



F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)

CHECKLIST

- Complete the **OPT Status Responsibilities Form**.
- Have your Advisor complete the **OPT Confirmation of Program Completion Form (POST-COMPLETION OPT ONLY)**.
- Complete form **1-765** (available at uscis.gov). (SEE SAMPLE I-765 – APPENDIX A)
- Contact the PDSO or DSO to arrange for an appointment. Please bring the above items to your appointment.
- The PDSO will print a new **I-20** for you which will include AUSB’s recommendation for your OPT. You will need to send a copy of the new **I-20** with your application.
- Mail the following documents to the USCIS at one of the addresses listed below. **For post-completion OPT, USCIS must receive your application no more than 60 days beyond your graduation day or 60 days beyond the end date of your I-20 (whichever is EARLIER). You must send your application within 30 days of receiving the new I-20 from the PDSO. Please keep copies of all documents mailed for your own records.**
 - Form **I-765** (available at uscis.gov – SEE SAMPLE I-765 – APPENDIX A).
 - Copy of pages 1 & 2 of the **new I-20** confirming your OPT recommendation.
 - Copy of **ALL** previous I-20s issued to you (from AUSB and any prior institution).
 - Copy of your **I-94** (available online).
 - Copy of the photo page and expiration date page of your passport.
 - Copy of the F-1 visa page of your passport (even if expired).
 - Copy of previous OPT card or EAD card, if you have one.
 - Two passport-size photos. Print your name and I-94 card number lightly in pencil on the back of each photo. Place the photos in an envelope and attach it to the front of your **I-765**. **DO NOT CUT THE PHOTOS.**
 - **Payment of Fee.** See <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> for current fee amount. Checks may be made payable to the Department of Homeland Security. You may send a money order or a personal check from a U.S. bank. Attach the money order or check to the front of the **I-765** form. **DO NOT SEND CASH.**
 - Staple the documents together and send via certified mail with return receipt or via FedEx (to track your package). You will receive a notification of receipt from the USCIS (Form **I-797**).

For U.S. Postal Service deliveries including U.S.P.S. express mail
USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For (non-USPS) courier service deliveries (FedEx, UPS, DHL etc)
USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S, Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034

FORM I-765 INSTRUCTIONS (SEE SAMPLE I-765 – APPENDIX A)

- Check box 1.a “permission to accept employment” or “renewal” if you are applying for a 17 month extension; fill out lines 1 through 27); sign and date:**
- #5 Mailing Address:** This must be an address at which you can receive mail for at least the next 3 ½ months. You cannot put in a forwarding order on this address—the immigration service’s envelopes state “Do Not Forward.” If the card is sent to an address with a forwarding order, or if you cannot receive mail at the address you use, your card will be returned to the immigration service and destroyed. If you want to use a friend’s address, please mark “In care of” and their name. If you want your department to receive mail for you, check with your department first.
- #8 Alien Registration Number:** In most cases you will use your I-94 number found at the top of your I-94 that you retrieved online. It is usually an 11 digit number – sometimes the last two digits are separated by a space.
- #12 Previous I-765:** The answer is “no” unless you have previously applied for an OPT card at this or any other institution. It is “no” even if you have had CPT or an H1B visa.
- #27 Eligibility Categories:** For F-1 OPT, fill out as follows:
 - For summer OPT PRIOR to graduating: (c) (3) (A)**
 - For POST-Completion (after graduating) OPT: (c) (3) (B)**
- Certification:** Remember to sign and date the I-765

REMINDERS: REGULATIONS WHILE YOU ARE ON "OPT"

REQUIRED UPDATES (ADDRESS AND EMPLOYMENT). Immigration regulations REQUIRE that while you are on OPT, you **MUST** notify the AUSB PDSO when you change your address AND/OR when you are NOT employed.

TRAVELING ABROAD WHILE ON PRACTICAL TRAINING:

In order to re-enter the U.S. while you are on Optional Practical Training, you must have a valid passport, current F-1 visa stamp, I-20 signed within the last six months, the EAD (OPT work card) or the receipt notice for you OPT application **AND your job offer letter.**

NEVER ENTER the U.S. in any VISA STATUS OTHER THAN F-1 while on your OPT (it will invalidate your OPT!)

OPT – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is F-1 Optional Practical Training?

Practical training is the opportunity to apply knowledge gained in your degree program to off-campus work in your major field (not your minor). OPT is authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This authorization can take 2 to 3 months to obtain. The maximum amount of time granted to work on F-1 OPT status is 12 months per degree level plus a possible H1B cap gap extension OR a 17 month extension for those who qualify (see info on page 4). You may use some or all of the available 12 months of practical training during your course of study or save the full twelve months to use after you graduate. You may apply for POST-graduation OPT up to 90 days before your graduation date and **the immigration service MUST RECEIVE your application NO LATER THAN 60 days beyond your graduation date or 60 days beyond the end date of your I-20 (WHICHEVER IS EARLIER)** or, if you are an advanced graduate student, **NO LATER THAN 60 days beyond the last day that you are registered as a student or the end date of your I-20 (WHICHEVER IS EARLIER)**. You **MUST** send your application within 30 days of getting the new I-20 from the PDSO.

