Preparing your Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application  A step-by-step tutorial

Rutgers Global—International Student and Scholar Services

global.rutgers.edu
STEP 1 Attend the appropriate workshop: F-1 Post-Completion OPT Workshop or Off-Campus Employment Workshop (for pre-completion OPT)

STEP 2 Prepare all application materials (using this step-by-step tutorial)

STEP 3 Meet with an international student adviser (ISA) to review your application and request your new I-20 with OPT recommendation

STEP 4 Pick up your new I-20 with OPT recommendation (when you receive an email saying it’s ready)

STEP 5 Mail your completed application (including a copy of the new I-20 you just received) to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
If you have completed your coursework or will soon be graduating, you must attend the F-1 Post-Completion OPT Workshop to receive important forms to complete your OPT application and learn:

- What is Employment? Am I eligible for OPT? How can I apply for OPT?
- Defining Optional Practical Training
- OPT Timeline Scenarios
- Maintaining your status while on OPT
- OPT Extensions

If you are looking for off-campus practical training (work) experience while you are still completing your degree requirements, you must attend the Off-Campus Employment Workshop.
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS STEP 2
Prepare all application materials

1. Certification for Optional Practical Training form completed by Academic Dean/Graduate Program Director

2. Form I-765

3. $410 check (or money order) made payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security."

4. Form G-1145

5. Two passport-style color photographs of you taken within 30 days of filing this application

6. Photocopy of your passport

7. Photocopy of your most recent visa

8. Hardcopy of your electronic Form I-94 OR photocopy of your paper Form I-94 (front and back)

9. Photocopies of any/all previous EAD cards (front and back) that have been issued to you

10. Unofficial full transcript that bears your name

11. Photocopy of your *NEW I-20 with OPT Recommendation

*You will receive this new I-20 after meeting with an international student adviser to review your OPT application materials.

Bring documents I-10 with you when you meet with an adviser. Missing documents will delay your new I-20

Download the OPT Application Checklist
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS

STEP 1: Receive a stamped form from the F-1 Post-Completion OPT or Off-Campus Employment workshop.

STEP 2: Fill out section I. of the form and bring it to your academic dean or graduate program director to complete section II.

If you are applying for post-completion OPT: The date listed as “completion of all degree requirements” will be the new program end date on your I-20. That is the last day you can work on-campus; however, you may be paid following that date for work already completed.

STEP 3: Bring this form with you as part of your materials when you meet with your international student adviser.

Complete this top section before bringing it to your academic dean or graduate program director.

This bottom section can only be completed by an academic dean or graduate program director.
POST-COMPLETION OPT
SCENARIO 1: APPLYING FOR OPT AFTER COMPLETING ALL DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

90 days before expected completion date, start your OPT application as it can take this long to process.

The earliest possible requested OPT start date is the day after degree requirement completion date; the requested OPT start date must fall within 60 days of degree requirement completion date.

Applying for post-completion OPT on the basis of having completed all degree requirements.

Possible OPT application date:

Possible requested OPT start date:

90 days before degree requirement completion date:
09/23/2017

Degree requirement completion date:
12/22/2017

60 days after degree requirement completion date:
02/20/2018

Download the OPT Dates Worksheet
Prepare all application materials: Certification for OPT form

**OPT APPLICATION PROCESS STEP 2**

**POST-COMPLETION OPT**

**SCENARIO 2: APPLYING FOR OPT AFTER COMPLETING ALL COURSEWORK** (only for students who have a non-coursework degree requirement)

90 days before desired OPT start date, start your OPT application as it can take this long to process.

The earliest possible requested OPT start date is the day after coursework completed (if one-year requirement is met). F-1 status ends at the end of OPT employment authorization; students who choose this option MUST complete all degree requirements and graduate within the period of authorized employment.

Download the OPT Dates Worksheet
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS STEP 2

Prepare all application materials: Certification for OPT form

PRE-COMPLETION OPT
(only for students who have not yet completed degree requirements)

90 days before desired OPT start date, start your OPT application as it can take this long to process

The earliest possible requested OPT start date is the day after completing one full academic year (2 semesters) in F-1 status; the requested OPT end date must be before degree requirement completion date

Download the OPT Dates Worksheet

STEP 2 Download fillable PDF Form I-765 here: http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf. Type the required information into the form, following the next steps.

