

**INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OFFICE  
OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING  
APPLICATION GUIDE**

# 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).

# DETERMINE YOUR OPT TIMELINE

## Plan Ahead

Your OPT approval may take more than two 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.

# CHOOSE YOUR OPT START DATE

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 after your application has been submitted.

# HOW TO FILE A USCIS FORM ONLINE

## 1: Create a USCIS online account (if you do not have one).

- Go to the [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 first create your account, you will select your preference for receiving the one-time password by text message, email, or authentication app.

## 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.

# 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.**

- 4: Receive your OPT I-20**
- Review the OPT dates when you receive your OPT I-20.
  - Verify your requested OPT dates on page 2 of the I-20
  - Sign and date page 1 of the I-20.

## **5: The U.S. government must receive your OPT application within 30 days of the ISO date issued on your OPT requested I-20 .**

If it has been more than 30 days , please contact us . we may have a way of helping you with this issue if it is still within the window to apply for OPT

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## 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. if larger than 6MB use the following website ([ilovepdf.com](https://ilovepdf.com)) to compress it . if after preprocessing it the file is still larger than 6MB , then divide the document into two attachments and upload both of the them.
- 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

- you are required to upload a passport-size photo, you must scan it 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.

- To digitally sign your application, type your full legal name (first, middle, and last names) in the space provided.

## **6: Pay the filing fee.**

- You must pay the \$410 I-765 OPT filing fee 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 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

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

- USCIS 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 not provide additional information, including evidence which was not specifically requested, 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](#).

# AFTER YOU RECEIVE YOUR EAD CARD

1. Send us a copy of the front and back and of your EAD (Employment Authorization Document ) or your OPT card .
2. Find and report employment immediately or within 10 days from receiving employment by logging in to your SEVP portal account and reporting it on there and also by filling out the [OPT Employment reporting](#) to inform us and print an updated I-20 on your behalf.
3. you may not start employment before the start date on your OPT EAD card .Also you may not be unemployed for more than 90 days (3 months) from your OPT EAD start date .

# POST-COMPLETION OPT

1. If you are an F-1 student with approved OPT and you are currently working, you may be eligible to apply for an extension if you earned a degree in a specialized field called STEM. STEM degrees are in the fields of Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics, listed on at this link:  
<https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/stemList2022.pdf>
2. To be eligible to apply for a STEM extension, you must file your request 3 months before your OPT expires.
3. You must work for a company or employer that is E-Verify. For more information on how an employer can register in the E-Verify program or to search for a list of employers already registered go to the U.S. Immigration website below: <http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify/about-program/e-verify-employers-search-tool>

# THANK YOU FOR REVIEWING

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

[intlss@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:intlss@hunter.cuny.edu)