WHAT IS OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit and extension of F-1 student status that permits you to remain in the U.S. after you complete your academic program, with permission to work in your field of study.
ELIGIBILITY

For All Students:

- You must be in F-1 status at the time of application.
- You are enrolled in a full-time degree or qualifying certificate program for at least one academic year (two consecutive semesters) in a valid, lawful status.
- You have not used all 12 months of OPT at the same degree level.
- You have not used OPT at a higher degree level.

Exception for Graduate Students:

- You must have finished all course requirements for your graduate degree except a dissertation, thesis or final project necessary for your degree (also known as ABD).
Plan Ahead

Your OPT approval may take more than three months to be processed by USCIS, so you need to plan ahead. Hopefully, you will receive an approval sooner.

Apply as Early as Possible

The earliest you can submit your OPT application is 90 days before the last day of your final semester. Use the OPT calculator to find your start date, and more.
You can choose the date when you would like your OPT authorization to begin, within the 60-day period following the end of your program.

Please choose your date wisely as OPT dates cannot be changed. This may not be an easy decision if you don’t have a job offer at the time of application.
1. Complete the G-1145 Form: E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance
   1. Download the G-1145 Form at USCIS: https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/g-1145.pdf
   2. Your information must be typed!

   2. Fill out the form online and print it.
   3. Sign Page 5 of the I-765 form (Item #7a) with a BLUE INK PEN.

▶ Or you may apply for OPT online.

See How to File a USCIS Form at the end of this presentation.
4. Photocopy of I-94/Admission Number

If your last entry into the U.S. was processed electronically and you do not have a paper I-94 card, you can find and print your most recent I-94 online at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home.

5. Two sets of copies of all your I-20s, including the ones received from Hunter College.

Do not bring original I-20s.

- We encourage you to scan all of your I-20s so that you will always have them for your records.

   Save the files on a removable drive, Google Drive, or email them to yourself.

6. Two Full, Frontal Passport Size Photos

1. Use the standards on the Department of State website (See the example of passport photos in the OPT packet.)

2. On the back of each photo, gently write your:
   - Full name
   - Date of Birth
   - SEVIS ID Number
GATHER DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION FOR YOUR OPT OR USCIS APPLICATION

7. Money Order for $410
Make the money order payable to:
U.S. Department of Homeland Security (do not abbreviate)
▶ Include your SEVIS IDN # in the memo field.

8. Enrollment Verification
You will need two letters:
1. One from your Departmental Advisor on their department letterhead (email your departmental advisor).
2. A second letter from the Office of the Registrar at registrar@hunter.cuny.edu.
▶ You can request Enrollment Verification directly via your CUNYfirst account.
View details here.

9. Photocopy of Any Previous EAD Cards, If Applicable
After submitting all completed documents, an International Student Advisor will issue you a new SEVIS I-20 with OPT authorization requested.
WAIT FOR THE ISO TO CONTACT YOU

Allow up to 5 business days for us to review and process your application.

We will notify you by email when your new I-20 is ready.

The U.S. government must receive your OPT application within 30 days of the ISO issuing you the OPT I-20.
1. Review the OPT dates when you receive your OPT I-20.

- Always use your most recent I-20 when you travel.
- The travel signature on page 2 of the I-20 is only valid for *six months* (not 12) when you’re on OPT.
- Keep all previously issued I-20s. You may need them for future applications.
1. Two U.S. Passport-Style Photos

Use the standards on the Department of State website.

- Photos must be less than 30 days old when you submit your application.

2. $410 USCIS Fee

- Pay with personal check from a U.S. checking account, cashier’s check from a bank, or money order,
- Write "USCIS I-765" in the memo line.
- We do not recommend using the Credit Card form G-1450 due to reported issues.

3. Form G-1145

This will allow USCIS to notify you when they accept your application.

- Do not send a copy.

4. Form I-765

1. Download the I-765 form (See sample form in OPT packet)
2. You must sign in dark blue or black ink only. Must include all pages of I-765, even if pages are blank.
- Do not send a copy.
5. A copy of your signed and dated OPT I-20

Please be sure to sign and date your I-20. You will send a copy (not the original) which you can use for Travel During OPT.

6. Copies of all previously-issued I-20(s)

If you have lost any I-20s, please include a short explanation.

▶ See the OPT Packet for sample explanations. You may edit this sample letter.

7. Copy of Passport Identification Page
(valid 6 months into the future)

8. Copy of your most recent I-94 Arrival Record

This is not your travel history. Make sure the record indicates:
- “Class of Admission: F1”
- “Admit Until Date: D/S,” which stands for duration of status.

9. Photocopies of both sides of any previously-issued EAD card(s)

If you have lost any Employment Authorization Document EAD(s) and you do not have copies, please include a short explanation.

▶ You may edit our sample letter for missing EAD(s). (See OPT packet)
MAIL YOUR USCIS APPLICATION

• Send it on time!
• Be sure your address on the I-765 will be valid for four months after mailing.
• Sign all forms with dark blue or black ink.
• Make a copy of your entire application of your records.

