT recommendation by email.

Documents needed to complete this request:
- Verification of Completion form (signed by your Academic Advisor or Area Dean of Students)

Click Apply Now to begin a new request and use your CNet credentials to log in. Click Edit Request to return to an existing request. You may edit your answers after submission.

If you have any questions, please contact your OIA advisor directly or contact OIA at international-affairs@uchicago.edu.

Use your CNet credentials to log in

Complete all questionnaires

Upload the completed Verification of Completion form

Once finished, click SUBMIT at the top of the page – Your form is considered submitted once a “Thank you for your submission” message appears in green at the top of the page.
AFTER FORM SUBMISSION

- Approximately 1 **week** to approve
- New OPT I-20 provided via e-mail
- Email will also include a screen shot of your CPT usage from SEVIS (provided to all students; regardless of whether or not CPT was used)
STEP 2: U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES (USCIS) MATERIALS

- NEW digital passport photo (should meet the U.S. government photo standards)
- Biographical Page of Passport
- Most recent I-94
- Copy of I-20 with OPT Recommendation (Page 2)
- Previous EADs (if applicable)
- CPT Usage

(Application fee $410)

Don’t forget to sign page 1! Recommendation valid for 30 days!
STEP 3: Create Your USCIS Account

Visit [https://myaccount.uscis.gov/](https://myaccount.uscis.gov/) to create your USCIS account. Detailed instructions on how to create a USCIS account can be found [here](https://myaccount.uscis.gov/).
STEP 4: File Form I-765 Online

After you have logged in to your USCIS account, click on “My Account” and select “File a form online” from the drop-down menu. Select “I-765, Application for Employment Authorization” to start populating your form.

Getting Started

- **Basis of Eligibility**
  - (c)(3)(A) Pre-completion OPT – select this option if your requested OPT start date occurs before the program end date listed on your I-20
  - (c)(3)(B) Post-completion OPT – select this option if your requested OPT start date occurs after the end date listed on your I-20, or after completion of course requirements for MA/PhD students
  - (c)(3)(C) STEM Extension – select this option if you are currently on valid post-completion OPT and eligible to apply for STEM extension based on your degree

**STEM OPT applicants only (c)(3)(C):**
- What is your degree?
- What is your employer’s name as listed in E-verify?
- What is your employer’s E-verify company identification number or a valid E-verify client company identification number?
STEP 4: File Form I-765 Online Con’t

**Getting Started**

- **Reason for Applying?**
  
  - What is your reason for applying?
    
    ▶ Select “Initial permission to accept employment”

  - Have you previously filed Form I-765?
    
    ▶ If you have previously filed an I-765, select “Yes”. If you have not previously filed an I-765, select “No”.

- **Preparer and Interpreter Information**

  - Is someone assisting you with completing this application?
    
    ▶ Select “No”
STEP 4: File Form I-765 Online Con’t

About You

☐ Your Name

  o What is your current legal name?
    ▶ Enter your name as it appears on your Form I-20
    ▶ Have you used any other name since birth? If “Yes”, provide the other names you have used. If “No”, continue to the next section.

☐ Your Contact Information

  o How may we contact you?
    ▶ Enter your daytime telephone number, mobile number and email address

  o What is your current U.S. mailing address?
    ▶ This is where your EAD will be sent. Your must enter an address that will be valid for the next 4-5 months. If your address will change, you can ask a friend, relative or employer if you can add their name and U.S. address. EADs will not be sent abroad. If you use a friend, relative or employer’s address, you must write their full name in the “In Care of Name (if any)” field.

  o Is your current mailing address the same as your physical address?
    ▶ Select “Yes” or “No”
STEP 4: File Form I-765 Online Con’t

About You

- Describe Yourself
  - What is your gender?
    - Select the gender as is reflected on your passport
  - What is your marital status?
    - Select your current marital status

- When and Where Were You Born?
  - What is your city, town, or village of birth?
    - Complete the information as is listed on your passport/birth certificate
  - What is your state or province of birth?
    - Complete the information as is listed on your passport/birth certificate (if it applies to you)
  - Is your country of birth?
    - Complete the information as is listed on your passport/birth certificate
  - What is your date of birth?
    - Insert your date of birth (MM/DD/YYYY)
STEP 4: File Form I-765 Online Con’t

