



International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO)
Email: iss@qc.cuny.edu
Website: www.qc.cuny.edu/isso

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: Prepare the following documents to submit to the ISSO at iss@qc.cuny.edu:

- 1. The opt request Form**
- 2. The Form I-765- Application for Employment Authorization**
- 3. The OPT Disclaimer Form**

1. The opt request Form

[The Optional Practical Training Request Form](#) is a fillable 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.

2. Complete the Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

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](#)

[Detailed instructions for completing the I-765](#) are also available through the USCIS website.

You may follow the [step by step instruction here](#)

STEP 3: Complete and submit the following steps to ISSO at iss@qc.cuny.edu

- o [I-765 Form](#)- Fillable typed Scanned PDF Format or the electronic draft I765 for from the on line application ([You may follow the step by step instruction here](#))
- o Submit the [Optional Practical Training Request Form](#)
- o Submit the [OPT request disclaimer form](#) (Must be hand-signed, NO ELECTRONIC SIGN)
You must apply for graduation through <https://hrsa.cunyfirst.cuny.edu>

STEP 4: 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, submit the OPT Request Form, I-765 and the OPT disclaimer form. 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 submit it with your I-765 on line application.

❖ **Note: Do not submit your on-line application without the I-20 with an OPT recommendation.**

STEP 5: Gather and scan the following information on your PC

- **JPG, JPEG, or PNG of 2 inch by 2-inch passport style photo**
- **PDF of your most [recent I-94](#)**
- **PDF Your passport and visa**
- **PDFs of all previously CPT or OPT endorsed I-20s**
- **PDF of Post-OPT endorsed I-20- This is the OPT-recommended I-20**
- **Fee Payment**

STEP 6: Organize and complete Your On- Line Application.

Review all of the information you have provided so far and then click to submit your I-765 online application.

You may follow the [step by step instruction here](#)

- <https://www.uscis.gov/news/news-releases/f-1-students-seeking-optional-practical-training-can-now-file-form-i-765-online>
- <https://www.uscis.gov/file-online/forms-available-to-file-online>

❖ These directions are meant to help you in completing your application but should not be considered legal advice. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) ultimately provides the decision on your OPT application. It is your responsibility, as the OPT applicant, to ensure that your OPT application is accurate and complete before you submit it to the US government. Incomplete applications could result in a delay in processing time or denial. QC in no event shall be held liable for any delay, denial, or mistake on your OPT application.

**AFTER SUBMITTING THE I-765 ON-LINE-
WHILE THE OPT APPLICATION IS PENDING**

- If you are applying for Post-Completion OPT, once you get your receipt notice, check your case status with your receipt number at www.uscis.gov.
- Your approval notice and EAD (OPT card) should arrive within 90-120 days.
- 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.

WHEN YOU RECEIVE THE I-797 APPROVAL NOTICE AND THE EAD CARD

- Make a copy of the Approval Notice and EAD (front and back) for your records.
- Make a copy of your EAD and write your CUNY ID # somewhere on the page. Scan and email to iss@qc.cuny.edu with a note indicating you applied for OPT and have received your EAD.

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:

1. Submit, to the Int’l Students & Scholars Office, a copy of the OPT Employment Authorization Card (EAD).
2. 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.
3. Keep your EAD in a safe place.
4. Read FAQ information [on this page](#)

- 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.

Check frequently the websites below to learn more about maintaining your F-1 status while on Post-completion OPT and the reporting employment requirements:

[more information about OPT.](#)

[reporting requirements.](#)