2. What are the Eligibility Requirements for F-1 Optional Practical Training?

To be eligible to apply for optional practical training, you must: have been a full time enrolled student in the U.S. for at least one academic year by the requested start date of your OPT and be in F-1 status when you apply.

3. If I complete one degree program, take 12 months of practical training, and then begin a second course of study, am I eligible for an additional 12 months of practical training?

Yes, you are eligible to apply for another 12 month period of Optional Practical Training after changing to a **higher degree level**. This does not apply to a second master's degree.

4. How can I use optional practical training while I am still in my program?

You may use OPT while you are still in your degree program as follows: (1) part-time while school is in session, (2) full-time during annual vacation periods, and/or (3) full-time after you completed all course requirements for the degree and have a thesis requirement remaining. These periods of OPT used before you graduate will be deducted from the total allowable period of 12 months. Part-time OPT will be deducted at one-half the full-time rate.

5. How long does it take to get authorization for OPT and when should I apply?

Authorization for OPT is granted by USCIS and can take 2 - 3 months to obtain. Therefore it is important that you apply long before the date you wish to start working. For post-completion OPT, you may apply up to 90 days before your graduation date and **NO LATER THAN 60 days beyond your graduation date, end date of your I-20 or last day that you are registered if you are an advanced graduate student**. You also can NOT apply MORE than 120 days before the start date that you choose. You **MUST** send your application within 30 days of getting to new I-20 from the PDSO.

6. Do I need to have a job to apply for optional practical training?

You do **NOT need to have a job offer** before applying for the first 12 months of optional practical training.

7. Do I need to have a job while I am on optional practical training?

Yes. The new regulation requires that you do have employment while on your POST-graduation OPT period. You are only allowed to have a total of 90 days of unemployment in your 12 month period of OPT. While on POST-completion OPT, you **MUST** update your employment information with the PDSO.

8. Does the job I have while on OPT have to be paid employment, or can it be unpaid?

For the first 12 month period of post-completion OPT, the employment does NOT have to be paid employment. Therefore, a student who is self-employed (including performance majors with regular “gigs”), interning or Volunteering in a position directly related to the academic field would be considered “employed” for the purposes of OPT employment.

9. Can I begin working before I receive the Employment Authorization Document?

You may NOT begin employment before you receive your EAD from USCIS; working before practical training has been authorized by the USCIS constitutes illegal employment that will jeopardize your legal status in the U.S.

10. Do I have to do anything with the PDSO while I am on OPT?

Yes! Immigration regulations REQUIRE that while you are on POST-completion OPT, you **MUST** report your employment and address information to the AUSB PDSO.

11. Can I extend my OPT after the 12 months?

There are two types of extensions available: 1) a 17 month extension for those in certain fields (not applicable at AUSB) and 2) an “H1B Cap Gap Extension” which extends your work authorization through to the start of your cap subject H1B visa if your OPT ends after your cap subject company has applied for a H1B for you but before the H1B starts on the following October 1st. This cap gap extension is available to all F-1 students using OPT in any field, as long as you have a pending or approved “cap subject” H1B application and the employer applied for in with a request for change of status as part of the application. The extension is automatic, you do not have to do anything at all to get the extension. “Cap Subject” refers to any H1B application that must be counted against the quota on H1B applications.

TRAVEL and OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

12. Now that I’ve turned in my application, can I travel outside the U.S. while I wait for the card to come?

After you graduate, in order to re-enter the U.S. you must have the following: OPT card (or receipt notice for the OPT application), your valid passport, a **current F-1 visa stamp**, I-20 signed within the last six months, **AND your job offer letter or proof of employment. Before you graduate**, you should be able to get back in to the U.S. without the OPT card as long as it is still long enough in advance of your graduation (at least one month). If you have to travel, talk to the PDSO before you leave.

13. I want to leave the U.S. for a short time while my OPT application is in process, but I need to return before the card will arrive. I have a tourist visa (B2) that is valid for 10 years. Can’t I just enter the U.S. on my tourist visa while I’m waiting to get the EAD card, then start work with the card once I get it?

