

International Student Affairs

219 Weller Hall
 134 Hofstra University
 Hempstead, NY 11549-1260
 international@hofstra.edu
 Tel: (516) 463-6796 Fax: (516) 463-5328

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 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 and visit [ISA's website](#). Information about OPT workshops is sent to students' Hofstra email and listed on our website.

Step 4: File Form I-765 online using a USCIS Account (https://myaccount.uscis.gov/users/sign_up), OR you can mail your I-765 application using FedEx/UPS to USCIS. ISA recommends students utilize the online filing option.

Note: You must be physically present in the U.S. when you file the I-765 to USCIS. If a student departs the U.S. after graduation without filing OPT first, they cannot return to the U.S. past their I-20 end date, and will lose their OPT eligibility.

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	February 29/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.*

- OPT Recommendation I-20: You will receive the OPT recommendation I-20 signed by an ISA advisor at the bottom of the first page. 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.
- I-765 Form: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> *If mailing a physical application, be sure to download the correct edition of the form from the USCIS website. If you use an outdated form your OPT application will be denied.*
- Copies of your valid passport ID page and your F-1 visa
- I-94: you can download your 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 (if mailing a physical application, submit as a check or money order from a U.S. bank or U.S. Postal Service and make payable to: U.S. Department of Homeland Security)
- U.S. style passport photo – size must be 2" by 2" and be taken within 3 months (if mailing a physical application, provide 2 photos and lightly write your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo)
- Copy of previous Employment Authorization Document(s) if you had previous OPT authorization.

Optional Forms:

- I-907, Request for Premium Processing Service: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-907> is now available to F-1 students applying for any type of OPT, filing online or by mail. Fee is \$1,500 (in addition to the \$410 I-765 filing fee). If the premium processing request is accepted, USCIS will take action on your application within 30 calendar days. USCIS will accept I-907 requests filed together with the I-765 for OPT.
- G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance: <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145> (only if mailing a physical application)

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 this website: <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 the Pay.gov website. After you pay the fee, your form will be submitted to USCIS. You will receive confirmation the form was submitted and immediately get a receipt notice. All notices will also be mailed to the mailing address you provided in the I-765 form.

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 the forms whenever possible. Keep a photocopy of your complete OPT application for your records. ISA will provide more detailed instructions when you receive your OPT Recommendation I-20.