**About You**

- **Your Immigration Information**
  - **What is your country of citizenship or nationality?**
    - Insert the name of your country of citizenship. If you hold multiple citizenships or nationalities, select “add country” to ensure all countries of citizenships or nationalities are reflected.
  - **What is your Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record Number (if any)?**
    - Your I-94 Arrival-Departure Record Number can be retrieved [here](#).
  - **When did you last arrive in the United States?**
    - List your arrival date, place of arrival and status at arrival. You can refer to your most recent I-94 for this information.
  - **What is the passport number of your most recently issued passport?**
    - Please refer to the biographical page of your passport.
  - **What is your travel document number (if any)?**
    - *Note:* most F-1 students would not have a travel document separate from their passport.
  - **What is the expiration date of your passport or travel document?**
    - Please refer to the biographical page of your passport.
  - **What country issued your passport or travel document?**
    - Please refer to the biographical page of your passport.
  - **What is your current immigration status or category?**
    - Select “F1 – Student, Academic or Language Program.
  - **What is your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Number (if any)?**
    - Your SEVIS number can be found on the upper left-hand side of your most recent I-20.
STEP 4: File Form I-765 Online Con’t

About You

☐ Other Information

○ What is your A-Number?
  ➤ You can list your A-number (if you have one) or select “I do not have or know my A-number.
  Note: Most F-1 students will not obtain an A-Number until after being approved for Post-Completion OPT

○ What is your USCIS Online Account Number (if any)?
  ➤ You can list your USCIS Online Account Number (if you have one) or select “I do not have or know my USCIS online Account Number

○ Has the Social Security Administration (SSA) ever officially issued a Social Security Card to you?
  ➤ If you have a Social Security Number, select “Yes” and enter your Social Security Number. If you do not have a Social Security Number, select “No”. You will then be asked of you want the SSA to issue you a Social Security Card to which your response will be “Yes”. You will need to agree to the “Consent for Disclosure” and provide your father’s and mother’s birth names (first and last names at birth).
STEP 4: File Form I-765 Online Con’t

Evidence

Use this section to upload your passport picture, Form I-94, biographical page of your passport, any previous Employment Authorization Document(s), previously authorized CPT (only if applying for initial OPT), your Form I-20s (including the OPT I-20 signed by you and OIA) and official transcript (if applying for STEM Extension).

STEM OPT application only: If you are applying for STEM OPT based on a prior STEM degree (prior to your most recently earned degree), you will need to upload evidence of institutional accreditation. Note that most students do not apply for STEM OPT based on a prior degree. If you think you are applying for STEM OPT based on a prior STEM degree, please email your OIA adviser.
STEP 4: File Form I-765 Online Con’t

**Review and Submit**

Thoroughly review the information reflected on your I-765 and make sure you have included the OPT I-20 signed by you and OIA. You will need to make payment of the current filing fee online prior to submitting your application. Payments can be submitted via credit/debit card or bank account information.

*Note: standard OPT and STEM OPT applicants are not required to pay a biometrics fee.*
What Happens After You Apply?

- **Receipt Number**: After your application is successfully submitted online, you will receive a receipt number immediately. You can check the status of your application by entering this receipt number on the [USCIS Case Status Page](#) or by logging into your USCIS account.

- **Contact OIA if you**: Have questions regarding your OPT dates, don’t graduate as planned, are unable to submit your OPT application within 30 days of OPT recommendation on your I-20, receive an RFE or rejection.

- **OPT Processing Time**: Currently, USCIS may take between 2.5-3.5 months (from the receipt date) to process your OPT application. Once your application is approved, you will receive your EAD at the address listed on your I-765.

- **Responsibilities While on F-1 OPT**: All F-1 students who engage in Post-completion OPT, including STEM Extension, must fulfill certain regulatory reporting requirements. For detailed information regarding responsibilities while of F-1 OPT, please visit the [OIA's website](#). Consequences of not fulfilling your reporting requirements could lead to termination of your F-1 status and immediate departure from the U.S.
While waiting on OPT approval, you **cannot** do any paid or unpaid work related to your area of study.

Volunteering may be acceptable if it is recreational or avocational in nature:
- Not related to your area of study
- May also fit the Dept of Labor's definition of volunteer work

According to the Department of Labor, a volunteer is: an “individual who performs hours of service... for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons, without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation for services rendered.”

- Services are performed for public service, religious or humanitarian objective.
- No expectation of compensation
- The volunteer cannot displace a genuine employee
- Services provided by the volunteer should not be the same services for which they was previously paid and/or expects to be hired and paid for in the future
Unemployment time starts accruing on your OPT start date.

