



Optional Practical Training (OPT) 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 two sequential steps: the first step is to submit materials to the Office of International Affairs (OIA); the second step is submitting 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)
- [Form I-765](#) Application for Employment Authorization (refer to the [OIA OPT website](#) for specific instructions)
An OIA International Adviser will review this application and let you know if edits need to be made.
- Submit the [Online Request Form for F-1 OPT Work Authorization](#) (attach the above; processing could take up to 5 business days).

After submitting, you will receive an email from OIA once your new I-20 with an OPT recommendation has been processed and is ready for pick-up. Along with the I-20, you will also receive a print-out of your Curricular Practical Training (CPT) history.

Step 2: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) materials

- \$410 Application Fee Payment; personal check, money order, or cashier's check completed as follows:
Payable To: U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- Two (2) new passport photos. Photos must meet [U.S. photograph requirements](#)
Write your name and I-94# on the back of photos (use permanent black marker)
- Reviewed and updated [Form I-765](#) Application for Employment Authorization
- Supporting Documents - Color Photocopies of the following documents (Note: Do NOT send the originals):
 - New I-20 (with OPT recommendation on the second page) that has been:
Signed and dated in the "Student Attestation" section (bottom of first page)
Issued no more than 30 days before USCIS will receive the entire OPT application
 - CPT Employment printout (received with new I-20)
 - Passport: photograph and biographical information
 - Most recent I-94 Arrival record (print online from: www.cbp.gov/i94)
 - Previously-issued EAD cards (if applicable)
- Recommended:* [Form G-1145](#) for E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance
In order to receive electronic notification when your application is received by USCIS and other application related updates.

Step 3: OPT Application Packet Review

Once your OPT packet has been assembled, you may bring it to OIA for final review before mailing it to USCIS during OIA walk-in advising times. Walk-in advising: Monday – Thursday, from 10am-1pm and 2pm-4pm.

Step 4: OPT Application Packet Mailing Instructions

1. Make a copy of the of the entire application for your records.
2. Mail application packet to the appropriate USCIS Lockbox Facility. Address depends on the U.S. mailing address you list on the I-765 application (Part 2. Information About You, Item Numbers 5.a. - 5.e.).
3. We recommend mailing in a way that allows tracking/confirmation of delivery (e.g. FedEx, UPS, USPS, etc.).

If the address used on the I-765 Application for Employment Authorization is in Illinois:

Mail your application to:

If mailing via the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) : (requesting certified mail highly recommended)	If shipping via Courier Service: (FedEx, UPS, DHL, etc...) (tracking information highly recommended)
USCIS P.O. Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036	USCIS Attn: NFB AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034

If the address listed on your Form I-765 is **not** in the State of Illinois, you should visit the [Application for Employment Authorization USCIS webpage](#) to determine which USCIS Service Center will process your application.

TIMING

We recommend that you mail the complete OPT application to USCIS as soon as possible (within 2 weeks from the DSO signature date on the I-20 with OPT recommendation). This is because your application will be denied if USCIS does not receive it within 30 days of the DSO signature date.

TRAVEL CONSIDERATIONS AFTER APPLYING FOR OPT

Traveling before program end date listed on I-20:	You can travel as a regular F-1 student before your I-20 end date.
Traveling after program end date listed on I-20:	After the program end date listed on your I-20, you will need your EAD to re-enter the country. 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.
Traveling while on OPT:	OPT is a continuation of your F-1 Student status. As an F-1 Student, you can enter and exit the country as long as you have all required travel documents ; you must have a valid passport, valid F1 visa stamp, I-20 signed within the last six months, the OPT EAD card.
My F-1 student visa has expired. Can I still renew it?	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.

Contact the Office of International Affairs (OIA) if:

- You need to cancel your OPT application
- You do not complete your program as planned
- Your application has been pending beyond the normal processing time-5 months

Estimated processing time range:

The estimated time range for USCIS to process OPT applications is 3-5 months from the day the application was received.

USCIS will mail an official [Form I-797 Notice of Action: Receipt Notice](#) approximately 2-4 weeks after receiving the application. This notice will confirm official receipt of the application by USCIS and indicate a case number which can be used to track the application using the [USCIS Case Status](#) website.