



International Student & Scholar Services

ILLINOIS INTERNATIONAL

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

OPT allows **F-1** students to work up to 12 months after completion of studies. All employment must directly relate to field of study and correspond with education level. **No job offer is needed to apply.** F-1 students are encouraged to attend an OPT workshop for more information. The ISSS website lists the OPT workshop schedule each semester.

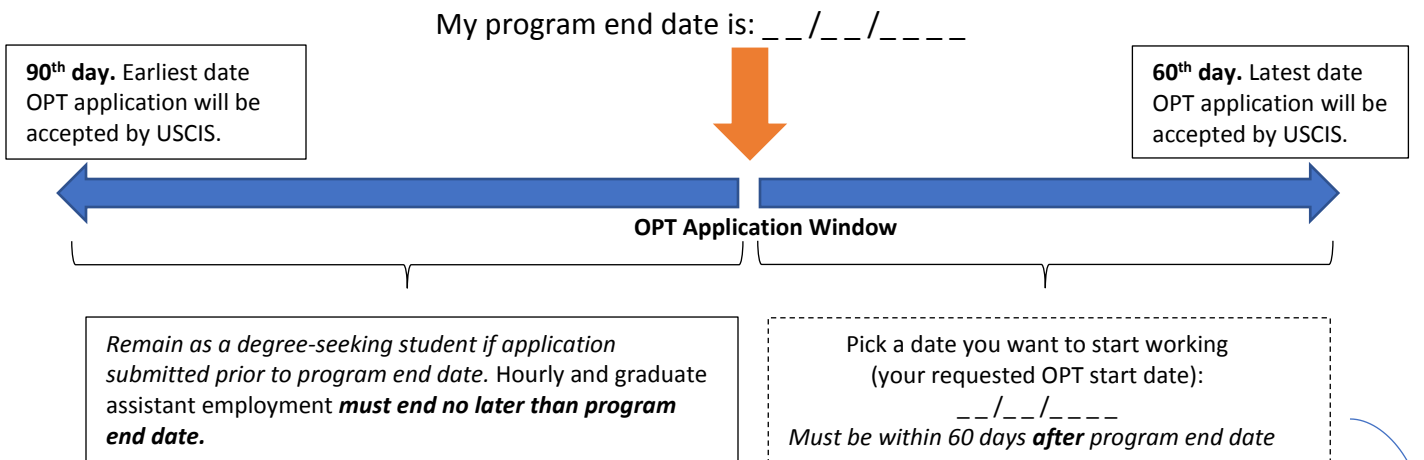
Eligibility Check:

- ✓ Students must have finished their coursework/degree requirements.
- ✓ Studied for at least TWO semesters prior to OPT request (can include current semester).
- ✓ You must be in a valid F-1 status with a valid passport (your passport **MUST** always be valid while you are in the U.S).
- ✓ Complied with previous CPT registration requirements (if applicable).
- ✓ Graduate students may apply for OPT after finishing all coursework.

OPT Application Window:

As early as **90 days before program end date** and no later than **60 days after program end date**. *If you are unsure of what your program end date should be, please contact ISSS after attending an OPT workshop.*

You **MUST** apply from within the U.S. You will forfeit the option of applying for OPT if you leave the U.S after your program end date without applying. In addition, you must send your OPT application to USCIS within 30 days of the OPT I-20 issue date.



Request OPT I-20 via iSTART system: (<https://sunapsis.illinois.edu>)

Under “F-1 Student Services” complete “**Optional Practical Training Request**” e-form. ISSS SEVIS Management Fee must be submitted with e-form. ISSS requires five business days to process new I-20.

“**Desired OPT Start Date**”: Select a date within **1 - 60 days AFTER** your program end date.

Thesis-track graduate students: select a program end date up to and including the final day of last registered semester. If you will hold an assistantship or tuition waiver, please consult the Graduate College policy **BEFORE** shortening your program. **NO** student employment is allowed after your program end date.

ISSS cannot process your OPT I-20 until your department has approved this request. Please select the correct e-form approver or check with your department to confirm.

You will receive an email when your I-20 is ready for pick up at the ISSS Front Desk. Document processing time is five business days after department approval.

NOTE: Your requested OPT period will be reflected on page two of your OPT I-20. Please check your OPT I-20 for accuracy **BEFORE** mailing your OPT application to USCIS. **Your requested dates cannot be changed once your OPT application has been mailed to USCIS.** Make photocopies or take pictures of all documents you send to USCIS to keep for your records.

Application materials to mail to USCIS:

- ✓ Personal check, money order OR credit card payment with use of form G-1450 for **\$410.00**, payable to the **“U.S Department of Homeland Security”**.
- ✓ Two identical immigration-style photos taken within 30 days of filing Form I-765. Photos must have white to off-white background, be printed on thin paper with a glossy finish, and be unmounted and unretouched. Lightly print your NAME and SEVIS ID on the back of the photos. Place photos in a clear Ziploc-type bag. For more photo guidelines, visit the U.S State department website. ISSS recommends photos be taken professionally/locally to comply with photo regulations.
- ✓ Photocopy of pages 1 & 2 of your new OPT I-20. Make sure you have signed your I-20!
If applicable, you must also include:
 - All previously used SEVIS numbers;
 - Evidence of any previously authorized CPT or OPT and the academic level at which it was authorized.
- ✓ Form I-765 (See guidelines on attached sheet).
- ✓ Print most recent I-94 from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>. If you have an I-94 card, photocopy the front/back of your I-94 card.
- ✓ Photocopy of passport identity **AND** most recent F-1 entry visa page (clearly displaying facial features).

* **Optional G-1145 form:** include to receive e-mail/text message updates about your case (available on uscis.gov).

