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

Rutgers Global–International Student and Scholar Services

global.rutgers.edu
RUTGERS GLOBAL—International Student and Scholar Services

OPT APPLICATION PROCESS

Overview

**STEP 1** - Attend the appropriate workshop on CANVAS: 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** – Submit the Post-Completion OPT e-form request on the RGlobal Portal. Meet with an international student adviser (ISA) to review your application and request your new I-20 with OPT recommendation (appointment is optional but highly recommended)

**STEP 4** - Receive 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)

Last Update Jan 2021
BEFORE YOU APPLY, PLEASE REMEMBER THE FOLLOWING:

• You MUST use the most updated I-765 form, which you can find at https://www.uscis.gov/i-765. Be sure the barcode appears on the bottom of each page after printing.

• Your post-completion OPT application should NOT be mailed to the USCIS more than 90 days prior to the program end date on your new I-20 with OPT recommendation

• Your post-completion OPT application MUST reach the USCIS before the end of your grace period

• 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

• If approved, the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card will be sent directly to you at the address you provided on the Form I-765. USPS will not forward the EAD to another address once shipped. Once you receive the EAD card, you are authorized to work on OPT between the start and end dates listed on the card

• USCIS recently announced that the OPT application fee will remain $410

• You cannot begin working until you have received your new EAD card and the start date printed on it has passed
If you have completed your coursework or will soon be graduating, you must attend the Post-Completion OPT Workshop on CANVAS 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 and Reporting Requirements
- OPT Extensions

You can gain access to this workshop by request through the RGlobal Portal. You must fill out the “Online Workshop Access” e-form.

If you are looking for off-campus practical training (work) experience while you are still completing your degree requirements (CPT), you must attend the Off-Campus Employment Workshop on CANVAS.

Go to: https://canvas.rutgers.edu/
Select: Rutgers Global – ISSS
Navigate to the appropriate workshop
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS

STEP 2

Prepare all application materials

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(s)
6. Photocopy of your most recent F-1 visa and most recent visa stamp
7. Hardcopy of your electronic Form I-94 OR photocopy of your paper Form I-94 (front and back)
8. Unofficial full transcript that bears your name
9. Photocopies of any/all previous EAD cards (front and back) that have been issued to you, if applicable
10. Evidence of previous CPT authorizations, if applicable (ex. copies of previous I-20s)
11. 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 coursework
- 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 and CPT (if applicable); however, you may be paid following that date for work already completed.
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS STEP 2
Selecting OPT Start and End Dates – Degree Requirement

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

*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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible OPT application date</th>
<th>02/21/2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possible requested OPT start date</td>
<td>09/24/2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 days before degree requirement completion date</td>
<td>12/23/2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree requirement completion date</td>
<td>02/21/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 days after degree requirement completion date</td>
<td>09/24/2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Download OPT Dates Worksheet

Last Update Jan 2021
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS STEP 2

Selecting OPT Start and End Dates – Coursework Requirement

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.

Download OPT Dates Worksheet

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OPT APPLICATION PROCESS STEP 2
Selecting OPT Start and End Dates – Pre-completion

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 full time student status; the requested OPT end date must be before degree requirement completion date

Download OPT Dates Worksheet

Last Update Jan 2021
$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

You MUST sign the G-1450 with black pen ink, not digitally.
STEP 1 - Download fillable PDF Form G-1145 here:  

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

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

Last Update Jan 2021
STEP 1 - Read official instructions for completing Form I-765: https://www.uscis.gov/i-765

STEP 2 - Download fillable PDF Form I-765 here: https://www.uscis.gov/i-765. 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 4 – If you have used other names on other documents, either formally or informally, please write them on questions 2 – 4, as needed. This includes maiden names or nicknames. If not, write N/A.
STEP 5 - 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 to four months. **This should NOT be the ISSS office address or department address. This may also be true for your Rutgers on-campus address, if you are moving after graduating.**

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.

If you are unable to type in these boxes, please write neatly in black ink instead, or try a different browser/after downloading and saving to desktop.
b. If you have ever applied for an EAD card before, answer “Yes” to question 12 and attach a copy of the front and back of your previous EAD card(s).

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 19 of the official instructions for completing Form I-765: https://www.uscis.gov/i-765
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. Write in the airport code, city, and state for question 23

f. 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 (c is lower case)

Fill in (c)(3)(A) in question 27 for pre-completion optional practical training
STEP 6 - 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 pen ink and fit within box provided. USCIS will NOT accept a stamped or digital name in place of a signature.

c. You must be located inside of the U.S. to apply for an EAD card.
STEP 7 - 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, if 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.

d. You have a matter that needs explanation (i.e. withdrew a previous OPT application, have multiple passports for dual citizenship)

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)* **Please see next page for an example**
Page 3, Part 2, Item 27

a. **CPT:** List all previous CPT authorizations
   - Employer’s name, start & end date, PT/FT, degree level
   - 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 8 - Remember to include all 7 pages of Form I-765 in your application to USCIS
2 COLOR PHOTOGRAPH SPECIFICATIONS

The color 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 and not been used before.

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(s), most recent F-1 visa, and most recent U.S. entry stamp

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

Photocopy of your Employment Authorization/EAD Card (if any), front and back
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 2

Prepare all application materials: Unofficial Full Transcript

Last Update Jan 2021
OPT APPLICATION PROCESS STEP 2

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 - Submit Post-Completion OPT e-form request e-form via the RGlobal portal

STEP 2 - Submit your complete OPT Application for ISA review via the OPT e-form

STEP 3 - Make an optional, virtual appointment to review your application with an ISA International Student Advisor: https://global.rutgers.edu/international-scholars-students/advising-services

STEP 3 – Move forward with the rest of the e-form sections

Important!

Missing or incomplete documents can delay the creation 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. The I-20 will be attached to the email.

STEP 2 - Review the OPT I-20 and make sure all information on it is accurate. Print and sign this I-20 and make a copy to mail with the OPT application. Keep the original I-20.

STEP 3 – Carefully read the email for important guidelines and reminders.

OPT APPLICATION PROCESS STEP 4
Receiving your OPT recommended I-20

Last Update Jan 2021
STEP 1 – Review your application materials for correctness and completeness. 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:

**On Jan. 8, USCIS adjusted the filing location for certain foreign students filing Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization. Please review the Direct Filing Addresses for Form I-765 page to see where you should file your application.**

STEP 3 – After mailing you should receive the official receipt notice at your mailing address. *If you do not get your receipt*, please view this USCIS webpage: [https://egov.uscis.gov/e-request/displayNDNForm.do](https://egov.uscis.gov/e-request/displayNDNForm.do)

*USCIS is experiencing delays in issuing receipt notices for some applications and petitions filed at a USCIS lockbox facility.*
REJECTED OR DENIED APPLICATIONS

If your application is rejected or denied by USCIS for any reason, please contact our office BEFORE you submit your RFE reply/new application, if time allows. You may need an updated I-20 from our staff.

Please let us know if you wish to have a second review of your application materials.

Email us:

- New Brunswick - isss-students@global.rutgers.edu
- RBHS - isss-rbhs@global.rutgers.edu

Call us:

- New Brunswick – 848-932-7015
- RBHS - 973-972-6138