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 information 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.

Check the workshop calendar
1. $410 check, money order or G-1450 (recommend to type)
2. Form G-1145 (recommend to type)
3. Form I-765 (recommend to type)
4. Two passport-style color photographs of you taken recently
5. Photocopy of your passport
6. Photocopy of your most recent F-1 visa
7. Hardcopy of your electronic Form I-94 OR photocopy of your paper Form I-94 (front and back)
8. Photocopies of any/all previous EAD cards (front and back) that have been issued to you
9. Unofficial full transcript that bears your name
10. Evidence of previous CPT authorizations, if applicable (ex. Copies of previous I-20s)
11. Photocopy of your NEW I-20 with OPT Recommendation*

* You will receive (11) your new I-20 with OPT recommendation after your application is reviewed by an international student advisor.
Confirm your academic plans with your Academic Official

*Undergraduate students: this is your Academic Dean/Advisor*
*Graduate students: this is your Graduate Program Director*
*RBHS students: this is your Registrar*

You and your academic official need to confirm the following academic dates, as they will impact your OPT eligibility dates. Your academic official will provide confirmation of this to our office via the OPT I-20 Request e-form in the RGlobal portal.

- **Date 1:** Completion of all course work
- **Date 2:** Completion of all degree requirements (including non-coursework requirements such as thesis/defense)
  
  *If you are applying for post-completion OPT, this date will likely be the new program end date on your I-20. That is also the last day you can work on-campus; however, you may be paid following that date for work already completed.*
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS

STEP 2

Prepare all application materials: Academic Certification

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

*degree requirement completion date is determined by your academic official; generally this date is earlier than your current I-20 Program End Date

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

Possible OPT application date

Possible requested OPT start date

02/21/2020

09/24/2019

12/23/2019

02/21/2020

Degree requirement completion date

60 days after degree requirement completion date

90 days before degree requirement completion date

90 days

60 days

Download OPT Dates Worksheet
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS

STEP 2

Prepare all application materials: Academic Certification

POST-COMPLETION OPT

SCENARIO 2: APPLYING FOR OPT AFTER COMPLETING ALL COURSEWORK (only for students who have a non-coursework degree requirement and plan to start OPT before completing 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 coursework completed (if one-year requirement is met). The day before the requested OPT start date will be the new program end date on your I-20; that is the last day you can work on-campus. 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.
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS STEP 2

Prepare all application materials: Academic Certification

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 degree requirement completion date; the requested OPT end date must be before degree requirement completion date

Download OPT Dates Worksheet
$410 FEE USING A CHECK, MONEY ORDER or G-1450

The check or money order 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.

If you prefer to pay the filing fee by credit card, follow the instructions to complete form G-1450: https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450
STEP 1 Download fillable PDF Form G-1145 here: http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf

STEP 2 Complete form providing your name, email address and phone number

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant/Petitioner Full Last Name</th>
<th>Applicant/Petitioner Full First Name</th>
<th>Applicant/Petitioner Full Middle Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>John</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Email Address: johnsmith@gmail.com

Mobile Phone Number (Text Message): +1 (123) 456-7890

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.
STEP 1 Read official instructions for completing Form I-765: https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/i-765instr.pdf

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: 1.a. Initial permission to accept employment” in Part 1.
STEP 2 Complete Part 2 of the form, paying attention to these important reminders:

a. Write in a U.S. mailing address in Part 2, question 5.b-e. where you will be able to receive documents for the next three or four months.

This does not necessarily need to be your current address; if it is not your current address, write the full name of person whose address you are using in 5.a., answer “No” to question 6, and provide your current address in question 7.a-d.
b. If you have ever applied for an EAD card before, answer “Yes” to question 12 and attach a copy of your previous EAD card.

c. If you do not yet have a Social Security number, you may apply for one now by completing item numbers 13.a. - 17.b. You must answer “Yes” to numbers 14 and 15, and provide your parents’ names in item numbers 16.a. - 17.b.

Once your OPT application is approved, the necessary information will be provided to the Social Security Administration. You should receive your Social Security Card by mail approximately one to two weeks after you receive your OPT approval and Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card.