Card Validity Dates
(Note: you may not begin working until this start date has been reached)

Simply means this card alone cannot be used as a passport/visa stamp. Refer to Travel Considerations.
RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE ON OPT

- Report employment/address changes (SEVP Student Portal or OPT Update Form)

**WARNING: Unemployment Time (90 days)**

- Report changes to your status (ex: F-1 to H-1B)

- Report ending OPT early

All must be reported no later than 10 days after the change takes place
RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE ON OPT

SEVP Student Portal

Step 1: SEVIS Sends Student Information to the Portal
When the status of an OPT request or practical training request in SEVIS changes to “Approved” and the OPT authorization is active, SEVIS sends relevant data from the student’s SEVIS record to the SEVP Portal.

Step 2: The Portal Sends the Account Creation Email to the Student
The portal will send the account creation email after getting OPT data from SEVIS. SEVIS sends OPT information to the portal if all the following are true:

Step 3: The Student Follows the Link to Create their Portal Account
Students must click the link in the email to open the registration page. The initial registration page will ask for the student’s SEVIS ID number. A student must enter their correct, most recent SEVIS ID on which practical training was approved and then click Submit.

Step 4: The Student Successfully Creates their Portal Account
After the student clicks “Create Account” the portal will open the login page and display a success message. This signifies that the student has successfully created an SEVP Portal account and may now:
WHAT IS ‘EMPLOYMENT’

Work that is:

- Directly related to your area of study
- Combined for at least 20 hours/week
- Appropriate for your level of education

COVID-19 Exceptions: Remote employment, working less than 20 hours per week
You are permitted to work for multiple employers – all must be directly related to your field of study!
You are permitted to start a business or be self-employed while on OPT. You are responsible for documenting your self-employment (i.e., proving you have the required business licensure).
PAID/UN-PAID INTERNSHIPS

- Students may work as paid/un-paid interns, where this does not violate any labor laws.
- Paid/Unpaid Internships have to be related to field of study.
- Benefits the intern, not necessarily the company.
- Record your participation (20 hours or more per week)
RECORD KEEPING TIPS

- Keep copies of all I-20s and EAD Cards
  - Students who apply for future immigration benefits in the US will likely be asked to provide evidence of all previous EADs and I-20s

- Keep track of OPT employment
  - OIA will continue to monitor students SEVIS records while on OPT, but it is the students’ responsibility to keep track of their employment records (i.e. Job offer letter, formal job description or job posting, etc.)

- Keep original EAD Card in a safe place
  - Lost or stolen EAD will need to be replaced at the student’s expense
SPECIAL ISSUES

- Travel
- Dependents
- Nearing the END of OPT
  - STEM Extension
  - H1-B Visa Status
  - Status Beyond F-1
TRAVEL WHILE OPT IS PENDING

Pre-end date: travel as you normally would
Post-end date: Will need EAD card to re-enter the U.S.
TRAVEL AFTER OPT IS APPROVED
DEPENDENTS

- F-2 status extended as long as F-1 is maintaining OPT requirements

- F-2 Dependent Travel
  - Copies of F-1 documents
    (I-20, F-1 visa stamp, passport ID page, I-94, EAD)
  - Valid F-2:I-20 with travel signature (TS valid for 6 months)
  - Valid Passport
  - Valid F-2 visa stamp
F1 students have a 60 day grace period after their OPT End Date to do the following:

1. Leave the U.S. (not eligible for re-entry in current F-1 status during this period)
2. Transfer SEVIS record to a new school or
3. Change education level at UChicago
STEM-EXTENSION

- STEM Qualified Majors Only
- A student can use the STEM extension based on their most recent or a previous STEM degree.
- A student may obtain up to two STEM extensions provided that the second STEM extension is for a higher qualifying degree.
- You need to apply before initial 12-months of OPT ends
- A job offer is required in order to apply
  1. It has to be directly related to your degree and field of study
  2. It has to be full time (i.e. at least 20 hours per week)
  3. It must be from an employer who participates in E-verify (http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify)
  4. It must be an eligible type of employment (unpaid or volunteer positions, positions with temp agencies and self-employment do not qualify)
- USCIS requires the employer to provide a formal Training Plan (Form I-983)
H-1B CAP-GAP

H-1B CAP-GAP Extension
CAP-Subject Employers only, Change of Status petitions only

April 1st
H-1B Applications Accepted

OPT End-Date

October 1st
H-1B status begins for approved petitions
Several potential statuses and solutions for full-time employment

Not like OPT; employer must submit petition

When conversations about sponsorship come up, work closely with your employer for creative solutions

Learn more about potential statuses on the USCIS Website to help employers understand them

Always work with experienced professionals for applications

The Student Services Team at OIA is not legally eligible to advise on statuses beyond F-1/J-1 student
During the period of OPT, a student remains in F-1 status.

A job offer is not required to apply for OPT.

The employment may occur anywhere in the U.S.