USCIS Mailing Address:

For U.S Postal Service (USPS):

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Chicago Lockbox
P.O. Box 805373
Chicago, IL 60680

For FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Attn:
I-765 C03
131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor (Box 805373)
Chicago, IL 60603-5517

For USPS: use **“Certified Mail with a Return Receipt”** to confirm application has been delivered.

NOTE: Refer to The USCIS Direct Filing Addresses for Form I-765 page to confirm Lockbox mailing information for your application before sending.

Your Notice of Action (I-797) will be mailed to you by USCIS 2-4 weeks after your application is received. The receipt number listed can be used to check your case status on www.uscis.gov. **Keep your Notice of Action for your records.**

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON MAINTAINING YOUR F-1 STATUS

- Do **NOT** work on OPT until you **receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) AND the “valid from” date on the card has arrived.**
- You may not exceed a **TOTAL of 90 days** unemployment time while on your 12 month OPT (counted from EAD start date).
- You **MUST report all OPT employment** via the iSTART system within 10 days of employment. SEVIS may **TERMINATE** your F-1 record for failure to report or exceeding 90 days of unemployment time.
- If you have additional questions about maintaining your F-1 status while on OPT, please contact ISSS.

How to Report Employment on OPT:

Report to a Designated School Official (DSO) through the iSTART system:

- Submit **‘OPT: Employer Information Update’** e-form **within 10 days** of employment (including reporting unemployment). Available only after your OPT start date. You will receive a new I-20 with employer information listed.
- Send a scanned copy of your EAD card to iss@illinois.edu or upload to your Employer Information Update e-form.
- Submit address updates whenever you move within the U.S. Update UI-Integrate with your non-UIUC e-mail address.

Report employment and U.S address through the **SEVP Portal:**

- Information on creating a SEVP Portal account will be emailed to you by dhs.gov. Use of the SEVP Portal is optional, but recommended.

Other Important Information:

- ❖ Do not withdraw final semester registration after you apply/receive OPT or your F-1 record will be terminated.
- ❖ Students with a program end date in August are limited to a 50% assistantship, and must register for a full course load or have an approved reduced course load.
- ❖ Check with ISSS prior to international travel on OPT. Travel endorsements only stay valid for **SIX months**. Remember, document processing time is FIVE business days.
- ❖ Application processing time is **approx. 90 – 100 days**. There is no formal expedite service, so please plan ahead!

Please note: This packet was updated on 10/17/2019 and is subject to change based on federal regulations.

Instructions provided are for reference only, since this is a personal application. Complete the latest Form I-765 version. These instructions are specific to the POST-completion OPT application (initial 12 months).

What you will need to complete Form I-765:

- Valid passport
- Most recent I-20 document
- Social Security number (if applicable)
- I-94 (retrieve online through CBP website OR use paper I-94 card in passport)

Part 1. Reason for Applying

Select 'initial permission to accept employment'.

Part 2. Information About You

- Provide basic biographical information about yourself.
- Note: If using a friend or relative's mailing address, complete Question #5.a (In Care of Name).
 - *Question #14* – if you currently **do NOT** have a social security number, you can authorize USCIS to share your information with the Social Security Administration. You must complete **Question 15 – 17** to complete the authorization. Complete only if you currently **do NOT** have a social security number and wish to apply for one with your OPT application.
 - *Question #26* – provide your CURRENT SEVIS number, listed at the top of your I-20 document.
 - *Question #27* – **(C)(3)(B)** is the eligibility category for POST-completion OPT. You are NOT required to complete Question 28 at this time.

Part 3. Applicant's Statement, Contact Information, Declaration, Certification, and Signature

- You must select the appropriate 'Applicant's Statement' and provide your contact information.
- Read carefully the *Applicant's Declaration and Certification* section BEFORE signing your Form I-765.
- **Don't forget to sign within the 'Applicant's Signature' box.** Signature should not touch or go beyond the lines of the space provided.

Part 4. Interpreter's Contact Information, Certification, and Signature

In general, **Part 4** does not apply to students applying for OPT as students do not generally have an interpreter assisting with the application.

Part 5. Contact Information, Declaration, and Signature of the Person Preparing this Application, If Other Than the Applicant

In general, **Part 5** does not apply to students applying for OPT as students do not generally have an interpreter assisting with the application.

Part 6. Additional Information

Complete if you have ever had a previous SEVIS number, previous OPT and/or previous CPT authorization.

- This section can be used to provide information on previously used SEVIS numbers and to indicate attached files such as previous EAD, approval notice and I-20s.
 - Example of how to indicate previous work authorization using Part 6:
 - **Page 3. Section 2. Number 27.**

List previously used SEVIS numbers (if applicable) and indicate *“previous CPT/OPT authorization documents attached.”*

Additional Tips:

- Put ‘N/A’ if a question does not apply to you.
- Read through each section carefully and double check your answers prior to mailing your OPT application.
- The [I-765 instructions](#) provided on the USCIS website, particularly page 15 – 19 can also be used to assist in completing your I-765 form.
- You must complete and submit ALL 7 pages of the I-765 with your OPT application.
- Complete the entire form in BLACK ink. Sign your Form I-765 using black ink.
- You may also include the optional form **G-1145 e-Notification of Application** to receive a confirmation that your application has been received by USCIS. Note: this is NOT your official receipt notice.
- The I-765 must be properly and timely filed with USCIS. The student must file an OPT application (I-765, signed I-20, and fee) within *30 days of the DSO’s OPT recommendation in SEVIS*, and within other OPT filing deadlines.

Acronyms You Should Know:

OPT - Optional Practical Training

USCIS – United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

NOA – Notice of Action

EAD – Employment Authorization Document

DSO – Designated School Official