



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 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)
- ☐ Submit the [Online Request Form for F-1 OPT Work Authorization](#) (attach the above; processing takes approximately 1 week).

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 the 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 (bottom of first page)
 - Issued no more than 30 days before your completed online OPT application is submitted
- ☐ 1st /Oldest UChicago I-20 you have for current program
- ☐ Screenshot from SEVIS of previously granted UChicago CPT (you will get this from OIA with your new OPT 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 EAD cards (if applicable)
- ☐ [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 to our website. Alternatively, you may contact your OIA adviser via email or during their QQA (Quick Question Advising) 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 an RFE or rejection.
- ☐ **OPT Processing Time:** Currently, USCIS may take between 3 - 4 months (from the receipt date) to process your OPT application. Once your application is approved, you will receive your EAD at the mailing address listed on your I-765.
- ☐ **Responsibilities While on F-1 OPT:** All F-1 students on post-completion OPT are required to report the following information within 10 days of any new job or interruption of employment through the SEVP Student Portal (you should receive an email from SEVP directly to access the portal):
 - Legal/passport name
 - Physical address, e-mail, and U.S. phone number
 - Employer name/address
 - Dates on EAD card
 - Description of how your job is related to your degree,
 - Average number of hours/week
 - Any interruption of employment/ending a job
 - Accruing more than 90 days of unemployment
- **IMPORTANT: You must meet these OPT reporting requirements in order to keep your F-1 status and OPT active.** Make sure to submit your OPT update form within 10 days of any change.
- USCIS keeps track of your unemployment days based off the OPT update forms you submit. If you fail to submit updates or if you accrue more than 90 days of unemployment, the SEVIS system will terminate your F-1 record, which will end your OPT and your legal presence in the U.S.
- If you change your status, provide evidence (e.g. approval notice, I-94 card, entry stamp, green card) of the new status to OIA so that we can clean up your F-1 SEVIS record appropriately.
- If you leave the country before your period of OPT authorization has completed, please provide documentation of your departure so OIA can update your SEVIS record appropriately.

TIMING

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 DSO signature date. Also note that USCIS will not accept the application earlier than 90 days before your I-20 program end date, nor later than 60 days after your I-20 program end date. Please plan accordingly.

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 and employer letter (if you are employed or have an offer) or job search materials if you have them (i.e. scheduled job interviews, etc.)
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.