**USCIS Mailing Address**
Use the address that corresponds to the state on your U.S. mailing address, as listed on the I-765 OPT application.

▶ **UEMS** (also known as eShip Global) offers discounted rates to ship your OPT application to USCIS by FedEx, UPS, or USPS. Follow [eShipGlobal instructions](#) to create your shipping label.

Send your application to the correct USCIS Lockbox, depending on how you mail your OPT Application:

- **via U.S. Postal Service (USPS)**
  USCIS Chicago Lockbox
  Attn: I-765 C03
  P.O. Box 805373
  Chicago, IL 60680-5374

- **via FedEx, UPS, and DHL:**
  USCIS
  Attn: I-765 C03 (Box 805373)
  131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor
  Chicago, IL 60603-5517
CONTACT US IF NECESSARY

Normally, you will receive these two documents from USCIS before the Employment Authorization Document:

1. I-797 Receipt Notice with a case number. Check this Notice for accuracy so that you can correct any errors in your name or other information.

2. I-797 Approval Notice.

You do not need to contact us when you receive these two documents, but do contact us if you need additional assistance.
THANK YOU FOR REVIEWING

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the International Students Office:

intlss@hunter.cuny.edu
1: Create a USCIS online account (if you don’t have one).

- Go to our Sign Up page. If you need help creating a USCIS online account, please visit How to Create a USCIS Online Account.

- You must provide a valid email address and password to create a USCIS online account. The email address you provide will also be the username for your USCIS online account.

The USCIS online account uses a “two-factor authentication process.”

This means that in addition to entering your username and password, you must also enter a one-time password that will be sent to you by email or text message.

When you create your USCIS online account, you can select your preference for receiving the one-time password.

Using two-factor authentication:

- Enter your email address and the password you created. Then select “Log in.”

- Every time you sign in to your USCIS online account, you must enter your email address and password.

- When you first create your account, you will select your preference for receiving the one-time password by text message, email, or authentication app.
HOW TO FILE A USCIS FORM ONLINE

- If you select text message, enter your U.S. mobile phone number in the Mobile Number box (standard SMS/text messaging rates may apply).
- If you select the app option, the system will generate a code that you can scan or type into an authentication app that you have installed on your mobile device (such as Google Authenticator).

2: Select “File a Form Online.”

3: Complete all sections of your form.

- We may reject your form if you leave a field blank or if you do not sign your form. Read the instructions for completing fields when your answer is “zero” or “not applicable (N/A).”

4: Upload evidence.

- As part of the application process, you must provide evidence to support your application, petition, or request. These documents help us evaluate your form and verify your answers are true. If we do not request a specific document, then you do not need to include it when you file your form.

Tips for uploading evidence:

- Use a scanner or take pictures of each document. Make sure each image you attach is clear and that all text is readable.
- Files must not be larger than 6MB in size.
- Files must be in one of these formats: PDF, JPG, or JPEG. For some forms, we also accept files in TIF or TIFF format.
- Do not encrypt or password protect your files.
HOW TO FILE A USCIS FORM ONLINE

• If your documents are in a foreign language, include an English translation.
• If we require passport-size photos, you must scan them or take a picture with your phone.

5: Review and digitally sign your form.
• Review the summary of the information you provided in your application. You can also view a PDF draft version of your completed form. You may save and print a copy for your records.

6: Pay the filing fee.
• To digitally sign your application, type your full legal name (first, middle, and last names) in the space provided.
• You must pay with a valid credit or debit card, or provide your bank routing and checking account numbers to have money taken directly from your U.S. bank account.

• After you make your payment, your form will be submitted.
• You will receive a receipt notice that contains your receipt number. This is a unique number that applies to your specific case with USCIS. You can find your receipt number on your online account home page, and you can find a copy of your receipt notice under the Documents tab.
HOW TO FILE A USCIS FORM ONLINE

7: View appointment notices.

- You may be required to attend a biometric services appointment at an application support center.

You must attend this appointment. You will need to provide “biometric” information, such as a passport-style photograph, signature, and fingerprints.

- Log in to your USCIS online account for more information about your appointment.

- If you are required to attend an interview, you will also receive an interview appointment notice in your account.

8: Respond to Requests for Evidence and Upload Unsolicited Evidence.

- We will notify you by text message or email (based on your preference) if you need to respond to a Request for Evidence (RFE).

- Log in to your USCIS online account and click on the Documents tab to view notices and respond to the RFE.

- While your case is pending, you may provide additional information, including evidence we did not specifically request, regarding your case. This is available in the Documents tab, except when you have an open RFE.
HOW TO FILE A USCIS FORM ONLINE

9: Check the status of your case.
   • Log in to your USCIS online account for details on the status of your case.

10: Send and receive secure messages.
   • Once you file a form, you will have access to a secure inbox to send messages to an immigration services officer and receive a response to your question.

11: Receive a decision
   • Log in to your USCIS online account to read details on the decision we made on your case. For information on processing times for all forms, please visit USCIS Processing Time.

Return to Step 3: Gather Documents and Information for OPT or USCIS Application