Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application Checklist

Pt. I lists the steps to obtain an OPT I-20; Pt. II lists documents a student seeking OPT must include with the OPT I-20 in their mailed application to USCIS; Pt. III provides OPT application mailing guidance; Pt. IV shows how to provide optional or required Additional Information on page 7 of the I-765; Pt. V offers post-OPT application status maintenance and STEM OPT Extension application tips.

I. OBTAIN OPT I-20

To apply for OPT, you must first request and obtain an I-20 recommending you for OPT issued by an ISSFS advisor in the last 30 days. To do this, complete each of the following steps:

- Fill out Form I-765 (bit.ly/form_I765) to the best of your ability. USCIS will accept I-765s filled out in black ink, but we recommend filling it out using a standalone, non-browser PDF reader such as Adobe Acrobat DC, and signing your completed print-out. To use OIP’s address as your mailing address on p. 2 and list previous SEVIS IDs as Additional Information—a requirement if you’ve ever been issued a visa for a different SEVIS ID than your current—on p. 7 of your I-765, see the sample answer and explanation in Pt. IV.

- Fill out your OPT I-20 Request (bit.ly/optrequest) form.

- Make scans of any EADs previously received from USCIS.

- In an email to intladvising@uttyler.edu sent from your Patriots account, attach the above documents to request your OPT I-20. You may also bring them in yourself for initial review during walk-in hours or by appointment.

Allow 1-3 business days for a full review of your OPT request file and creation of your OPT I-20. You’ll be notified by email when your OPT I-20 is ready for pick-up. If you’re not in Tyler, designate a friend to pick it up for you and/or request a scan of your OPT I-20. Upon receiving your OPT I-20, immediately proceed to Pt. II.

USCIS must receive your I-765 application within 30 days of your OPT I-20 issue date and before the end of your 60-day grace period or your application will be denied/returned. If this happens after your grace period has ended, you are out of status!

II. ASSEMBLE OPT APPLICATION

In 1 envelope, assemble all required documents from the list in this section in the order shown to prepare for mailing:

- $410 Filing Fee via one of the following payment methods:
  - Personal/Cashier’s Check or Money Order made payable to: U.S. Department of Homeland Security
  - Credit card: include Form G-1450 (uscis.gov/g-1450) for required 1-time credit transaction authorization.
- Form I-765: hand-signed original proof-read by an international advisor in Pt. I.
- Form I-20: B&W single-sided copy of OPT I-20 obtained in Pt. I, after you’ve signed and dated it.
- Form I-94 (bit.ly/recentI94): Printout of your e-admission record. If it doesn’t find your record, check inside your passport for an I-94 card, often issued to those who arrived in U.S. by land or sea; if you were in other visa category (e.g., B-2) before obtaining F-1 status by application, check bottom of Form I-797A approval notice.
- Passport: bio page copying expiration date at least 6 months beyond requested OPT start date*
- F-1 Visa: copy of visa inside passport*
- 2 Passport-style 2-by-2 Photos: full face visible on white to off-white background, head height measuring 1-1/2" with your name & A-Number, if any, printed lightly on back of each photo with a black pencil or felt pen.

*USCIS’ Filing Instructions (bit.ly/I765instr-20) state government-issued documents containing your biography and recent headshot of the following types may be provided as a substitute for an unaviable or invalid F-1 visa or Passport: your last EAD; a visa issued by a foreign consulate; birth certificate or national ID.

III. MAIL OPT APPLICATION

Choose the correct Lockbox address to mail your fully assembled OPT application. If using a TX mailing address, choose the Dallas Lockbox address designated for the courier delivering your OPT application:

- U.S. POSTAL SERVICE (USPS)
  - USCIS
  - P.O. Box 660867
  - Dallas, TX 75266

- DHL, FEDEX, UPS
  - USCIS
  - Attn: NFB AOS
  - 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business
  - Suite 400
  - Lewisville, TX 75067

If using a non-TX mailing address, check USCIS’ Filing Addresses (bit.ly/optlockboxes) page to see if you’ll need to mail it to one of the Phoenix (AZ) Lockbox facilities instead.

Working before your OPT application has been approved or your EAD start date is a violation of your visa status!
IV. SELECTED I-765 ITEM NUMBER TIPS

- p. 2, pt. 2, item number 5: Name the location where you want USCIS to mail documents related to your OPT application, including your EAD card. You may use your own address or OIP’s (if you want us to receive your documents on your behalf). If using OIP’s, enter our address as follows:
  - 5.a. In Care Of Name (if any) UT TYLER OIP
  - 5.b. Street Number and Name 3620 VARSITY DR
  - 5.d. City or Town TYLER, 5.e. State TX; 5.f. ZIP Code 75701

- p. 7, pt. 6. Additional Information:
  - 6. Is your current mailing address the same as your physical address?  
    □ Yes  □ No

V. AFTER MAILING YOUR OPT APPLICATION

- You are required by federal regulation to report all employment, address (physical or mailing), and contact information changes within 10 days of the change. Use either of the following methods to report a change:
  - Self-update through your SEVP Portal (sevp.ice.gov/opt) account: you’ll need to have activated it via the registration link you’ll receive from do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov just after the start of your OPT period.
  - Request we update your SEVIS record for you: fill out our Employment Report (bit.ly/oipoptreportform) in full with your job offer as an attachment in an email to intladvising@uttyler.edu.

- Once your OPT period has begun, you may accrue no more than 90 days of unemployment; gaps between reported employment periods are treated as unemployment days in SEVIS, so make sure to report each change promptly.

- You are required to validate your employment and contact information every 6th month after your OPT start date by emailing intladvising@uttyler.edu, even if nothing’s changed since your last update.

- Before traveling abroad, ensure your I-20 is validly travel-endorsed—i.e., signed in last 6 months on 2nd page—by an ISSFS advisor. We do not recommend travels abroad with an expired F-1 visa!

- If you need to obtain a travel-endorsed I-20 or any other documents still under OIP care, order a pre-paid label from eShipGlobal (bit.ly/eshipglobal) to arrange for a DHL, FedEx, or UPS shipment from our office, or use USPS (cns.usps.com); you may also instruct us by email to send them via regular postage (no tracking) to a specified address for free.

- If seeking STEM OPT Extension, refer to our STEM OPT Application Checklist (bit.ly/oipstemoptchecklist) and email your STEM OPT I-20 request well before (up to 90 days) the expiration of your EAD.