

**International Student Affairs (ISA)**

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**How to Apply for F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

Please review the information below to learn how to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). We highly recommend that you attend ISA’s OPT workshops during your final semester to learn about the most updated regulations and request process.

**What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?**

Optional practical training is a type of work authorization available for eligible F-1 students who have completed at least one academic year of study in the U.S. It allows students to gain work experience in an off-campus job related to their field of study. There are two types of OPT: Pre-Completion OPT (used before graduation during your program) and Post-Completion OPT (for after graduation or after finishing all coursework).

**Application Process**

**Step 1:** Submit a request to International Student Affairs for an I-20 recommending you for OPT by completing the ‘F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) Request E-Form’, available at <https://internationalforms.hofstra.edu/>

If you are requesting Post-Completion OPT and are NOT a Zarb School of Business graduate student, you will be required to upload a completed ‘OPT Academic Advisor Approval Form’ signed by your academic advisor when you fill in the e-form. To download this form, go to <http://www.hofstra.edu/isa>. Under ‘Resources’, select ‘Student Resources’, then on the Student Resources page, under ‘Immigration Resources’, click ‘Forms’.

**Do not submit your application to USCIS until you receive the OPT recommendation I-20 and instructions from ISA.**

**Step 2:** If your OPT request is approved, ISA will email your electronic OPT recommendation I-20 to your Hofstra email address with additional instructions.

**Step 3:** Prepare your remaining documents for the OPT application using the checklist on the next page. For additional guidance on how to fill in the forms and prepare your materials, please attend ISA’s OPT workshops. More information about OPT workshops is sent to students’ Hofstra email and is available on ISA’s website.

**Step 4:** Mail your OPT application using FedEx/UPS to USCIS, **OR** file your I-765 application online using your USCIS Account ([https://myaccount.uscis.gov/users/sign\\_up](https://myaccount.uscis.gov/users/sign_up)).

**How long is the application process?**

- Please allow up to 10 business days for ISA to review and process your OPT request.
- You can check the USCIS OPT normal processing time at <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>, by selecting Form I-765 and Potomac Service Center.
- Students can only submit an application to USCIS up to 90 days before the program end date on their I-20 and up to 60 days after the end date. Please refer to the chart below for an application timeline for Post-Completion OPT.

I-20 End Date	Earliest date ISA can process your OPT request	Recommended date to request OPT from ISA	Last date to request OPT from ISA	Deadline for the OPT application to be received by USCIS
May 31	March 3	April 1	July 15	July 30
August 31	June 3	July 1	October 15	October 30
December 31	October 3	November 1	February 15	March 1

## F-1 OPT Application Checklist

Below is a checklist of all the materials you should gather to prepare your OPT application. Incomplete or incorrect applications can cause processing delays so go over the checklist carefully and make sure you have included everything. *This resource is meant to provide you with best practices in preparing an OPT application. Please note that this is not legal advice. You may choose to hire an immigration attorney to assist you with this process at any time.*

### Mailing A Physical Application

If you plan to mail a physical application to USCIS, be sure to include the original check/money order, original photos and original I-765 and G-1145. Everything else should be a copy. Print all materials single sided and type information into forms whenever possible. Keep a photocopy of your complete OPT application for your records.

- OPT Recommendation I-20: You will receive the OPT recommendation I-20 signed by an ISA advisor at the bottom of the first page. If the I-20 is not signed by an ISA advisor, please contact ISA. Print out and sign your signature by hand at the bottom of the first page of the OPT I-20 and then make a copy. Include the copy with both the ISA advisor's and your signature with your application.
- G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance: <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>
- I-765 Form: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> *Be sure to download the correct edition of the form from the USICS website. If you use an outdated form, your OPT application will be denied.*
- Copy of valid passport, your F-1 visa and the most recent entry stamp in your passport
- I-94: you can print out the most recent I-94 from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/>
- Copies of all previous Form I-20s (including all schools you have attended)
- Filing fee of \$410 as a check or money order (from a U.S. bank or U.S. Postal Service). Make payable to: **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**
- 2 recent passport photos - must be 2" by 2" and be taken within 3 months (lightly write your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo). You can purchase passport photos from Hofstra Card Services.
- Copy of previous Employment Authorization Documents, if you had previous OPT authorization.

### Online Filing

You can file the I-765 online by creating a USCIS account at <https://myaccount.uscis.gov/>. More information about filing online is available at <https://uscis.gov/file-online>. When filling in the online form and uploading documents, please note:

- Be sure to select the correct eligibility category. For Student Post-Completion OPT (for after graduation or after finishing all coursework), choose (c)(3)(B). For Student Pre-Completion OPT (used before graduation during your program), choose (c)(3)(A).
- The following file formats are accepted: JPG, JPEG, PNG, PDF, TIF, TIFF. The following file formats are NOT allowed: DOC, BMP, XLSX
- Maximum file size is 6 MB per file.
- Foreign and special characters are not allowed. The only characters allowed in document file names are: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, parentheses.
- Foreign language documents must have English translation.
- The system allows you to submit your application without all required evidence, which can lead to requests for evidence and delays if you forget to upload documents. Please be careful to ensure that everything is correctly uploaded before submitting the online application.
- For digital passport photos, you may use these websites: <https://tsg.phototool.state.gov/photo>
- Review your entries carefully before you pay the filing fee. Once you submit payment, you cannot make corrections.
- When you review your form before submission, print or download a draft snapshot for your records.
- To pay the filing fee you will be directed to Pay.gov, a secure government portal where you can pay by ACH withdrawal from a U.S. bank account, or a U.S. debit card, or accepted credit cards as listed on Pay.gov.
- After you pay the fee, your form will be submitted to USCIS. You will receive confirmation the form was submitted. Click on "Go to my cases" to see your case card and receipt notice. All notices will be mailed to the mailing address you provided in the I-765 form and posted to your account, including any requests for evidence (RFE) and decision letter.