

## Applying for Optional Practical Training (F-1 Students)

**Attention: A consent order issued by a U.S. District Court allows for standard post-completion OPT applications received through October 31, 2021, to be filed up to 120 days before the student's program end date. Your Form I-765 application must be received by USCIS by October 31, 2021, in order to be eligible for the interim relief. This relief does not extend to STEM OPT applications. You must be physically present inside the US in F-1 status to apply for OPT. Do not attempt to apply for OPT while outside the US.**

**USCIS often takes over 90 days to process OPT applications, we suggest you plan accordingly. The International Center has no influence over how quickly your OPT application is processed by USCIS. You must be physically present inside the US in F-1 status to apply for OPT. Do not attempt to apply for OPT while outside the US.**

Information on this page relates to Pre- and Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT). STEM extension OPT information can be found [here](#) [1].

- [Process for OPT Applications](#)
- [Different Kinds of OPT and Application Deadlines](#)
- [Documents Needed to Request a New I-20 with OPT Recommendation from the International Center](#)
- [Filing Your Completed OPT Application with USCIS - Online Option](#)
- [Filing Your Completed OPT Application with USCIS - Paper-Filing Option](#)

### Process for OPT Applications

1. Take the [OPT Online Workshop](#) [2] (this requires a U-M login). Print the OPT Online Workshop Completion Email and prepare the [required documentation to request an OPT I-20](#) as outlined in the workshop.
2. Meet with your Academic Advisor or Graduate Program Coordinator to request an [OPT recommendation letter](#) [3].
3. Submit your request for an OPT I-20 via email to [icenter@umich.edu](mailto:icenter@umich.edu) [4], or in person at the International Center front desk.
  - An International Center advisor will review your OPT I-20 request, and then send your OPT recommendation to SEVIS electronically to generate a new I-20. The OPT recommendation will be printed on page 2 of the new I-20. The processing time required to produce your new I-20 will be approximately 2 weeks. Please note that if you are completing your degree requirements earlier than indicated by the program end date on your current I-20 (page 1, item 5), then the program end

date will be shortened. Remember that F-1 students are eligible to work on-campus as a benefit of status only up until the I-20 end date.

- If you have requested in-person pickup, the International Center will notify you when your new I-20 is available. Bring your M-Card to the U-M International Center front desk to pick up your I-20. For office hours and more information about visiting the International Center in person, please visit our [website](#) [5].
  - If you wish to have the OPT I-20 shipped to you, set up and pay for an [eShip Global](#) [6] order. To avoid delays, if you choose eShip Global to receive your I-20, do not wait to be notified that the I-20 has been created before setting up the shipping request. Instead, set up the eShip Global request at the same time you submit your OPT I-20 request.
  - As soon as you receive the I-20, review the information on pages 1 and 2 of the I-20. Pay particular attention to the Program of Study information on page 1 and the OPT information (including requested dates) on page 2. If everything looks accurate, add your signature and the date to the bottom of page 1 in the Student Attestation section. (If there is any concern or question about the information contained on your OPT I-20, please contact an International Center advisor.)
4. Submit your complete application and required documents to USCIS. Refer to '[Guidance for Online Completion of Form I-765 for Optional Practical Training](#) [7]' or '[Guidance for Paper-Filing of Form I-765 for Optional Practical Training](#) [8]'. You may choose to either submit your OPT application by filing online at the USCIS website, or by mailing a paper-based application packet to USCIS, but do not pursue both methods.
  5. USCIS will send you a notice of receipt of your I-765 (OPT) application. If you file your application online, you should immediately obtain confirmation of your filing and have access to receipt information. If you apply for OPT via a paper-based application, you should generally expect to have a receipt notice mailed to you approximately 3-4 weeks after your application is first received by USCIS.
  6. Once you have received your receipt number, you can track the status of your application using USCIS online tools such as the [case status search feature](#) [9].
  7. Once USCIS has completed their final review of your OPT application packet, they will issue a formal adjudication decision of approval or denial. Expect at least 90 days processing time, recognizing that processing times can fluctuate from student to student and year to year. Current expected I-765 processing times can be found on the [USCIS website](#) [10].
  8. If your application is approved, you should receive an EAD card in the mail from USCIS. It is the EAD card which confirms your OPT approval, helps prove your ongoing F-1 status, and allows you to begin OPT employment once you reach the "Valid From" date printed on the card.

