

## OCCUPATIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

### What is OPT?

Occupational Practical Training (OPT) is a work benefit granted to international students in F-1 immigration status who are enrolled in, or completing a degree program in the U.S. This employment can be used pre-completion of studies, over the annual vacation leave term, or post-completion of studies, after the student finishes the degree.

### When should I apply?

**Apply early!** Allow **three months for processing** by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), plus additional time for obtaining your academic advisor's signature on the OPT Request Form, for the PDSO to process your new Form I-20 (2-3 working days), and mailing to USCIS. You cannot begin work until you receive OPT approval. This is granted in the form of your EAD card (Employment Authorization Document).

You may submit your application to USCIS as early as 90 days before your program end date and up to 60 days after your **program end date**.

The PDSO strongly encourages you to apply for OPT three months prior to your program end date. Though USCIS will accept your application up to 60 days after your program end date, you cannot begin work until the application is approved. A delayed application may result in delayed work authorization and/or loss of full OPT eligibility (12 months) due to the three-month processing time by USCIS.

### How do I apply?

**Step 1:** Complete your OPT application. *(See below for details.)*

**Step 2:** Have your application materials reviewed by the PDSO. *(See below for details.)*

**Step 3:** Pick up OPT application materials from the PDSO and mail to USCIS. *(See below for details.)*

## Step 1: Completing your OPT application

- Completed "[Optional Practical Training Request Form](#)" signed by your *academic* adviser before you submit it to the PDSO;
- Complete I-765 Form, included with this packet, or downloadable at <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=73ddd59cb7a5d010VgnVCM10000048f3d6a1RCRD&vgnnextchannel=db029c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD>. At this site, you'll see links to the Form I-765, downloadable instructions for the form, and the Form G-1145 for email notification of the application's acceptance. In printing out the Form I-765, be sure that the bar code at the bottom of the form is visible.
- Photocopy of all past and present I-20s
- Photocopy of passport identification page
- Photocopy of F-1 visa page
- Two passport-style photos (see specifications below); do not cut the photos!
- Print-out of your latest I-94 record (from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/request.html>)
- Photocopy of previously issued EAD (if applicable);
- Fee payment of US \$410 payable by bank draft, personal check, cashier's check, certified check, or money order to "[U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#)" (spelled out like that). In the memo line, note "[I-765 application fee](#)"; **attach the check to the front of the I-765.**
- Completed [G-1145 Form](#) (optional but recommended -- it signs you up for email/text message notification of your application's arrival at USCIS), downloadable at the main site noted above.

### Tips for completing your application:

Choosing an OPT start date:

- The "start date" is the date your work permission begins. You cannot work earlier than the start date, but you can start working later.
- Your requested start date must be within 60 days after your program completion date. For example, if you graduate or complete your exchange program June 11, your start date can be no later than August 10.
- Changing the requested OPT dates after the application has been mailed to USCIS can be very difficult. Choose your dates carefully.

Photo specifications (U.S. Dept. of State guidelines):

- The photos must have been taken within the last 30 days (do not use the same photos used for your F-1 visa application; USCIS might notice and will return the application).
- The two photos should have a white background.
- They should be unmounted, printed on thin paper, glossy, and not re-touched.
- The photos should show a passport-style, full-face image, with both ears visible. The photos should be 2 by 2 inches

## TIPS FOR COMPLETING I-765 FORM

### Part 1: Reason for Applying

**Item 1:** Check the box "Initial permission to accept employment." If you lost your EAD and are applying for a new card, select "replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document NOT DUE to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) error." If you are applying for STEM OPT, select "initial permission to accept employment."

#### Part 1. Reason for Applying

I am applying for (select only one box):

- 1.a.  Initial permission to accept employment.
- 1.b.  Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document, or correction of my employment authorization document **NOT DUE** to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) error.

**NOTE:** Replacement (correction) of an employment authorization document due to USCIS error does not require a new Form I-765 and filing fee. Refer to **Replacement for Card Error** in the **What is the Filing Fee** section of the Form I-765 Instructions for further details.

- 1.c.  Renewal of my permission to accept employment. (Attach a copy of your previous employment authorization document.)

### Part 2: Information About You

**Item 1:** Enter your family name first. Enter your first name second. Include your middle name if you have one. This name should match what is indicated on your passport.