No. If you intend to continue working on your OPT, **NEVER** enter in any other immigration status except F-1. If you leave the U.S. and re-enter with a B status, and you will have lost your F-1 status and your OPT will be **invalid!**

14. What documents do I need to re-enter the U.S. while on OPT?

You will need your I-20 that has been endorsed on the travel line by the PDSO within the last 6 months; the OPT card from the USCIS (or the receipt notice for your OPT application), your valid passport, a **current F-1 visa stamp**, **AND your job offer letter or proof of employment.**

15. The visa stamp in my passport has expired, but I need to travel outside the U.S. while on OPT. Do I need to get a new visa stamp at an embassy?

If you are going to Canada or Mexico, and staying for less than 30 days, you could re-enter the U.S. on your expired F-1 visa stamp, with your I-94 card, a valid passport, your EAD card (or receipt notice), an I-20 that has been signed by the PDSO within the last 6 months, **AND your job offer letter or proof of employment** as long as: 1) you do not apply for a visa while in Canada and 2) you are NOT a national of Iran, Syria, Sudan, Cuba or North Korea. **If you are traveling elsewhere**, you will need to go to a U.S. embassy or consulate and seek a new visa stamp. **Please come in to the PDSO** to discuss your visa application with an advisor as the consulates often change the requirements for visa applications for students on OPT.

16. In what ways is my application to the embassy for a new visa stamp affected by being on Optional Practical Training?

The risk of denial of an application for a renewed visa stamp for Optional Practical Training is somewhat higher than while you are in your active student program. The F-1 student visa requires that the applicant must intend to return to the home country at the end of the program, and if the embassy official is not convinced of your intention to return home, the visa application will be denied. It is possible and many students on OPT get their F-1 visa stamps renewed. You do have to be careful to demonstrate non-immigrant intent.

17. What documents do I need to show at the embassy for a new visa stamp under OPT?

You need to take a valid passport, the EAD card or receipt notice for your application, an I-20 created by the PDSO for your OPT application, **AND your job offer letter or proof of employment**. The official job offer letter should say temporary and not permanent. You should also be prepared to discuss how this job experience will apply to the job market in your home country, and how you intend to apply it there.

18. Do I still need to get the travel line on my I-20 signed by the PDSO during the year of OPT?

Yes, during the OPT year, if you travel outside the U.S., you need to have the travel line signed every six months. If you are not located in Santa Barbara, mail the original I-20 to the PDSO for endorsement, leaving plenty of time for mailing delays both ways.

Choosing your Start Date

You are allowed to pick a start date any time within the 60 days following your graduation date or your last day of registration (whichever is earlier). There is some leeway if you finish your coursework and need an earlier start date. There are many overlapping time constraints which affect your OPT application. When choosing the start date for your OPT card, the most important priorities to weigh are:

1. **Choose the earliest day that you might want to start working (you cannot begin working BEFORE the start date on the OPT card).**

2. **If you want the latest possible day to start your work authorization**, the latest day you may choose as your start date for the OPT card is 60 days after your graduation or last day of registration (whichever is earlier).

REMEMBER: You may not change these dates after you apply for OPT.

APPENDIX A

To be completed by an attorney or Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA)-accredited representative (if any). Select this box if Form G-28 is attached. Attorney or Accredited Representative USCIS Online Account Number (if any)

Part 1. Reason for Applying (marked)

I am applying for (select only one box):

- Initial permission to accept employment.
- Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document, or correction of any employment authorization document NOT DUE to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) error.
- Renewal of my permission to accept employment. (Attach a copy of your previous employment authorization document.)

NOTE: Replacement (correction) of an employment authorization document due to USCIS error does not require a new Form I-765 and filing fee. Refer to Replacement for Card Error in the What is the Filing Fee section of the Form I-765 Instructions for further details.

Other Names Used
Provide all other names you have ever used, including aliases, maiden names, and nicknames. If you need extra space to complete this section, use the space provided in Part 6.

Additional Information:

- 2.a. Family Name (Last Name)
- 2.b. Given Name (First Name)
- 2.c. Middle Name
- 3.a. Family Name (Last Name)
- 3.b. Given Name (First Name)
- 3.c. Middle Name
- 4.a. Family Name (Last Name)
- 4.b. Given Name (First Name)
- 4.c. Middle Name

Part 2. Information About You

Your Full Legal Name

- 1.a. Family Name (Last Name) FAMILY NAME
- 1.b. Given Name (First Name) GIVEN NAME
- 1.c. Middle Name

NOTE: Family name should be in all caps.

Part 2. Information About You

Address must be in the U.S. and be valid 30 months in the future.

Your U.S. Mailing Address

- 5.a. In Care Of Name (if any)
- 5.b. Street Number and Name
- 5.c. Apt. Ste. Flr.
- 5.d. City or Town
- 5.e. State S.F. ZIP Code

6. Is your current mailing address the same as your physical address? Yes No

NOTE: If you answered "No" to Item Number 6, provide your physical address below.

U.S. Physical Address

- 7.a. Street Number and Name
- 7.b. Apt. Ste. