OPT APPLICATION PROCEDURES

These are the items that you will need to send to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services:


2. **2 passport size photos**, taken within 30 days of filing your application. The photos must have a white to off-white background, be printed on thin paper with a glossy finish, unmounted and unretouched.

   The passport style photos must be 2 inches by 2 inches. They must be in color with full face, frontal view. Head height should measure 1 inch to 1 3/8 inches from top to bottom of chin, and eye height is between 1 1/8 inches to 1 3/8 inches from bottom of photo. Your head must be bare unless you are wearing a headdress as required by a religious order of which you are a member. Using pencil or felt pen, lightly print your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo.


3. **$410 check or money order** made payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Do not abbreviate. Payment by credit or debit card is also possible, but not recommended for data security purposes. If you choose to pay by credit or debit card, you must prepare form G-1450, available at [https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450](https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450), and include it on top of your application documents for mailing.

4. **Copies of your passport and visa.**

5. **A printout of your electronic I-94, available at [https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home) or copies of the front and back of your I-94 card if you entered the U.S. prior to implementation of the electronic I-94 system in mid-2013.**

   Once you have prepared items 1 through 5 above, **please schedule an appointment at least 1 day in advance to meet with a DSO in the Office of International Engagement.** Item 6 will be issued during this appointment and your application will be checked for any errors and any questions will be answered.

6. **A copy of your new I-20 form with OPT endorsement on page 2.**

   **Important! Please Read Below**

   - Use your current address on the Form I-765, even if you might be moving before the application is approved. **If you change your address at any time during OPT, you must inform the Immigration & Advising Coordinator right away.** You must also report the name of your employer and the address of employment. This is required by the Dept. of Homeland Security and it could cause problems for you if you do not report this information in a timely manner.

   - The correct code for OPT must be entered for Part 2, item number 27 on the Form I-765. The correct code is **(c)(3)(B) for Post-completion Optional Practical Training.** (In less common situations (c)(3)(A) is used for Pre-completion Optional Practical Training when a student seeks part-time OPT or summer OPT before returning for fall classes.) Items 28-31 on the I-765 form should be left blank.

   - Do not start working before you receive your Employment Authorization card and before the starting date indicated on the card. *(Turn this sheet over →)*
• You should apply for OPT about three months before your intended start date. If it is received more than 90 days in advance, it will be rejected. Processing times may change, so you can always check processing times available at https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do.

Mailing Instructions

You must mail your I-765 OPT application to the following address:

**USCIS**  
**PO Box 805373**  
**Chicago, IL  60680**

We recommend that you use a level of service that will provide you with a tracking number so that you will know that this important application has been received by USCIS. The U.S. Postal Service provides a flat-rate priority mail envelope that works very well for OPT applications. More information is available at https://www.usps.com/ship/priority-mail.htm. There is a Postal service center in the rear of the upper floor of the UNI Bookstore at 1009 W. 23rd St. in Cedar Falls where you can send priority and other kinds of U.S. mail.

If you wish to use a private courier (non-United States Postal Service; like FedEx or UPS) for delivery, you must use the following address:

**USCIS**  
**Attn:  I-765 C03**  
**131 South Dearborn – 3rd Floor**  
**Chicago, IL  60603-5517**
1. **What is OPT?** – It is a one-year period of time for F-1 students to work off-campus in the US in a field related to their area of studies/major. For example: Computer Science/Management Information Systems graduates should be employed in an information technology area.

2. **How long is OPT?** – A maximum of 12 months unless your major area of study is in a specific Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) field. For these majors, a total of 36 months of OPT is possible under certain conditions. The initial 12 month period is authorized, then a 24 month extension is possible based upon continued employment. Please contact the Office of International Engagement for more information.

3. **When does it start?** – The starting date depends on you, the student. You will need to determine when you will be finished with your program in order to determine the starting date. You may wish to discuss this with a DSO.

4. **How long does the application take?** – approximately 90 days.

5. **Can I work before approval is granted?** – You cannot start working before your application is approved and you have received your Employment Authorization Document (EAD for short, also called an employment card).

6. **Can I start searching for a job before the approval is granted?** – YES!

7. **Where can I work?** – Anywhere in the US. You must keep the ISSO informed of your residential address whenever it changes. Once employment is found, you must notify the Immigration & Advising Coordinator of your employer’s name and address, and any time your employment ends or changes.

8. **Can I leave the US for a visit home while waiting for approval?** – Yes! The Department of Homeland Security has indicated that you may reenter to search for employment while your OPT application is pending. Please consult with the Immigration & Advising Coordinator before traveling.

9. **What status do I hold with an OPT?** – Your status will still be F-1 student status while you are authorized for OPT. This means that before you leave the US, a Designated School Official at UNI must still endorse page 3 of your I-20 for travel. An unexpired I-20 (section 5 ending date) is not necessary because the OPT endorsement on the third page of your I-20 is proof that you are on OPT. Carry your OPT card with you when you travel abroad.

10. **Can I do more than one OPT?** – Yes! 12 months of OPT are available per each academic level from baccalaureate through doctoral. Only one year is allowed per each level. You cannot “save” 12 months of OPT from a bachelor’s degree and ask for 24 months following a subsequent master’s degree.

11. **Can I be a full-time student while on OPT?** – NO! You cannot be enrolled as a full-time student while on OPT. The OPT will not be valid if you transfer to another school or change degree levels. This means that you cannot be a full-time student while working full-time with your OPT. However, you can be a part-time student. Be sure to consult with your immigration advisor before taking any classes while on OPT.
Optional Practical Training (OPT)
Important Points to Remember After You Apply

- You remain in F-1 immigration status during your authorized OPT period. This means that you are eligible to apply for a new F-1 entry visa if your most recent F-1 visa has expired and you choose to leave the U.S. and you plan to return to resume employment after a visit home or a business trip.

- There is a limit of 90 days of unemployment during your authorized OPT period. If you reach 90 days without employment, your OPT is automatically over and you will need to leave the U.S., enroll as a full-time student again, or consult with the Immigration & Advising Coordinator or an immigration attorney to discuss any other options that might be available to you.

- To report employment, please use the SEVP portal account that will be created for you upon approval of your OPT application by USCIS. Watch for an automated e-mail message from SEVP about this. You will be able to input the name and business address of your employer, your employment start date, and a brief statement that explains how the employment is related to your program of study at UNI. Please contact the Office of International Engagement if you do not receive any messages from SEVP about your portal account after your card has arrived. Please be sure to check your junk mail folder also.

- Approximately two weeks after your OPT application is received, you will receive a printed receipt in the mail. Please keep this receipt because it contains your unique case number/ID that can be used to check your case status at https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do. This case number/ID can also be used by school officials in the very unlikely event of a problem with your case.

- More information about OPT, OPT STEM Extensions, and many other topics can be found at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s “Study in the States” web site at https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/training-opportunities-in-the-united-states