Optional Practical Training (OPT) Tutorial

International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS)
OPT Tutorial Instructions

• View each slide completely
• Note anything you don’t understand, so you can ask for clarification later
• It may be helpful to have the following documents handy to refer to:
  ❑ USCIS form I-765
  ❑ Current I-20
As you begin, bookmark these helpful links and instructions

1. Overview of OPT Process
2. OPT Application Materials Checklist
3. How to request your OPT I-20 in WorldLink
4. How to mail your application to USCIS
5. Reporting Responsibilities on OPT
Why apply for OPT?

▪ Gives you the opportunity to add practical knowledge and training to the academic knowledge you have gained while studying

▪ Gives you 12 months of employment authorization for each higher level of study you complete.

▪ Is a benefit of F-1 status
There are 2 kinds of OPT

1. Students may use pre-completion OPT to engage in training before they graduate.
2. Students may use post-completion OPT to engage in training after they graduate.

We will focus on post-completion OPT in this tutorial. If you have questions about pre-completion OPT, please email oia@pdx.edu
Post-completion OPT

Is used after your degree requirements have been met.

- **Undergraduate** students are eligible when *all* degree requirements have been completed.

- **Graduate** students are eligible after finishing all degree requirements *or* after finishing all coursework, while working on a thesis or dissertation.
When to apply for OPT

You can apply up to **90 days before** you finish your degree requirements and up to **59 days after** completing your degree.

Applications **must be received** at the USCIS service center by the **60th day** of your grace period.

It is also important to consider processing times . . .
Processing Times

1 week processing in ISSS

1 week for mailing

3-5 months service center processing time

2 weeks to issue the EAD and to mail it

Plan on \textit{4-6 months} of processing time total
Timing your OPT Application

You cannot work during this period

OPT start date must be within 60 days* from program completion date

Completion Date

Can apply as early as 90 days before and up to 60 days after completion date

12 months of OPT

You cannot work during this period

60-day grace period

* Must be received by USCIS by 60th day

It is ALWAYS best to apply as early as possible!
Choosing an OPT Start Date

The start date your request for your OPT must be within your 60-day grace period.

You may use the [Start Date Calendar Tool](#) to determine a suitable date.

Remember, if you apply late, this could impact the length of your OPT period since your OPT may be approved after your 60-day grace period and it will always end 14 months after your program end date.
Choosing a Start Date - Important Considerations

You can’t change your OPT dates after your OPT application is sent, so choose them carefully.

Remember that you CANNOT work until you have the card AND the start date has arrived.

☒ You cannot go in for training, and
☒ You cannot volunteer in your field of study before the EAD has arrived and the start date has passed
How to Assemble your OPT Documents

1. 2 recent passport-style photos
2. USCIS I-765 Fee (recommended: Check or Money Order)
3. Form G-1145
4. Form I-765
5. Copy of signed OPT I-20 (will be issued by OISSS)
6. Copies of the following documents:
   - The identity page of your valid passport
   - Your F-1 visa stamp (it is ok if it has expired!)
   - Electronic I-94 record – www.cbp.gov/I94
   - All CPT and previous OPT I-20s
   - Front and back of any EADs (Employment Authorization Document) you may have received before
Passport Photo Requirements

2 identical photos that meet the specifications of U.S. style passport photos. To see a full description of these specifications, go to the [U.S. Department of State website](https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/products/passports/). Using pencil or felt tip (soft) pen, lightly print your name and I-94 number on the back of the photo. Do not damage the photo surface by pressing hard while writing.
I-765 Fee - USCIS Filing Fee

The federal government charges a fee for processing all applications.
The USCIS fee must be mailed with your OPT application.

- Pay by check, money order or credit card**.

Checks or money orders must be made payable to the "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" (see next slide)

**We strongly urge you to pay by check or money order and not credit card since students have experienced delays and rejections when using credit card payments!**

Check here for the current filing fee
Sample Check

Check/Money Order should be made payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" with SEVIS number in the memo line. The current fee is $410 but could change at any time.
Form G-1145

Use this form to request text and email notification(s) regarding your application. Download the form at http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf

WARNING!
USCIS will rarely contact you by phone regarding the status of your OPT application. If you receive a phone call from a person claiming to work for USCIS or any other government agency, do not provide your personal information to them. Note the person’s name, phone number, and email address, and contact OISSS before responding.
Completing Form I-765

USCIS frequently updates Form I-765. Download Form I-765 directly from USCIS Website to make sure you have the most recent edition.

Please read the instructions very carefully while filling out the form.

The next slides give examples on how to complete the Form.
Completing Form I-765

- Type your responses in this form - do not handwrite
- Print your I-765 SINGLE SIDED
- Sign and date page 5, No. 7a & b in black ink - must be an original signature.
- Print all pages (1-7)!
Completing Form I-765

Top Portion: Leave this entire section blank

Part 1. Reason for applying:
Check the “1.a.” box for “Initial Permission to accept employment.”
Part 2. 1.a.-1c.: Info About You:
Your full legal name as shown in your passport

Complete 2.a.-2.c., 3.a.-3.c., 4.a.-4.c. for other names you have used
5.a.-5.f.: Enter the address to which you want your EAD (and Social Security card) sent. It should be where you plan to receive mail in 3-5 months.

- 5.a. If the mailing address belongs to someone other than yourself, put their full name (First Name Last Name) here. This person MUST be listed as a resident of the address with the U.S. Postal Service. If this is your address, write “N/A.”
- 5.b-5.e Write a valid mailing address in the U.S. It may be a residence, commercial address, or PO Box.
Completing Form I-765

6. If you listed a mailing address that is NOT your current physical living address, select “No” and complete 7.a.-7.e. with your current physical address. If “Yes,” write “N/A” in 7.a.-7.e. Physical address should reflect where you actually live.

7.a.-7.d.: Enter the address at which you currently reside (if it is different)

If you move while your OPT application is pending and you did not report a PO Box on your application, report your new address through Banweb, USCIS and U.S. Postal Service!
Completing Form I-765

8. F-1 students do not have an A-Number; leave this blank.
9. F-1 students do not have a USCIS Online Account Number; leave this blank
10.-11. Complete
12. Check “No” if you have never applied for an EAD. Check “Yes” if you have previously applied for an EAD and were either Approved, Denied, or Rejected. If you were Approved, you will need to provide copies of your previous EADs in your application packet. If you were Rejected or Denied, include a copy of the Rejection or Denial notice.

If yes, you will need to provide copy(s) of your previous EAD(s) or a copy of your rejection notice.
Completing Form I-765

13.a.-17.b. Social Security Number (SSN)
13.a. Check “Yes” if you have been issued an SSN and enter your SSN with one letter in each box.
13.b. Skip this if you don’t already have an SSN.

14. Check “Yes” if you want a new or replacement SSN card and complete. Check “No” if you do not want a new or replacement SS card.

15-17.b. If you checked "Yes" for 14., answer these questions. If you checked "No" for 14., skip these questions.
Completing Form I-765

18. Countries of Citizenship:
List all as applicable (use Part 6 of the I-765 if needed) or leave blank in 18.b. if you do not have multiple citizenships.

19.-20. Place of Birth:
name of the country as it was named when you were born, even if its name has changed
Make sure your Date of Birth is in the correct format of MONTH - DAY - YEAR. (01/31/1998 not 31/01/1998)
Completing Form I-765

21.a. I-94 Number Use your current I-94 number. This is at the number found on the electronic I-94 record or on the top left corner of the paper Form I-94 card (see example).

21.b.-e. Passport Information
Enter the information directly from your passport. This passport should match the country on your I-20. In cases where you entered the US on a passport that is now expired, enter the number of your expired passport. (You will provide information on the new passport on pg. 7 of the application.)
### Date of Last Entry into the U.S.:
Your most recent entry date can be found on your passport admission stamp, electronic I-94 record, or paper I-94 card.

### Place of Last Arrival into the U.S.:
Name of the Port of Entry city from your most recent entry. This information can be found on your passport admission stamp, travel history section of your electronic I-94 record, or paper I-94 card. If you drove across the border, write the name of the city where entered the U.S.

### Immigration Status at Last Entry Status in which you entered the U.S.:
“F-1 Student”

### Current Immigration Status Current status should be “F-1 student.”

### SEVIS ID:
Your SEVIS ID appears on the top left side of your I-20 and starts with N00...
Completing Form I-765

27.
- (c)(3)(A) for pre-completion OPT
- (c)(3)(B) for post-completion OPT

Information About Your Eligibility Category

27. Eligibility Category. Refer to the Who May File Form I-765 section of the Form I-765 Instructions to determine the appropriate eligibility category for this application. Enter the appropriate letter and number for your eligibility category below (for example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii)).

\[
(C)(3)(B)
\]

28. - 31.b. Leave blank
Completing Form I-765

PART 3., Page 4

1.a. Select 1.a. to indicate that you have read and understood the questions.

