HOW TO APPLY FOR OPT

The application form: Form I-765 (online at www.uscis.gov/forms). You can complete the form on-line then print it.

Instructions are pretty simple, but the following information may be helpful:

- Click permission to accept employment at the top of the form
- The address you enter in #3 is the address where USCIS will mail your card, so if you are planning to move anytime soon, list the address of someone who you trust to forward you the card. USCIS mail is NOT forwarded to new addresses you may have listed with the post office.
- Question #11 is likely “no”, as they only mean the type of authorization that you apply to a USCIS service center for. However, if you did apply for OPT previously based on a previous degree, you should answer “yes” and complete the remainder of that section.
- The code in section #16 is “C 3 B” for post-completion practical training.
- Unless you are in a STEM degree, leave section 17 blank.

Do NOT file your application online. You can fill the application and then print it out. All supporting materials and the fee must be mailed with the application.

Preparing the materials to accompany the application:

- Prepare copies of supporting documentation, including:
  - Photocopy of all I-20s.
  - Copy of passport photo page and F-1 visa page (or Notice of Action of change of status to F-1 visa)
  - Copy of any previously issued EAD (employment authorization documents)
  - OPTIONAL, but recommended: recent transcript of courses taken and currently enrolled for
- Obtain 2 passport style photos (available at CVS on Main Street, or PFS in Christiansburg)
- A check for $380 made payable to DHS or Department of Homeland Security
- Schedule an appointment with the IEC/International Student Advisor
- Determine what date you want your work authorization to begin. It can be as early as the day after your completion of studies (last day of exams), or as late as 60 days after completion of studies. Provide your preferred start date to the International Student Advisor.
- The International Student Advisor will issue a new I-20 in SEVIS indicating recommendation for OPT. Student and advisor must sign the new I-20 and make a copy to include with the application.
Mailing the Application

The IEC suggests putting your OPT application packet together in this order, with the check on the very top in the upper left hand corner, followed by the photos in a protective envelope with your name noted on the envelope, and then the I-765 form and remaining documents. STAPLE the application packet together, but be careful not to damage the photos.

Here’s the order of the package:

- Check for $380 made payable to DHS, or Department of Homeland Security.
- Photos, in protective envelope
- The I-765 application form
- The new I-20 issued in SEVIS with recommendation for OPT, and start/end date requested.
- All previous I-20s issued from any school in the U.S., pages 1 & 2, in reverse chronological order
- Copy of I-94
- Copy of Passport photo page
- Copy of visa
- Copy of any previously issued Employment Authorization Documents (EAD card)

All of the items are then mailed to a lockbox in Texas, where they will process the check and forward the application to one of the USCIS service centers. You’ll get a paper receipt in the mail with a tracking number in a few weeks. If you do not receive this paper within a month, please notify the IEC.

**IMPORTANT!** Be absolutely sure that your application arrives to the lockbox address no more than 30 days after your OPT I-20 is issued in SEVIS, or your request WILL be DENIED. It is recommended that you keep a copy of your application and that the IEC retain a copy.

FOR EXPRESS MAIL & COURIER

FOR U.S. POSTAL SERVICE 

USCIS
P.O. BOX 660867
DALLAS, TX  75266

FOR EXPRESS (UPS, FED-X)

USCIS
2501 S. STATE HWY. 121 BUSINESS SUITE 400
LEWISVILLE, TX  75067

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