HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY
International Enrollment

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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). You must attend or watch recordings of International Enrollment's OPT webinars in your final semester to learn about the OPT process.

What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

- OPT 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 you to gain work experience in an off-campus job related to your current major at Hofstra.
- 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 Enrollment for an OPT request I-20 by completing the 'F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) Request E-Form' at https://internationalforms.hofstra.edu

- If you are requesting Post-Completion OPT and are <u>NOT</u> a Zarb School of Business graduate student, you must upload an 'OPT Academic Advisor Approval Form' signed by your academic advisor when you fill in the e-form.
- To download this form, scan the QR code or visit the forms section of our website: http://www.hofstra.edu/international-enrollment.
- **Do not submit the I-765 to USCIS until you receive the OPT request I-20 and instructions from International Enrollment.**

Step 2: We will email your OPT request I-20 to your Hofstra email address with more instructions.

⚠️ **The OPT request I-20 must be used within 30 days from when it is given to you. If you use it even 1 day after that, USCIS will deny your application. There are no exceptions or flexibility for this deadline!**

Step 3: Prepare the required documents for the OPT application using the checklist on the next page.

- For more guidance on how to fill in the forms and prepare your materials, see our OPT webinars and visit our website. Information about our OPT webinars is sent to students' Hofstra email each semester.

Step 4: File Form I-765 online using your USCIS account: https://myaccount.uscis.gov/users/sign_up

Note: You must be physically located in the U.S. when you file the I-765 to USCIS. If you leave the U.S. after graduation without filing the I-765, you cannot return to the U.S. after your I-20 end date, and you will lose your OPT eligibility.

How long is the application process?

- Please allow up to 5 business days for our office to review and process your OPT e-form.
- You can check the USCIS OPT estimated processing time at https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/. Select Form I-765, academic student (c)(3) category, and Potomac Service Center. Typically, it takes 3 - 5 months.
- You can only submit the I-765 to USCIS up to 90 days before the program end date on your I-20 and up to 60 days after your program end date.
- **We recommend you apply for OPT as early as possible.** See the chart below for Post-Completion OPT timelines.

I-20 End Date (Expected Graduation)	Earliest date you can request the OPT I-20 from Hofstra:	Request OPT I-20 from Hofstra no later than:	Final deadline for USCIS to receive your I-765:
May 31	March 3	July 15	July 30
August 31	June 3	October 15	October 30
December 31	October 3	February 15	February 29/March 1

F-1 OPT Application Checklist

Below is a checklist of all the materials you need to prepare for your OPT I-765 application.
- Incomplete or incorrect applications can cause processing delays.
- Review the checklist carefully and make sure you have included everything.
- This information is meant to help you follow best practices. Please remember, this is not legal advice. Depending on your immigration history, you can choose to hire an immigration lawyer to help you with this process.

- ☐ OPT Request I-20: You will receive the OPT I-20 signed by a DSO (immigration advisor).
  - o Print it out and sign your signature by hand at the bottom of the first page, then scan all 3 pages.
  - o Upload the scanned copy with both the DSO and your signature to your I-765.
- ☐ Online I-765 Form (Instructions available at: https://www.uscis.gov/i-765)
- ☐ Copies of your valid passport ID page and your F-1 visa
- ☐ I-94: download your most recent I-94 from https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/
- ☐ U.S. style passport photo – size must be 2" by 2" and taken within the past 3 months (check requirements at: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos/photo-examples.html)
- ☐ Copies of all previous Form I-20s (including all schools you have attended)
- ☐ Copy of previous EADs (Employment Authorization Documents) if you had OPT authorization before.
- ☐ I-765 online filing fee: $470

Optional Forms:
- ☐ I-907, Request for Premium Processing Service: https://www.uscis.gov/i-907
  - o You can file the I-907 together with the I-765 for OPT, or separately after you submit the I-765.
  - o The fee is $1,685 (in addition to the I-765 filing fee).
  - o If USCIS accepts the request, they will take action on your case within 30 calendar days.

Online Filing Tips
- 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 remember:
  - Select the correct eligibility category:
    - o For Student Post-Completion OPT (for after graduation or after finishing all coursework), choose (c)(3)(B).
    - o For Student Pre-Completion OPT (used before graduation during your program), choose (c)(3)(A).
  - These file formats are accepted: JPG, JPEG, PNG, PDF, TIF, TIFF.
  - These 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.
  - Please be careful to upload everything correctly! The system will let you submit the I-765 even without all required evidence. This can lead to requests for evidence and delays if you forget to upload documents.
  - You can use this website to check your digital passport photo: https://tsg.phototool.state.gov/photo
  - Review your entries carefully before you pay the filing fee. After you pay, you cannot make corrections.
  - Print or download a draft snapshot of your I-765 to save for your records.
  - To pay the filing fee you will be directed to the Pay.gov website. After you pay the fee, your I-765 will be submitted to USCIS. You will get confirmation the form was submitted and immediately get a receipt notice.
  - All notices will also be mailed to the mailing address you put in the I-765 form.

Mailing a Physical Application
It is possible to mail a physical I-765 application, but we do not recommend it. If you want to mail a physical application to USCIS, please tell International Enrollment before you request the OPT I-20. You must make an appointment to talk about the requirements with us because the procedure is very different.