## **Different Kinds of OPT and Application Timelines**

To understand if you wish to pursue Pre-Completion or Post-Completion OPT, you need to first figure out your completion date.

### **Definition of Completion Date**

The completion date is generally established as the last day of the last month of the final term in which you will register to complete academic requirements (e.g. April 30 for winter, June 30 for spring, August 31 for spring/summer, or December 31 for fall. I-20s issued for students of U-M Law School may have end dates in early May).

## **Pre-completion OPT**

Employment begins and ends before the completion of the academic program.

### ***Earliest time to apply:***

- If a student has not yet completed a full academic year: 90 days before completion of full academic year
- If student has completed a full academic year: 90 days before OPT start date

### ***There are three types of Pre-completion OPT:***

#### ***Type A: During the student's annual vacation***

- Student must intend to enroll for the next term
- OPT may be part- or full-time

#### ***Type B: While school is in session***

- Student must be enrolled full-time
- OPT may be part-time only

#### ***Type C: After completion of all course requirements (excluding thesis/dissertation)***

- After completion of all course requirements excluding thesis/dissertation
- If Type C OPT is part-time, student must be enrolled full-time
- If Type C OPT is full-time, student need not be enrolled

## **Post-completion OPT**

Employment begins after completion of academic program.

### ***Timeline for Post-Completion OPT Application to be Received by USCIS:***

- No more than 90 days before the program end date
- No more than 60 days after program end date
- Within 30 days of the date the OPT I-20 is issued. You can confirm the date your OPT I-20 was issued by viewing the "DATE ISSUED" section on page 1 in the "School Attestation" box.
- You must be physically present inside the US in F-1 status to apply for OPT

PhD candidates who wish to request a post-completion OPT start date earlier than the standard completion date should contact an International Center advisor for guidance.

## **Documents Needed to Request a New I-20 with OPT Recommendation from the International Center**

To begin your OPT I-20 request procedure, you must first complete the [OPT Online Workshop](#) [2]. Once you receive your OPT Online Workshop Completion Email and compile all of the required documentation

for an OPT I-20, you may submit your request in person to the [IC front desk](#) [5] on central campus or via email to [icenter@umich.edu](mailto:icenter@umich.edu) [4]. Your OPT I-20 request packet must include the following documents:

- [OPT I-20 Request Form](#) [11]
- OPT Online Workshop Completion Email
- OPT [recommendation letter](#) [3] from academic advisor or graduate program coordinator
  - **Instructions for the Academic Advisor**  
The academic advisor letter must meet these criteria:
    - On U-M departmental letterhead
    - Indicate the degree level at which the student will be applying for OPT
    - Indicate the final term in which the student is enrolled for required credits
- Copy of Most Recent [Form I-94](#) [12] (please click on the link for instructions)
- Photocopy of your current I-20 form, pages 1 and 2 (do not include documents of any F-2 dependents)
- Photocopies (if applicable) of all previously issued CPT and/or OPT I-20s (all pages except instruction page)
- Photocopies (if applicable) of any previous OPT EAD cards (front and back)
  - Write the degree level for which the previous OPT was granted on the copy of the EAD card (e.g. bachelor's, master's, or doctoral)
- Unofficial transcript from [Wolverine Access](#) [13]. Please print a fresh version of your transcript rather than re-using one you printed or saved previously.

Please note that after requesting an OPT I-20 from the International Center, if you ultimately decide not to send your application to USCIS, you must [contact](#) [14] an advisor at the International Center. If you do not notify us that you no longer intend to apply for OPT, we will be unable to adjust your SEVIS record to accurately reflect your situation. You will also continue to be billed for health insurance.

## Filing Your Completed OPT Application with USCIS - Online Option

In April 2021, US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that F-1 students applying for Optional Practical Training (OPT) may now file their form I-765 online if filing under the pre-completion, post-completion, or the 24 month STEM extension categories. Please see the [USCIS news release](#) [15] for additional information.

**NOTE:** You may still mail a paper based application to the appropriate USCIS mailing address or choose to [file online](#) [16], but **not both**. Multiple OPT applications may result in denial by USCIS.

USCIS encourages students to file their OPT application online. If you prefer to file your OPT application using a paper-based application process despite the benefits of online filing, be sure to carefully review guidance under the appropriate 'Filing Your Completed OPT Application with USCIS' section below to ensure the accuracy and completeness of your application.

