Post-Completion OPT Application Checklist

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

Application Window
USCIS can accept your application earliest 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.

OPT Application Steps
Students may apply via paper mail or online method. Please only choose one method. Before applying, please do NOT submit your I-765 Form to USCIS until you have received a new I-20 with OPT Recommendation by an ISS Advisor (OPT I-20).

1) Obtain an OPT I-20 from UCR 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 and issue your OPT I-20.

- [ ] OPT Request Form
  - Signed by your Academic Advisor (Undergraduate Students) or Graduate Advisor (Graduate Students)
- [ ] Form I-765 (Practice Draft Only)
  - Do NOT submit an I-765 to USCIS until you receive an OPT I-20 from UCR ISS Office. You must have an OPT I-20 before submitting your I-765 to USCIS.
  - We recommend downloading the latest paper version from the I-765 website to practice filling out the I-765 form before submitting it to USCIS.
  - You can refer to our Sample I-765 as an example.
    - The sample I-765 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

2) Receive your OPT I-20 from the UCR ISS Office

Once your OPT documents are reviewed, 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. The OPT I-20 will expire within 30 days of the I-20 issue date. If you would like to meet with an ISS Advisor to review your documents, please reach out to internationalstudents@ucr.edu.

3) 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 OPT I-20 issue date. Here are the documents that USCIS will require:

- [ ] Form I-765
  - You can refer to our Sample I-765 as an example.
    - The sample I-765 is for general instructional purposes only and USCIS may update the I-765 edition version directly on the website.
- [ ] 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. DSO recommendation must be made before the I-765 Application is submitted to USCIS.

☐ 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 write your name and SEVIS ID or I-94 Number on 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
☐ 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
  • For Online Applications: Credit Card or Electronic Bank Transfer
  • For Paper Applications: Personal Check, Money Order, or Cashier’s Check – Payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”

Mailing the I-765 Application to USCIS (Only for Paper Applications)
If you will be filing via paper mail, please gather the final OPT (I-765) application and mail it to the correct mailing address. You can find the 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 UCR ISS Office. Please DO NOT submit your I-765 application/online OPT application to USCIS until you receive your OPT I-20 from the UCR ISS Office.

Step One: Go to 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
After You Submit your OPT Application Online: 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 right away (internationalstudents@ucr.edu).
  • If your OPT is approved, USCIS will deliver your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card to your mailing address.
    o Send scan of EAD Card to ISS (internationalstudents@ucr.edu)
    o If you applied for an SSN, SSA will mail you your SSN card separately.
**From the Start Date of EAD card:** SEVP will email SEVP OPT Portal link to your UCR email address

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**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 6 months into the future)
- Valid F-1 Visa stamp
- OPT I-20 with Travel Signature (only valid for 6 months)
- OPT EAD Card
- Supporting Documents:
  - Proof of Employment (i.e. job offer letter or employment verification letter)
  - Financial Documents