#### Your Full Legal Name

- 1.a. Family Name (Last Name)
- 1.b. Given Name (First Name)
- 1.c. Middle Name

#### Items 2-4:

Provide all other names you have ever used, including aliases, maiden name, and nicknames. Write "N/A" on all boxes if you haven't used another name.

#### Item 5:

Enter your mailing address. This must be a US address and it should be valid until your OPT application is approved. If you believe you will change addresses within the next three months we recommend you instead list the address of a trusted friend or family member. If you choose to enter your friend's or family member's address, you must also include an "in care of" name for item 5.a. You

#### Your U.S. Mailing Address

- 5.a. In Care Of Name (if any)
- 5.b. Street Number and Name
- 5.c.  Apt.  Ste.  Flr.
- 5.d. City or Town
- 5.e. State  5.f. ZIP Code

[\(USPS ZIP Code Lookup\)](#)

may list a US Post Office address (PO Box) if you have one.

**Item 12:**

Select "Yes" if you have previously applied for OPT or ever submitted the I-765 for work authorization to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services. Select "No" if you have only ever worked on campus or been authorized for CPT, or if you have not previously worked.

If you select "Yes," you will also need to list each time you previously filed the Form I-765 in Part 6, page 7 of this Form I-765.

12. Have you previously filed Form I-765?

Yes  No

**Item 13a:**

If you have ever received a Social Security card previously you must check "Yes", if not, check "No".

**Item 13b:**

Only answer this question if you have a Social Security Number and checked "Yes" for item 13a.

**Items 16-17:**

Only answer these questions if you do not have a Social Security card and checked "Yes" for items 14-15. By answering these questions you would be applying for a Social Security card with your Social Security number printed on it. Your SSN will be issued, and you will receive an SSN card within 2-4 weeks of your OPT application approval. You will not need to submit a separate application for an SSN to the Social Security Administration.

**Item 18:**

Type or print the name of the country or countries where you are currently a citizen or national. If you are a citizen or national of more than one country, type or print the name of the foreign country that issued your last passport. If you are a citizen of one country, item 18.b. should indicate "N/A".

18.a. Country

Republic of Korea

18.b. Country

N/A

**Item 21a:**

Enter your I-94 number.

**21.a. Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record Number (if any)**

▶ 

6	0	0	3	9	4	6	1	2	1	1
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**Most Recent I-94**

Admission (I-94) Record Number : ██████████  
Most Recent Date of Entry: 2018 January 16  
Class of Admission : F1  
Admit Until Date : D/S  
Details provided on the I-94 information form:

Last/Surname : ██████████  
First (Given) Name : Federico  
Birth Date : ██████████  
Passport Number : ██████████  
Country of Issuance : Italy

[Get Travel History](#)

▶ Effective April 26, 2013, DHS began automating the admission process. An alien lawfully admitted or paroled into the U.S. is no longer required to be in possession of a preprinted Form I-94. A record of admission printed from the CBP website constitutes a lawful record of admission. See 8 CFR § 1.4(d).  
▶ If an employer, local, state or federal agency requests admission information, present your admission (I-94) number along with any additional required documents requested by that employer or agency.  
▶ Note: For security reasons, we recommend that you close your browser after you have finished retrieving your I-94 number.

**Item 22:**

Enter the last date you entered the U.S.

For most of you, this should be the date stamped in your passport.

**22. Date of Your Last Arrival Into the United States, On or About (mm/dd/yyyy)**

<b>08/07/2017</b>
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**Item 23:**

Indicate city and state of your last arrival or entry into the US. This should be indicated by the three digit code stamped on your passport. For example, if you entered JFK, the stamp in your passport should indicate "NYC". If you

**23. Place of Your Last Arrival Into the United States**

<b>New York, New York</b>
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entered through Newark, the stamp on your passport should indicate "NEW".

**Item 24:**

Your status of last entry should be "F-1 Student.

24. Immigration Status at Your Last Arrival (for example, B-2 visitor, F-1 student, or no status)

F-1 Student

**Item 25:**

Your current status should be F-1 Student.

25. Your Current Immigration Status or Category (for example, B-2 visitor, F-1 student, parolee, deferred action, or no status or category)

F-1 Student

**Item 26:**

Enter your SEVIS ID number as indicated on the top of your I-20.

26. Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Number (if any)

► N- 1234567890

Department of Homeland Security U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement		I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status OMB NO. 1653-0038	
<b>SEVIS ID: N-1234567890</b>			
<b>SURNAME/PRIMARY NAME</b> Doe Smith	<b>GIVEN NAME</b> John	<b>CLASS</b> <b>F-1</b>	
<b>PREFERRED NAME</b> John Doe-Smith	<b>PASSPORT NAME</b>	<b>ACADEMIC AND LANGUAGE</b>	
<b>COUNTRY OF BIRTH</b> UNITED KINGDOM	<b>COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP</b> UNITED KINGDOM		
<b>DATE OF BIRTH</b> 01 JANUARY 1980	<b>ADMISSION NUMBER</b>		
<b>FORM ISSUE REASON</b> INITIAL ATTENDANCE	<b>LEGACY NAME</b> John Doe-Smith		
<b>SCHOOL INFORMATION</b>			
<b>SCHOOL NAME</b> SEVP School for Advanced SEVIS Studies SEVP School for Advanced SEVIS Studies	<b>SCHOOL ADDRESS</b> 9002 Nancy Lane, Ft. Washington, MD 20744		
<b>SCHOOL OFFICIAL TO CONTACT UPON ARRIVAL</b> Belene Robertson POSD	<b>SCHOOL CODE AND APPROVAL DATE</b> BAL214F4444000 03 APRIL 2015		

**Item 27:**

If you are applying for Pre-Completion OPT enter the codes (c) (3) (A). For Post-Completion OPT enter the codes (c) (3)

27. **Eligibility Category.** Refer to the **Who May File Form I-765** section of the Form I-765 Instructions to determine the appropriate eligibility category for this application. Enter the appropriate letter and number for your eligibility category below (for example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii)).

( c ) ( 3 ) ( B )

(B) - The c is a lower case "c" and B is an upper case "B". For STEM OPT enter the codes (c)

(3) (C) - The first c is a lower case "c" and second C is an upper case "C".

**Item 28:**

Write "N/A" in the blank fields if you are not applying for STEM OPT. If you are applying for the 24 month STEM OPT Extension write the following:

- Degree: Write your academic level and the CIP code found on your I-20. You can find the CIP code for your previous degree on page 1 of the current format I-20 or at the top of page 3 of the old format I-20.
- Employer name: Write your employer's name as listed in the e-verify system (this should also match your I-983)
- Employer's E-verify number: Write your employer's e-verify number. This is usually 4-7 digits. E-verify number is not the same as EIN. Check with your employer if you do not know your employer's e-verify number.

28.a. Degree

28.b. Employer's Name as Listed in E-Verify

28.c. Employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a Valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number

**Items 29 and 31a:**

Write "N/A" in blank fields.

**Items 30 and 31b:**

Leave checkbox blank as it does not apply to OPT applications.

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

### Applicant's Statement:

Select the box appropriate to your situation.

If you select 1a, write "N/A" in the text boxes

for items 1b and 2.

### *Applicant's Statement*

**NOTE:** Select the box for either **Item Number 1.a.** or **1.b.** If applicable, select the box for **Item Number 2.**

- 1.a.  I can read and understand English, and I have read and understand every question and instruction on this application and my answer to every question.
- 1.b.  The interpreter named in **Part 4.** read to me every question and instruction on this application and my answer to every question in , a language in which I am fluent, and I understood everything.
2.  At my request, the preparer named in **Part 5.**, , prepared this application for me based only upon information I provided or authorized.

### Applicant's Signature:

Be sure to sign the form in black ink inside the box. Make sure only your signature is in the box and fits entirely within it, as the government will scan your signature for your approval document.

NOTE: The signature must be done by hand, and not electronically/digitally.

### Parts 4 and 5:

- Part 4. Interpreter's Contact Information, Certification, and Signature
- Part 5. Contact Information, Declaration, and Signature of the Person Preparing this Application, If Other Than the Applicant.

Leave all text boxes blank if you have completed the I-765 yourself. If someone else has completed your I-765 for you, you should indicate their contact information. Regardless of answers, these pages must be included in your application.

## Part 6: Additional Information

Complete this section only if:

- You have previously been approved for CPT and/or OPT
- You have had a different SEVIS ID number while in F-1 status (for example, you attended school but left for a leave of absence, then returned to school with a new I-20).