3.-6. Provide your information as requested
Completing Form I-765

PART 3., Page 5

7.a.-7.b. Print the form and sign it with pen.

You must sign and date (MM/DD/YYYY) by hand in **black** ink. Do NOT use any form of e-signatures.

![Image of Form I-765]

**Applicant's Signature**

7.a. Applicant's Signature

Your signature here *(don’t touch the lines)*

7.b. Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy)

MM/DD/YYYY

**NOTE TO ALL APPLICANTS:** If you do not completely fill out this application or fail to submit required documents listed in the Instructions, USCIS may deny your application.
Completing Form I-765

Part 4. and Part 5.:

Blank or N/A
Completing Form I-765

Part 6. Additional Information
complete if you have ever been authorized for CPT, OPT, or STEM OPT

1.a-1.c.: Provide your name again as listed in Part 2, 1.a-1.c.

2. Leave blank
Completing Form I-765

3.a.-3.c.: Reference Pg 2, Part 2, Item No. 12
for previous OPT/ STEM OPT Authorizations

3.d.: List SEVIS No., Type of OPT, Dates, Academic Level

4.a.-4.c.: Reference Pg 3, Part 2, Item No. 27
for previous CPT Authorizations

4.d.: List SEVIS No., CPT, part-time or full-time, Dates, Academic Level
Make Copies of these Documents

Passport

F-1 visa

I-94
Additional Documents

CPT/ OPT I-20s (if applicable)

Previous EAD(s) (if applicable)
OISSS Extended Services Fee

OISSS charges an $80 Extended Services fee

- Although you will have graduated from PSU, we continue to provide services to you as long as you are on OPT

- Your PSU student account will be charged the OISSS filing fee when we issue your OPT I-20.
When you are ready, request your OPT I-20 through WorldLink - here is the step-by-step process with pictures

1. Log into WorldLink (go.pdx.edu/worldlink)
2. Complete all the **OPT Information & Request Forms**
   a. OPT Information Quiz
   b. OPT Eligibility - Academic Advisor Feedback Form
   c. OPT Request Form (12 month post-completion OPT)
After you submit your OPT Request in Worldlink

Your international student advisor will review the application and recommend OPT

A new I-20 will be issued and will be sent to you

- You MUST sign that I-20 before the application can be mailed.

- Scan and email a copy of your signed OPT I-20 to oia@pdx.edu

If your application is not received by the USCIS processing center within 30 days of the date your advisor recommended OPT, it will be DENIED!
Mailing Your OPT Application

Please review this helpful video about "how to mail your OPT Application to USCIS"

ASSEMBLE YOUR APPLICATION MATERIALS (in this order)

1. Passport photos (with your name and I-94 on the back of them)
2. Check or money order (do not recommend using G-1450)
3. G-1145 (if you include it - we recommend that you do)
4. I-765 (single sided, no staples!)
5. Copy of signed OPT I-20
6. Copy of passport
7. Copy of visa
8. Copy of I-94
9. Old CPT I-20s (if applicable)
Mailing Your Application

It is your choice of which mail service to use. You have several options depending on your preferred cost and delivery time:

- USPS First Class Mail
- USPS Priority Mail
- Priority mail via courier service such as FedEx, UPS, or DHL

We highly recommend using a service that includes tracking, such as USPS Certified mail or a courier service.

VERY Important: the mailing address is different depending on which mail service you use and where you are located at when submitting your documents.
Mailing Your Application

Please carefully check the following link before mailing your OPT application.

If you are located in Oregon:

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) regular mail:

USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For FedEx, UPS, and DHL:

USCIS
Att: NFB AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100
Phoenix AZ 85034
After your application is mailed

• Within several weeks a receipt (I-797C) will be sent from the USCIS Service Center

• IMPORTANT: Check the order and spelling of your name and personal information on the receipt to be sure they are correct

• Please upload a copy of the Receipt Notice in Worldlink when you receive it

• If you do not receive a receipt Notice, or if you receive a Request for Information, contact OISSS immediately!
Your EAD Card

▪ Review your EAD card to make sure the information is accurate. If it is not, contact an international student advisor immediately!
▪ Present your EAD to employers as proof of your legal work authorization in the US.
▪ The EAD is a required document for entry to the U.S. during OPT.
▪ You can ONLY work during the dates listed on the approved EAD card- not before and not after!
▪ Upload a copy of your card to the OISSS EAD Card Upload Form.
Maintaining status while on OPT

You are allowed to be unemployed for up to 90 days within the 12-month OPT period

- Working 20 or more hours per week (ideally for one employer) is considered being “employed”
- If you are working fewer than 20 hours per week, you are considered to be “unemployed” and are using part of your 90 days of unemployment
Maintaining Status while on OPT

Students must be “employed” during their OPT to maintain status, similar to the requirement to enroll full-time during their degree.