No special permission is needed from the USCIS or OIA to quit a job or change employers. However, you must update your SEVP Student Portal or complete the OIA OPT Update form of these changes within 10 days.

An extension of OPT is allowed for up to 24 months if at the time of the extension you have a degree in a Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM) field and your employer is enrolled in E-Verify.
Optional Practical Training (OPT) Online Application Checklist

This checklist is to be used for F-1 students applying for the initial 12 months of post-completion OPT. The application process is in two sequential steps: the first step is to submit materials to the Office of International Affairs (OIA); the second step is to submit a complete OPT application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Step 1: Office of International Affairs (OIA) materials
- Verification of Completion Form, signed by your academic department (for post-completion OPT applicants only)
- Submit the Online Request Form for F-1 OPT Work Authorization (attach above; processing could take up to 5 business days).
- After your request has been processed, you will receive an email from OIA with an electronic copy of your new I-20 with OPT recommendation. Along with this I-20, you will also receive an electronic copy of your curricular practical training (CPT) history.

Step 2: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) digital materials
- New passport photo that meets the U.S. government passport photo standards
- New I-20 (with OPT recommendation on the second page) that has been signed and dated in the "Student Attestation" section of the first page
- Issued no more than 30 days before your completed online OPT application is submitted
- E6 (OIC for Chicago I-20): you have for current program
- Screenshot from SEVIS of previously granted Chicago OPT (you will get this from OIA with your new I-20)
- Identity page(s) of your passport (page that has your photograph and biographical information)
- Most recent I-94 Arrival record (accessed online, www.cbp.gov/i94)
- Previously issued I-20s (if applicable)
- Visa application fee payment (payments can be made via credit/debit card or bank account information)

Step 3: OPT Application Packet Review
Prior to submitting your online OPT application, thoroughly review the information reflected on your I-765 and make sure you have included the OPT I-20 signed by you and OIA. If you have any questions regarding the online filing process, you may refer to a recording of the OPT workshop, which will be posted on our website. Alternatively, you may contact your OIA advisor via email or during our OIA (Quick Question Answering) hours.

Step 4: What Happens After You Apply?
- Receipt Number: After your application is successfully submitted online, you will receive a receipt number immediately. You can check the status of your application by entering this receipt number on the USCIS Case Status Page or by logging in to your USCIS account.

Contact OIA if you:
- Have questions regarding your OPT dates, don't graduate as planned, are unable to submit your OPT application within 30 days of OPT recommendation on your I-20, receive a RFE or rejection.
- OPT Processing Time: Currently, USCIS may take between 3-5 months (from the receipt date) to process your OPT application. Once your application is approved, you will receive your EAD at the address listed on your I-129S.
- Responsibility While on F-1 OPT: All F-1 students who engage in Post-completion OPT, including STEM OPT, must fulfill certain regulatory reporting requirements. For detailed information regarding responsibilities while on F-1 OPT, please visit the OIA's website. Consequences of not fulfilling your reporting requirements could lead to termination of your F-1 status and immediate departure from the U.S.

TINING
We recommend that you file your completed OPT application online to USCIS as soon as possible. This is because your application will be denied if USCIS does not receive it within 30 days of the DS-2019 signature date. Also note that USCIS will not accept the application earlier than 90 days before your I-20 program end date, and not later than 60 days after your I-20 program end date. Please plan accordingly.

TRAVEL CONSIDERATIONS AFTER APPLYING FOR OPT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traveling before program end date listed on I-20:</th>
<th>Traveling after program end date listed on I-20:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You may travel as a regular F-1 student.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the program end date listed on your I-20, you will need your EAD to re-enter the country.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you leave the U.S. before you receive the card, and your OPT is approved, you would need to arrange to obtain the card for re-entry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You must have a valid passport, valid F1 visa stamp, I-20 signed within the last six months, the OPT EAD card.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If my F-1 visa has expired. Can I still renew?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. To re-enter the U.S. from abroad, you will need a valid visa. Review the OIA travel page for specific information regarding visa renewal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Page 1

Page 2
REVIEW THE OIA WEBSITE

internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/page/opt-optional-practical-training

- Instructions for filing OPT application (by mail and online)
- Access Verification of Completion Form
- Link to “Request for F-1 OPT Work Authorization” online form
Email: international-affairs@uchicago.edu

Phone: +1 (773) 702-7752

Appointments: Schedule online through our Staff Directory

Location:
Press Building, 1427 East 60th Street, Second Floor, Suite 251

Office Hours (Operating Virtually):
Monday – Thursday: 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM, Friday: 10:30 AM – 4:00 PM
Thank you for participating in our Webinar