### Previous CPT and/or OPT

If you have previously been approved for CPT and/or OPT:

**Items 3a-c, 4a-c, 5a-c, etc.:**

Write Page 3, Part 2, Item 27.

<b>3.a. Page Number</b>	<b>3.b. Part Number</b>	<b>3.c. Item Number</b>
<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="27"/>

### Items 3d and 4d:

List out any of the previous CPT or OPT authorizations you have had. Use separate fields for each type of authorization (for example, list all previous CPT or previous OPT in separate boxes).

- **CPT:** List all previous CPT approvals. We suggest this format: CPT Authorizations (as the title to this section); whether the authorization was part-time (20 hours or fewer per week) or full-time (more than 20 hours per week); your SEVIS ID number, employer name; employment start date - employment end date; degree level. You can find all of your previous CPT details on the I-20 that was approved for each period of CPT. *For*

*example: CPT Authorization,*

*Full-time, N0123456789, Top Job*

<b>3.d. CPT Authorization</b>
_____
<b>Full-time</b>
_____
<b>N0123456789</b>
_____
<b>Top Job Inc.</b>
_____
<b>06/01/2018 - 09/03/2018, Bachelor's</b>
_____

Inc., 06/01/2018 - 09/03/2018, Bachelor's.

- **OPT:** List all previous OPT approvals. We suggest this format: OPT Authorizations (as the title to this section); whether the authorization was part-time (20 hours or fewer per week) or full-time (more than 20 hours per week); your OPT approved start date - OPT approved end date; degree

level. *For example: OPT Authorization, Part-time, N0123456789, 09/04/2018 - 12/20/2018, Bachelor's.*

**4.d. OPT Authorization**

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**Part-time**

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**N0123456789**

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**09/04/2018 - 12/20/2018, Bachelor's**

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## Previous SEVIS ID

If you had a previous SEVIS ID number:

### Items 3a-c, 4a-c, 5a-c, etc.:

Write Page 3, Part 2, Item 26.

3.a. Page Number	3.b. Part Number	3.c. Item Number
3	2	26

### Items 5d:

List out any of the previous SEVIS ID numbers you have had. Use separate fields for each type of authorization (for example, list any previous SEVIS ID number in 5d).

- List all other SEVIS ID numbers you have used in the past. We suggest this format: Previous SEVIS ID numbers (as the title for this section); your previous SEVIS ID number; program start and end dates for that previous SEVIS ID number; degree level and the name of the

university attended. *For*

*example: Previous SEVIS ID*

*number; N0012345678,*

**5.d. Previous SEVIS ID number**

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**N0012345678**

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**09/05/2015 - 05/15/2017, Bachelor's**

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**New York University**

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**International Student Services & Enrollment**

1000 Longfellow Boulevard  
Lakeland, FL 33801

Phone: 863-6675000

Fax: 863-667-5200

Email: [internationals@seu.edu](mailto:internationals@seu.edu)

[www.seu.edu/ISSE](http://www.seu.edu/ISSE)

## HOW TO AVOID OPT APPLICATION DELAYS

Applying for OPT is typically a smooth process, but each year there are a few applications that are rejected, delayed or even denied. This can cause major headaches for the affected students and potentially require that plans are changed last minute. While there is much about the process that neither the student nor ISSE can control, please follow the guidance outlined here to prevent an unpleasant OPT application experience to the best of your ability.

**1. APPLY EARLY:** Be ready to mail your OPT application 90 days before your program end date/graduation. Especially in the spring, USCIS is flooded with OPT applications from around the country and the longer you wait to apply, the longer yours will likely take to be adjudicated.

**2. CHECK YOUR APPLICATION TWICE:** Make sure you have not made any errors by reviewing the following parts of your application before mailing:

Check or money order:

- Must be signed
- Must be from a U.S. bank. Checks cannot draw from a Canadian bank account.
- Cannot be dated into the future
- Cannot bounce (there must be enough funds in the account to cover the full amount when cashed by USCIS)

If USCIS is not able to cash your check, your application will be returned to you. This will likely take several weeks and you will need to request a new I-20 from ISSE before you reapply.

Copy of I-20 with OPT recommendation:

- Must be received by USCIS within 30 days of being issued by ISSE
- Must be signed by an ISSE advisor and student on page 1

If the copy of your I-20 is not included with your application or USCIS cannot accept your I-20 due to one of the reasons above, your application will be denied. You will need to request a new I-20 from ISSE before you reapply.

