Post-Completion OPT Application Checklist

Before applying for OPT, please attend an OPT Workshop or review the F-1 OPT guidelines on the ISS OPT Page. If you have any questions, please set up a meeting with an ISS Advisor by emailing internationalstudents@ucr.edu.

Application Window
The earliest USCIS can accept your application is 90 days before your program completion date (not graduation date) and no later than 60 days after your program completion date. USCIS will deny applications outside of this application window. Students may apply via paper mail or online method, please only choose one method.

OPT Application Steps

1. Request an OPT I-20 from the ISS Office. Please gather the following items and email them to internationalstudents@ucr.edu. Please allow 7-10 business days for an ISS Advisor/DSO to review your documents to determine if you are eligible to apply for OPT.

   - OPT Request Form
     ● Signed by your Academic Advisor (Undergraduate Students) or Graduate Advisor (Graduate Students)
   - Form I-765 (Optional Practice Draft)
     ● We recommend downloading the latest paper version to practice filling out the I-765 form before submitting it to USCIS.
     ● Do NOT submit an I-765 to USCIS until you receive an OPT I-20 from the ISS Office. You must have an OPT I-20 before submitting your I-765 to USCIS.
     ● You can refer to our Sample I-765 as an example. The sample is for general instructional purposes only and USCIS may update the I-765 edition version directly on the website.
   - Copy of your most recent Form I-94
   - (If Applicable) Supporting Documents: Copies of previous CPT I-20, EAD cards, OPT I-20, I-20 with different SEVIS number, or other relevant documents.

2. Pay $100.00 ISS OPT Fee. ISS will review your OPT packet. Once ISS has determined that you are eligible to apply for OPT, ISS will provide you with ISS OPT Fee payment instructions.

3. Receive your OPT I-20 from the ISS Office. Once you have paid the OPT fee and submitted your payment receipt to ISS, an ISS Advisor will email your OPT I-20 to your UCR email. Please review your OPT I-20 and sign it at the bottom. If you would like to meet with an ISS Advisor to review your documents, please reach out to internationalstudents@ucr.edu.

4. Gather Final OPT (I-765) Application Documents to Submit to USCIS. Please be sure to submit your documents to USCIS within the application window and within 30 days of the date that the International Student Advisor entered your OPT recommendation into SEVIS. Here are the documents that USCIS will require:

   - Form I-765
   - OPT I-20 (MUST BE ISSUED BEFORE THE I-765 IS SUBMITTED TO USCIS)
     ● The OPT I-20 must have OPT Recommendation from a DSO on the 2nd page. OPT recommendation is required before the I-765 Application is submitted to USCIS.
     ● The OPT STEM I-20 must be submitted to USCIS within 30 days of issuance
   - Passport Photos
     ○ For Online Applications: 1 Digital Copy of your U.S. Passport-style photo
     ○ For Paper Applications: 2 Hard Copies of your U.S. Passport-style photos (Please lightly write your name and SEVIS ID or I-94 Number on the backs of each photo)
   - Government Identification
     ○ For Online Applications: Digital copy of a previous EAD card, valid passport, or most recent F-1 visa
     ○ For Paper Applications: Hard copy of valid passport and F-1 visa
Form I-94 to receive eNotifications (Only for Paper Applications)

Form G-1145 to receive eNotifications (Only for Paper Applications)

Supporting Documents (if applicable): Copies of previous CPT I-20, OPT I-20, EAD card, I-20 with different SEVIS ID number, or others

$410 USCIS I-765 Fee (Review USCIS Fee Schedule for any Fee Changes)
- Online Applications: Credit Card or Electronic Bank Transfer
- Paper Applications: Personal Check, Money Order or Cashier’s Check → Payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Optional USCIS Premium Processing Fee (Review USCIS Fee Schedule for any Fee Changes)
- Decisions on OPT applications are made within 30 days of submission.

Mailing the I-765 Application to USCIS (Only for Paper Applications)
- Filing address under ‘Foreign Students’ on the I-765 Direct Filing Address page

Filing the I-765 Online (Only for Online Applications)
- REMINDER: You must first receive the OPT I-20 from the ISS Office
- Step One: I-765 Website
- Step Two: Scroll down the I-765 page and click ‘File Online’
- Step Three: Create USCIS Online Account

After Submitting the OPT Application to USCIS
- USCIS will issue an OPT Receipt Number and mail you a paper I-797 Receipt Notice.
- You can track your case through your online USCIS account or use the receipt number to track case status
- Within Approximately 3-5 Months: USCIS will mail the final OPT decision
  - If USCIS sends you a Request for Evidence (RFE) or a Denial Notice, please make an appointment with an ISS advisor internationalstudents@ucr.edu
  - If your OPT is approved, USCIS will deliver your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card to your mailing address.
    - Send scan of EAD Card to ISS internationalstudents@ucr.edu
    - If you applied for an SSN, SSA will mail you your SSN card separately.

After OPT Approval
Set up Your SEVP OPT Portal
Once you are approved for OPT, you will need to set up your SEVP OPT Portal account. The OPT Portal is an important tool to maintain your F-1 status by reporting your employment and personal information during your OPT period. From the start date of your EAD card, you will receive an OPT Portal link through your UCR email to set up your portal account. If you do not receive this link or it has expired, please contact the ISS Office internationalstudents@ucr.edu to reset the OPT portal link. Once your OPT portal is set up, you must report any changes within 10 days of that change.

Unemployment Rule
USCIS allows 90 days of unemployment time during the 12-month Post-Completion OPT period. Unemployment days are counted from the start date on your EAD card/your approved OPT start date. In order to stop the unemployment clock, please be sure to report your employment information through your OPT Portal account. It is important to report your OPT Employment before your unemployment time has passed to avoid falling out of F-1 status.

International Travel during OPT
When traveling internationally during your OPT period, please carry the following items to enter back to the U.S. To request for an updated travel signature, please email internationalstudents@ucr.edu.
- Valid Passport (must be valid for at least 6 months at time of entry to the U.S.)
- Valid F-1 Visa Stamp (Canadian nationals are exempt)
- OPT I-20 with Travel Signature (only valid for 6 months)
- OPT EAD Card
- Employment Verification Letter or Job Offer Letter