

OPT Application Instructions & Information



Next Steps

1. Create an online account with United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS)
2. File a form online using the I-765 Application for Employment Authorization
3. Apply for category (c)(3)(B) for Student Post-Completion OPT

Your complete OPT application must be submitted to USCIS no later than 30 days after receiving your OPT I-20 from the Center for International Programs. If USCIS receives your application after this date, your application will be denied with no option for appeal.

Application Checklist

Make sure your application is complete before submitting it to USCIS.

- ☐ Completed Form I-765
- ☐ Digital copy of new I-20 with OPT start and end dates
- ☐ Digital copies of SMC I-20s with CPT authorization (if any)
- ☐ Digital copy of biographical page of passport
- ☐ Digital copy of I-94
- ☐ Digital U.S. passport-sized photo
- ☐ Credit or debit card for the \$470 USD application fee
- ☐ Digital copy of previous EAD card & all supporting documentation (if any)
- ☐ Digital copy of Change of Status approval notice (if any)

Helpful Links

- USCIS: <https://www.uscis.gov/>
- I-94: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>
- SEVP Portal: <https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/#/login>

Reminders

- Review your application and responses thoroughly before submitting
- Keep a digital copy of your complete OPT application for your records
- Be sure to sign all of your I-20s – no electronic signatures
- Cannot change your OPT start and end dates after the application is submitted
- From the time you start an application, you have one month to complete and submit it
- Check the status of your application by logging into your USCIS account
- Send a copy of your EAD card and I-797 approval notice to the Center for International Programs

Photo Requirement

USCIS requires all Post-Completion Optional Practical Training applicants to appear at an Application Support Center to have their photo taken. USCIS will send you the date, time, and location of your appointment. Your appointment information will be available on your MyUSCIS portal, and you can reschedule this appointment twice using the portal. USCIS will not process your application until your photo has been taken at an Application Support Center.

Traveling Internationally Before OPT

It is highly recommended that you DO NOT travel internationally after the Program End Date listed on your I-20 if you have not received your EAD card. Once you have your EAD card, you can travel internationally. Be sure to get an updated I-20 when your OPT is approved and each time you report changes in employment. Remember that travel signatures are only valid for 6 months while on OPT.

The SEVP Portal

Once approved for Post-Completion OPT, you will receive an email notification on or after your OPT start date with a link to access the Student & Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Portal where you can update your local and international address, phone number, and employment information. It is your responsibility to create an account as well as monitor and update any changes to your contact information and/or employment information. It is recommended that you bookmark the link to the Portal.

Employment Reporting & Updating Your Information

It is your responsibility to comply with all immigration regulations that apply to you as an F-1 visa holder, which includes your time on Post-Completion OPT. The Center for International Programs will advise you on these regulations. Here are some important responsibilities that you agree to be subject to by applying for OPT:

1. Understanding the responsibilities of maintaining F-1 status while on OPT and understanding your responsibility to report certain information to Saint Mary's College or the SEVP Portal while on OPT
2. Reporting any changes to any or all of the following details to Saint Mary's College or the SEVP Portal within 10 days of the change:
 - Legal name changes
 - Change in permanent or local address, phone number and email address
 - Change in employment
 - Includes new employment, unemployment and employer changes
 - Change in immigration status
 - Includes the filing of an H-1B petition, an application for adjustment of status or any other change in your immigration status
 - Early departure from the United States
 - If you decide to not use OPT or to leave the U.S. before the end of your OPT with no intention of returning as an F-1 student
3. Understanding that during OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment, and that you will be considered out of status if you accrue a total of more than 90 days of unemployment, and will need to leave the U.S. immediately.

H-1B Applications and Cap-Gap Extensions

- If your employer decides to sponsor you for an H-1B visa, you may be eligible for a Cap-Gap Extension.
- A Cap-Gap Extension extends OPT work authorization and F-1 status for any student who is selected in the H-1B lottery to October 01. To be eligible for a Cap-Gap Extension, your OPT has to start on or after April 2.
- In many cases, your employer will want an updated I-20 documenting the Cap-Gap benefit. Please contact the Center for International Programs for information on how to get a Cap-Gap I-20.

Contact Information

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USCIS
1-800-375-5283
www.uscis.gov
Click "Check Case Status" to track the status of your application