I-765 Form:

- Must be signed
- Must be recently dated
- Cannot be a photocopy
- Must not be missing required information

If your I-765 is not acceptable, your application will likely be returned to you and you will need to request a new I-20 from ISSE before you reapply.

#### I-94:

- Must show you are in F-1 status

If you are not in F-1 status at the time you apply, you are not eligible for OPT. USCIS has stated that it does not matter if your I-94 number changes after you apply for OPT (i.e. you travel over spring break) as long as you are properly entered in F-1 status again when you return to the U.S.

#### Passport photos:

- Must be the correct size and meet the standards outlined by USCIS
- Cannot be the same photos previously used for your passport or visa (USCIS may not consider them recent)

If your photos do not meet the specifications, you will receive a Request For Evidence (RFE) for new photos. If your photos are not accepted a second time, your application will likely be denied.

#### Previous I-20s:

- Must include all previous I-20s, especially your initial I-20 and any issued for CPT or OPT

You may receive an RFE if the USCIS adjudicator determines a previous I-20 s/he would like to see is missing from your application. This is also true for copies of previous EAD cards, if applicable. We recommend you try your best to include all previous I-20s and EAD cards connected to your current SEVIS record, including those issued while at another school if you transferred your SEVIS record to Southeastern University. If you cannot include an I-20 or EAD copy, write a brief letter to explain why so that the adjudicator will know you did not simply forget to include the copy.

#### Passport:

- Must be valid

If your passport is expired or close to expiring, you should include evidence with your OPT application which shows you are in the process of renewing your passport (i.e. receipt notice from your home country embassy) and a brief letter of explanation.

#### Visa:

- Must be F-1 visa
- SEVIS ID # on a visa must match SEVIS ID # on your most recent Southeastern's I-20

You can apply for OPT with an expired visa. If you transferred your SEVIS record to Southeastern, your visa may have a different school name on it, but the SEVIS number should still match your current Southeastern I-20. If you changed to F-1 status from another status without applying for a new visa, include a copy of your I-797 approval notice with I-94. Canadian citizens do not need to include a visa with the OPT application.

**3. TRACK YOUR APPLICATION ONLINE:** Enter your receipt number frequently on the USCIS Case Status website and alert ISSE if you have not received correspondence from USCIS that was mailed to you.

**4. DON'T TRAVEL AFTER GRADUATION UNLESS YOU HAVE YOUR EAD CARD:** If you travel without your EAD card, you may not be able to fix potential problems that arise at the last minute with your application.

**5. BE AWARE OF THE FOLLOWING WORST CASE SCENARIOS:**

**Your application is denied...**

It is unlikely your OPT application will be denied if you avoid errors on your application, but if you do receive a denial, please contact ISSE immediately. You may be able to reapply if there is still time for USCIS to receive your application before your grace period ends. Please note that if you travel outside the U.S. after graduation, you will no longer be eligible to reapply for OPT since the remainder of your grace period will be considered forfeited.

**You do not receive your EAD card before graduation...**

This is true even if you have arranged to have your mail forwarded after graduation. You can change your mailing address on the USCIS website, but you will need to use a U.S. address.

**You don't receive your EAD card before you were supposed to start your job...**

You cannot begin working until you have your EAD card and have reached the start date on the card. You will need your EAD card to complete an I-9 Form for your employer within the first few days of starting your job. You cannot choose to work without pay because your OPT has not been approved yet. You need to have OPT work authorization for any type of work you do (paid or unpaid) while physically located in the U.S. after graduation. Working without authorization is a serious violation of your F-1 status.

**Your EAD card is lost in the mail...**

You should check the status of your application using your receipt number on the USCIS Case Status website. If you see that your card has been delivered, but you have not received it, please contact ISSE immediately. You will likely need to follow up with the local post office to try to figure out where your card is. If your card cannot be located, you will need to apply for a replacement card (see below).

**You lose your EAD card...**

You will need to apply to USCIS for a replacement card. Include any evidence you can to show that your OPT was already approved by USCIS (i.e. screenshot from USCIS case status website, updated I-20, copy of card). Replacement cards are usually processed faster than initial applications since they have already been adjudicated. You will need to pay the filing fee again and include new photos.

Please note that you cannot begin new employment, travel outside the U.S., apply for a Social Security number or renew a driver's license until you have your new EAD card