- Being “employed” means engaging in at least 20 hours of practical training activity directly related to their degree each week (ideally in one position)

- Students are allowed a total of 90 calendar days of “unemployment”, or days that they are not engaged in a period of practical training for at least 20 hours per week
What Activities can count as “Employment”?

- Paid employment
- Unpaid internships
- Volunteering

In all cases, students must have their EAD in-hand and be within their approved OPT period to engage in any employment activities.
Paid Employment

Most students think of this type of employment first when planning for OPT. Possible types of paid employment include:

- Hourly wage positions
- Salaried positions
- Independent contractor positions
- Short-term or gig work
- Self-employment
Unpaid Internships

Students may engage in unpaid internships during their OPT as a form of practical training.

Unpaid internships may take place with for-profit or not-for-profit organizations in the private sector, or in the public sector.

Unpaid internships must adhere to Department of Labor Guidelines to comply with wage laws.
Volunteering

Students may volunteer with not-for-profit or public sector (state or local government) organizations for public service, religious, or humanitarian objectives.

Volunteer activities never have an expectation of payment, and do not displace regular employees.

It is not legal to “volunteer” with a private, for-profit employer; any unpaid activities with an organization that category must meet the requirements for unpaid internships.
Volunteering while on OPT

To be considered a volunteer, you must meet the following criteria:

- No expectation of compensation
- The volunteer cannot displace a genuine employee,
- The services provided by the volunteer should not be the same services for which he or she was previously paid and/or expects to be hired and paid for in the future
- Services are performed for a non-profit organization for public service, religious or humanitarian objective.
- Work at a for-profit entity is considered employment and must be for pay. The only exception is made for training programs where the trainee functions, to some degree, like an employee, but is under close supervision and provides no significant measurable work for the employer. The trainee must not take the place of a paid employee. For example, students who are considered student interns may engage in unpaid internships at for-profit organizations.
- Provides hands-on training similar to educational environment
When you find an OPT Training Opportunity

Let us know within 10 days of starting a new position (paid or unpaid/ volunteering):

Log in to WorldLink
  • select the F-1 Practical Training tab
  • select Report New OPT Employment e-form
    - upload a pdf or .jpg formatted letter of offer
    - verify your physical address as well
    - submit the e-form

If your employment changes, use the Update OPT/STEM Employment Information e-form. More information on reporting on OPT here.
REMEMBER!

• You are **required** to report your employment information to us so that we can report it to the government.

• If we are unable to report employment, the government will start counting days of UNemployment and may terminate your F-1 SEVIS record!
Travel abroad while on OPT

You **must** have the following items to reenter the U.S. while on OPT:

- A valid EAD
- A valid travel signature on your I-20 (less than 6 months old)
- A valid passport
- A valid F-1 visa
- A job to return to or a letter of offer from a new employer

Please review the travel section on our [website](#)!
IS OPT a VISA?

• It is not. While on OPT, you are still in F-1 status
• Your international student advisor is still a resource, so call or email if you have questions!
Address Updates

● If you move while your OPT application is pending and you did not report a PO Box on your application, report your new address through Banweb, USCIS and US Postal Service.

● You MUST update your address within 10 calendar days any time you move – this is a requirement of your F-1 status. During your OPT, you must use the Update Contact Information E-Form in WorldLink
What about Health Insurance?

You can keep your PSU health insurance if your employer does not provide insurance.

Email insurancehelp@pdx.edu for instructions as to how to purchase insurance.
OPT Process Summary

1. Student: Request OPT
2. DSO: Recommend OPT
3. Student: File I-765
4. USCIS: Adjudicate I-765
5. Student: Get EAD & start work and reports to DSO
6. DSO: Report address change & employer Information
Thank you for your Attention!

We hope that you enjoy your practical training experience!

Contact us if you have questions at oia@pdx.edu or make an appointment to talk to an international student advisor.