POST-COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a 12-month period of work authorization given to an F-1 status student who has completed their program of study. OPT is meant to help students to gain practical work experience directly related to their field of study.

An F-1 status student on a period of post-completion OPT is authorized to work in both paid and unpaid positions as well as for multiple employers, self-employment and freelance/contract employment. However, all employment during the initial period of OPT must be in positions that are directly-related to the student’s field of study.

When on a period of OPT, the student must work at least 20 hours per week (total combined employment) or they will accrue days of unemployment. There is a limit of 90 days of unemployment during the initial 12-month period of OPT. A day of unemployment is any day in a week in which the student on OPT does not work 20 hours, including Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays.

The student’s expected completion date determines when they may apply for OPT and what date they may ask for as a starting date of the OPT. The completion date is the date on which all requirements for the degree will have been completed. (It will show on your I-20 as “Program End date”)

There is a 150-day range in which to apply for OPT. The earliest an application can be received by the USCIS is 90 days before a student’s completion date. The latest an application can be received by USCIS is 60 days after a student’s completion date. We recommend applying as early as possible.

The requested starting date may be from the day after a student’s Program End Date up until 60 days after a student’s Program End Date.

While on OPT, students are still attached to the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) at Queens College.
APPLICATION PROCESS FOR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

STEP 1: Complete and Return the Optional Practical Training Request Form to the ISSO

The Optional Practical Training Request Form is a fillable google form that the student who is applying for OPT must complete. The Optional Practical Training Request Form is not submitted to USCIS with the OPT application. It is used by the Office of International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) to update the student’s SEVIS record with the student’s expected completion date and to issue an updated Form I-20 with the new Program End Date and the OPT recommendation dates.

STEP 2: Complete the Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization and submit it to ISSO.

The Form I-765 is the most important part of an application for OPT. An International Student Counselor in the Office of International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) will review your I-765 to ensure its completeness and accuracy.

Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

1. **COMPLETE I-765 FORM** As follows: Check box with “Permission to Accept Employment,” under part 2, Question #27 (c) (3) (B) in the parentheses. (leave #28-30 blank, they are only for STEM and other categories.)
2. PRINT the I-765 form and sign it with a blue ink pen. You may save the form in your PC for later correction(s).
3. APPLY FOR GRADUATION THROUGH CUNYFirst: https://hrsa.cunyfirst.cuny.edu
4. OBTAIN TWO COLOR PHOTOS: Photos must be 2-inch by 2-inch full frontal passport photos, on white background. Photos must be no more than 30 days old, write your name and SEVIS ID# on back of photos.
5. PROVIDE A $410 Fee you may pay by check or money order payable to U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY. On the bottom of check or money order, write I-765 FEE and SEVIS ID# (N00......................).
   You may pay by credit card using Form G-1450
6. EMAIL the I-765 and the OPT disclaimer form
   - I-765 Form- Fillable typed Scanned PDF Format
   - You must complete and submit the google form The Optional Practical Training Request Form
   - You must complete and submit the OPT request disclaimer form

STEP 3: Obtain an updated Form I-20 with an OPT Recommendation.

The Office of International Students’ main role in the OPT application process is to make a recommendation for OPT in the SEVIS system and to issue an updated Form I-20 with the OPT request.
To obtain the recommendation and an updated Form I-20, send an International Student Counselor the completed OPT Request Form and I-765. We will process a new I-20 with the OPT recommendation dates and we will email a copy with electronic signature so you can print it and place it in the OPT package that you will need to mail to USCIS

**STEP 4: Organize and Mail Your Application.**

**OPT APPLICATION CHECKLIST:**

- Submit the following items to the USCIS in your post-completion OPT application:
  - Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization: Eligibility Category (c) (3) (B)
  - The required fee. $410
  - Two color photographs
  - A copy of your updated Form I-20 with the OPT recommendation
  - A copy of your most recent I-94
  - Copies of all previous I-20 forms (pages 1 & 2, one-sided) (pages 1 & 3 old style form)
  - A copy of any previous EADs (I-766)
  - A copy of your passport identification page (should be valid)
  - A Copy of your F-1 Visa
  - Form G-1145 -if paying via credit card

Please Note: Paperclip all documents at the top of all the forms and letters. Photos and check should be clipped to the left-side, front of the I-765.