For more information see page 17 of the official instructions for completing Form I-765: https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/i-765instr.pdf
d. Obtain your I-94 number and write in question 21.a.: to view and print your I-94 go to: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/

e. Enter your current SEVIS ID number in question 26. Your SEVIS ID is located at the top left corner of your I-20. Use Part 6. Additional Information to provide any previously used SEVIS ID numbers, if applicable.

f. Fill in (c)(3)(B) in question 27 for post-completion optional practical training

Fill in (c)(3)(A) in question 27 for pre-completion optional practical training

g. Leave questions 28.a. – 31.b. blank
STEP 5 Complete Part 3 of the form, paying attention to these important reminders:

a. Check response 1.a. “I can read and understand English, and I have read and understand every question and instruction on this application and my answer to every question.”

b. Sign and date in question 7.a.-7b. Signature must be in black ink and fit within box provided. USCIS will not accept a stamped or typewritten name in place of a signature.
STEP 6 Complete Part 6 of the form only if:

a. You have been approved for CPT in the past
b. You have been approved for OPT in the past
c. You have used a different SEVIS ID in F-1 status in the US
   - For example, you attended school for a while, left the US to take a break from school, and returned with a new I-20, you would have a SEVIS ID from your first period of attendance that is different than your current SEVIS ID).

If you need to complete this section because one or more of these apply to you, please complete item 1.

For each of the items listed above, complete one box in Part 6. We suggest using the following to complete the Page number, Part Number, and Item number, as this information is required specific to Category (c)(3)(B) (per the I-765 instructions, page 4):

* Please see next page for a sample
Page 3, Part 2, Item 27

a. CPT: Write “See attached I-20”
   • Attach copies of previous I-20(s) with your previous CPT authorization(s)

b. OPT: Please list your past OPT approvals
   • OPT Authorizations (as a title to the section)
   • Start date-End date; Degree Level (Bachelor, Master’s, or PhD)

Page 3, Part 2, Item 26

c. Previous SEVIS ID’s: Please list your other SEVIS ID’s you have used in the past.
   • Previous SEVIS ID’s (as a title to the section)
   • SEVIS ID: N00… Program start date- Program end date; Degree Level (Bachelor’s, Master’s, or PhD)

STEP 7 Remember to include all 7 pages of Form I-765 in your application to USCIS (even if pages 5-7 are blank)
PHOTOGRAPH SPECIFICATIONS

The photographs must have a white to off-white background and 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 full face.

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

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

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

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

Photographs must be taken recently

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

STEP 2

Prepare all application materials: Photocopies of other immigration documents

Photocopy of your passport, most recent F-1 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)
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS STEP 2

Prepare all application materials: Unofficial Full Transcript

1. Visit my.rutgers.edu and click “Get My Grades” under the Academics tab.

2. Use your NetID to log in and receive your unofficial transcript.

3. Print your unofficial transcript.
Prepare all application materials: CPT authorizations

If you received CPT authorization, you should include copies of page 2 of the (previous) I-20 on which this CPT authorization was shown.

Add this copy to your application before mailing to USCIS.
STEP 1 To see an international student adviser during walk-in hours:

New Brunswick: visit 180 College Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901:
Monday & Thursday 12pm-4pm; Tuesday & Friday 10am-2pm; We are closed Wednesdays

Newark RBHS: visit 65 Bergen Street, Room GA72, Newark, NJ 07101
Monday & Friday 10am-1pm, Thursday 1-4pm
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

STEP 4 Submit Optional Practical Training (OPT) I-20 Request e-form via the RGlobal portal when instructed to do so by an ISA

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 to pick it up from the front desk. You will also pick up a copy of SEVIS screenshot that shows your previous CPT authorizations if you have been on approved CPT(s) with Rutgers. 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.
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS

STEP 4

Pick up your new I-20

Pick up your new I-20 at 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 (UPS, FedEx and DHL)**, 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 the program end date on your new I-20 with OPT recommendation

• 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 your new I-20 with OPT recommendation was issued