STEP 3 Be sure to check off “I am applying for: permission to accept employment”
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS  
STEP 2  
Prepare all application materials: Form I-765

STEP 4: Complete the form, paying attention to these important reminders:

a. Write in a U.S. mailing address in section 3 where you will be able to receive documents for the next three or four months; this does not necessarily need to be your address; if it is not your address, write “c/o [full name of person whose address you are using]” in the margin as shown.

```
Family Name: Smith  
First Name: John  
Middle Name:  

123 Training Ave  
New Brunswick NJ  
08901  

Date of Birth: 01/01/1990  
Gender: Male  
Marital Status: Single
```
b. Obtain your I-94 number and write into section 10; to view and print your I-94 go to: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/

c. If you have ever applied for an EAD card before, check “Yes” in section 11, provide the requested information, and attach a copy of your previous EAD card or denial letter

d. Fill in (c)(3)(B) in section 16 for post-completion optional practical training

Fill in (c)(3)(A) in section 16 for pre-completion optional practical training
e. Leave sections 17, 18 and 19 blank

STEP 5  Sign, date, and write your telephone number. Signature must be in black ink
$410 FEE USING A CHECK OR MONEY ORDER

The check must be drawn on a bank or other financial institution located in the United States and must be payable in U.S. currency.

Make the check or money order payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Spell this name out; do not use USDHS or DHS or other abbreviations.

Add your SEVIS ID number, phone number and the phrase “Fee for I-765” in the memo area.

Do not write on the back of the check or money order.

Each money order is different. Follow the instructions provided at the time of purchase or ask the institution providing the money order to explain how to fill in the necessary information.
STEP 1 Download fillable PDF Form G-1145 here:

STEP 2 Complete form

Use this form to request an email/text notification from USCIS when your application is accepted by the lockbox facility.

This notification is unofficial and does not replace the paper I-797C receipt you will receive in the mail.

You must have the paper receipt in order to travel.
PHOTOGRAPH SPECIFICATIONS

The photograph must have a white or off-white background, to be printed on thin paper with a glossy finish—do not mount or retouch.

The photograph must be sized at 2 inches by 2 inches and must be in full color with a frontal view of your face.

The head height in the photograph should measure 1 inch to 1 3/8 inches from top of head to bottom of chin.

Eye height in the photograph should be between 1 inch to 1 3/8 inches from bottom of photo.

Your head must be bare unless you are wearing headwear as required by a religious order of which you are a member.

OPT APPLICATION PROCESS STEP 2
Prepare all application materials: Two passport style photographs.

Photographs must be taken within 30 days of application date.

Using a pencil or felt pen, lightly print your name and SEVIS ID number on the back of the photo.

John Smith
SEVIS ID: N00...
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS STEP 2

Prepare all application materials: Photocopies of other immigration documents

Photocopy of your passport, most recent US visa, and most recent US entry stamp

Photocopy of your most recent I-94: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/

Photocopy of your Employment Authorization/EAD Card (if any)
Visit my.rutgers.edu and click “Get My Grades” under the Academics tab.

Use your netid to log in and receive your unofficial transcript.

Print your unofficial transcript.
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS

STEP 1
To see an international student adviser, visit 180 College Avenue any time from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. or 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday – we are closed Wednesday.

To learn more, visit Advising Services on our website.

STEP 2
Bring your completed application documents when you meet with an ISA.

STEP 3
Review your application with an ISA and submit documents needed to request a new I-20 with OPT recommendation.

Missing or incomplete documents can delay your receipt of your new I-20. Please make sure you’ve prepared all required documents outlined in STEP 2 of this tutorial before meeting an international student adviser.
STEP 1 Look for an email confirming that your new I-20 with OPT recommendation is ready.

STEP 2 Visit our office (180 College Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ) to pick it up from the front desk. If you cannot pick it up, the email from our office will provide information on how we can help you make other arrangements.

STEP 3 Double-check your new I-20 to make sure it is correct.

Our office hours are Monday and Tuesday 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and Thursday and Friday 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. We are closed Wednesdays.

848-932-7015
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS STEP 4

Pick up your new I-20 from Rutgers Global – International Student and Scholar Services

Add a copy of pages 1 and 2 of your NEW* I-20 with OPT recommendation to your application before mailing to USCIS
STEP 1  Make a photocopy of your entire application to keep for your own records

STEP 2  Select a carrier and request a tracking number so you know the application was received:

**United States Postal Service,** mail to:
USCIS
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

**Express mail and courier delivery services** (i.e. UPS, FedEx) mail to:
USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business
Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

* If you are using an address on your I-765 that is NOT in NJ or NY, visit [https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses](https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses) to confirm you are using the correct address

STEP 3  In two to three weeks after mailing, you will receive the official receipt notice
REMEMBER THE FOLLOWING

Confirm that you are using the most updated I-765 form, which you can find at www.uscis.gov/i-765

Your post-completion OPT application should NOT be sent to the USCIS more than 90 days prior to your degree completion date.

Your pre-completion OPT application should NOT be sent to the USCIS more than 90 days prior to your requested OPT start date.

Your OPT application MUST reach the USCIS within 30 days of the date that the OPT recommendation was issued on your I-20.
More questions?  
Contact your international student adviser!

Rutgers Global—
International Student
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