**STEP 5: Mailing your application**

STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAILING ALL DOCUMENTS TO USCIS WITHIN A WEEK OF RECEIVING THE I-20 FROM ISS

Send the application to either the Dallas Lockbox or the Phoenix Lockbox. If using the U.S. Postal Service, you can send the application to the PO Box address of the lockbox. If using a courier service (FedEx, UPS, DHL, etc.), you must use the street address of the lockbox.

FOLLOW THIS LINK TO THE ADDRESSES OF THE LOCKBOXES
F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)

**NOTE:** Do not write (c)(3)(i) as your category on your application. Use one of the following categories instead:

- (c)(3)(A), Pre-completion OPT
- (c)(3)(B), Post-completion OPT
- (c)(3)(C), 24-month extension for an F-1 student who has received a degree in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) that appears on the STEM designated Degree Program List published on the [SEVP website](https://www.dhs.gov/sevp)

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**Notes:**

- The application cannot be received by the USCIS more than 90 days prior to the completion date. The application cannot be received by the USCIS more than 60 days after the completion date. **The application must be received by the USCIS within 30 days of the date the updated Form I-20 with the recommendation for OPT was issued.**
WHEN YOU RECEIVE THE I-797 APPROVAL NOTICE AND THE EAD CARD

- Keep the copy of the receipt from the post office showing the tracking number for your records.
- If you paid by personal check, monitor your bank account and note the date the check was cleared. This will confirm receipt by USCIS.
- If the G-1145 has been submitted, the student will receive a text or email notification of the receipt of their application.
- The student will receive a paper Receipt Notice within two weeks to one month of submitting the application. The Receipt Notice will give a case number and a Received Date for the application. Follow the instructions to check USCIS website using Receipt Number.
  - Verify that your name and mailing address are correct on the receipt notice.
  - When the status of your case shows online “Approved”, wait for a few days to receive the EAD card.
- USCIS processing time is between 60 and 120 days after the Received Date of the application. Often processing times reach or exceed 90 days, so we recommend applying as early as possible. Please visit the USCIS Processing Times website for the most up-to-date processing times for OPT/STEM applications.
- If you have an OPT/STEM application that has been pending for longer than the normal processing time, please contact ISSO and submit a case inquiry on the USCIS website.
- The ISSO does not recommend traveling between the completion date and the approval of the OPT application.

MAINTAINING YOUR STATUS DURING YOUR OPT- REPORT DIRECTLY TO USCIS

If you have been approved by the USCIS for Optional Practical Training (OPT) do the following:

2. We will issue you a new I-20 with an OPT approval and will email you a copy.
3. Report to Immigration your employment information. Only students who have OPT approved after the start date can use the SEVP Portal. You will receive an error message if you try to log in to report earlier than your start date. To login you must create an account and set a password. You can visit the Portal Help page for more information.

https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/#/login
- Once you have reported your employment, contact us to request an updated copy of your I-20 with your employer information.
- The Department of Homeland Security requires students to report all periods of employment and unemployment while authorized for OPT.

  **SEVIS will calculate the total number of unemployment days. If you exceed the total number of 90 days of unemployment, or if you forget to report your employment/practical training, SEVIS will terminate your F-1 SEVIS record 90 days after your OPT start date.** A terminated SEVIS record cancels OPT authorization and requires you to leave the U.S.

  https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/opt-student-reporting-requirements

  https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2018/10/dsos-prepare-for-sevis-release-641-and-share-these-unemployment-reminders