### Benefits of Online Filing:

- Immediate filing of OPT application with USCIS and issuance of I-765 receipt notice;
- Direct access to USCIS notices including, but not limited to receipt notice, requests for evidence, approval notice, etc.
- Ability to communicate with USCIS through a secure inbox

- Option to provide additional unsolicited evidence/updates to your application if necessary
- Minimizes risk of rejection of the application by vetting common reasons for rejection such as applicant's signature and proper fee payment
- Ability to pay application fee through your bank account (ACH), debit, or credit card.

### **Reminders for Online Filing:**

- You must be physically present in the U.S. when your OPT application is filed with USCIS.
- While filing Form I-765 online allows for immediate filing and receipt of your application, ***the overall processing time for the I-765 application is the same regardless of paper vs. online filing.*** See the [USCIS website](#) [10] for current processing times.
- Please carefully review all answers and documentation before submitting your application to USCIS. Any amendments to the application would need to be submitted to USCIS by uploading evidence in the 'Unsolicited evidence' section of the 'Documents' tab of your USCIS online account. Additional evidence that was not requested in a request for evidence will be considered by USCIS at their discretion, and USCIS will consider the timeliness and relevance of the information when adjudicating your application.
- USCIS has the discretion to require [biometrics appointments](#) [17] on a case-by-case basis.
- Since online filing has only been announced in April 2021, our office is unable to anticipate all potential challenges of online filing.

### **[Guidance for Online Completion of Form I-765 for Optional Practical Training](#)** [7]

## **Filing Your Completed OPT Application with USCIS - Paper-Filing Option**

### **Reminders for Paper-Based Filing:**

- You must be physically present in the U.S. when your OPT application is filed with USCIS.
- USCIS must receive your OPT application within 30 days of the OPT I-20 issuance date, no more than 90 days before your I-20 program completion date, and no more than 60 days after your I-20 program completion date.
- Unlike with the online filing option, applying for OPT via a paper-based application will not provide you with immediate access to your receipt number, receipt notice, or other proof of filing. If you include the G-1145 form with a paper-based application, you may be notified by USCIS via text or email of your receipt number approximately two weeks after submitting your application. The receipt notice from USCIS may take 3-4 weeks or more to arrive after a paper-based filing.
- Unlike with the online filing option, applying for OPT via a paper-based application will not provide you with immediate confirmation that your application fee payment was successful.
- Keep a copy of your entire application packet for your personal records (including signed I-765, photos, and check/money order), just in case you need to reference these documents in the future.
- Please carefully review all I-765 answers and application packet documentation before submitting your application to USCIS. If you realize after filing your OPT application with USCIS that you have made an error in your application, please immediately [consult](#) [14] an advisor with the International Center.
- Even if you file your OPT application via a paper-based application, you can still create an online account with USCIS and benefit from some of their online tools to track your case status. See the [USCIS website](#) [18] for more details.

### **[Guidance for Paper-Filing of Form I-765 for Optional Practical Training](#)** [8]

Please review our [After You Have Applied for OPT](#) [19] page for a summary of recommended next steps after filing your OPT application.

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**Source URL:** <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/apply-opt>

**Links**

- [1] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/stem-extend>
- [2] <https://umich.instructure.com/courses/294193>
- [3] [https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/f\\_optletter.pdf](https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/f_optletter.pdf)
- [4] <mailto:icenter@umich.edu>
- [5] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/about/location>
- [6] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/express-mail-through-eship-global>
- [7] [https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/Guidance\\_Online\\_Filing\\_Form\\_I-765\\_OPT.pdf](https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/Guidance_Online_Filing_Form_I-765_OPT.pdf)
- [8] [https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/Guidance\\_Paper\\_Filing\\_Form\\_I-765\\_OPT.pdf](https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/Guidance_Paper_Filing_Form_I-765_OPT.pdf)
- [9] <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>
- [10] <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>
- [11] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/forms/OPT-Request.pdf>
- [12] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/i-94>
- [13] <http://wolverineaccess.umich.edu/>
- [14] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/advising-hours>
- [15] <https://www.uscis.gov/news/news-releases/f-1-students-seeking-optional-practical-training-can-now-file-form-i-765-online>
- [16] [https://myaccount.uscis.gov/users/sign\\_up](https://myaccount.uscis.gov/users/sign_up)
- [17] <https://www.uscis.gov/forms/filing-guidance/preparing-for-your-biometric-services-appointment>
- [18] <https://www.uscis.gov/file-online/how-to-create-a-uscis-online-account>
- [19] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/opt-after>