

OPT – OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Guidelines for Eligibility, Approval Process and Work



Eligibility Requirements

- You must be enrolled for one full academic year (three consecutive quarters) in the U.S.
- You must be pursuing a transfer degree, AAS, or Short Term Certificate program. If you are studying Prerequisites or for one of the majors in the Liberal Arts field, you are not eligible to apply for OPT. Ask your advisor if you're not sure.
- You can apply up to 90 days before you complete your study program and up to 60 days after your program end date (end date = final day of your last quarter).
- Have you been out of status any time during the past 3 quarters? You might not be eligible yet; check with an advisor.

Steps to Apply for OPT (*keep this page for reference!*)

It will take a short time to hear from an advisor and prepare your application but it may take 3 – 4 months for your OPT application to be approved after you've sent it to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Be sure to plan ahead!

1. Submit Request for OPT to IEP Office

- We recommend that you submit the OPT request form near the end of the quarter before your final quarter, then schedule your appointment before mid-terms of your final quarter.
- Complete all information in the *Student Section* of the OPT request form (attached) and submit it to the IEP Office reception desk. It will then be given to an advisor for review

2. Watch Email / Schedule Appointment: Watch for a message confirming OPT eligibility. Please allow up to one week to process your request. If approved, schedule an OPT appointment with the advisor but be sure to allow enough time for YOU to prepare all the materials needed!

3. Application materials: prepare all the materials listed on the back. You should have all documents ready by the time you have your OPT appointment with an advisor, so don't schedule your appointment too quickly.

4. OPT Appointment / New I-20: An advisor will review the application with you, and print a new I-20 with the OPT endorsement listed on page 2. Do not send your application without the new I-20!

5. Make copies of everything before mailing, to keep for your record. We've had cases where students need to re-send something or mail gets lost. It's important for you to have copies because we will not provide them for you later.

6. Send your application by certified mail to the address listed on back, within two weeks. If it is not received by USCIS within 30 days of the date your new I-20 was issued, it will not be accepted.

7. Notice of Action / EAD card: When you receive any mail from USCIS (request for more information and/or the Employment Authorization Document (EAD card), bring it to the IEP Office to make a copy for your file.

8. If you move: If you change your address after mailing your OPT application, be sure to notify USCIS so that you can receive Notices and your EAD at the new address. Go to <http://www.uscis.gov/ar-11> to update your address online. Don't forget update your address via the Seattle Central website within 10 days of your move (to update your SEVIS record), as well as the U.S. Postal Service.

9. If you do not finish your program (fail classes, drop a class, etc.): If you do not complete your program after you have already applied for OPT, notify your advisor right away! It may be possible to cancel your OPT, take the necessary class(es) and re-apply for OPT later. If you do not communicate with your advisor, your OPT may be cancelled and you may fall out of status.

IMPORTANT: You may not begin working in an OPT job until after you have received your EAD card!

>> Your checklist of things to prepare is on page 2 (back), together with other information

Materials to prepare before you meet with your advisor are listed below.

NOTE: If you do not have all materials ready before the appointment, please reschedule your appointment to the following week.

- Completed Form I-765/** Application for Employment Authorization. Go to this website www.uscis.gov >> Click on "Forms" in upper left side >> in the "Search For" box, type in "I-765" then when results show up below the box, click on the link "I-765" >> Next, click on the words "Form I-765." This will open a PDF document that you can type in from your computer then print when you're finished.
 - Type your information directly in the PDF and print it when you've finished answering all the questions
 - Do not type in the first block (large rectangle at top). Start with "I am applying for..."
 - **For question #16**, write in this code: "(c) (3) (B)" for F-1 students requesting FULL-TIME OPT
 - When you sign ("Certification"), **make sure your signature fits within the box!** Your signature will be scanned and put on your EAD card. You may need to use very small handwriting.
- Form G-1145:** Print and fill out Form G-1145 e-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance (also from www.uscis.gov website). This form enables USCIS to send you an email and/or text message to confirm your application is received and provide you with a receipt number so you can get updated case status information.
- \$410 application fee.** Check or money order payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security". Must be from a U.S. institution. Write your SEVIS ID on the top of your check. The check amount must be exactly \$410. If you have to pay a fee to the bank, make sure the fee is paid separately and is not subtracted from the \$410. Further details about payment are available online: <http://www.uscis.gov/forms/paying-immigration-fees>
- Two color passport photos:** 2" x 2" square; white background only; face fully forward. Lightly print your full name, SEVIS ID, and Admissions number (from your I-94) on the back of each photo.
- A **copy of your passport's** photo page. Passport must be valid for at least another 6 months.
- A **copy of F-1 visa** page (if you changed status while in the US, bring the copy of your original visa also)
- Copy of I-94** card (in passport) or electronic I-94 (printed from online here: <http://www.cbp.gov/I94>)
- Copies of pages 1 and 2 of all previous Seattle Central I-20s.** If needed (to show three quarters of enrollment for OPT eligibility) also include copy of I-20 from previous school(s).
- If you have previously been issued an EAD, include a copy of both front and back of the card.
- If you applied for a change of status from J-1 to F-1, include a copy of your USCIS Notice of Action, DS-2019, and I-94. OR, a copy of your Notice of Action, visa, and I-94 if you applied for a change of status from other visa categories.

After your appointment, send your application packet to the address listed below.

- Send by **certified mail** (from a US post office, you will need to request it) so that it can be tracked
- Must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the date your OPT I-20 was issued
- Don't forget to make your own copies to keep; we will not give you back copies from the school file

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries, including certified mail option:

USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For overnight or courier deliveries (non-USPS):

USCIS
ATTN: AOS
1820 E Skyharbor Circle S, Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034

You will receive an **OPT Reminders** sheet from your advisor during the appointment. Keep this paper and refer to it for instructions and important notes about what you need to do later, after your application has been mailed.

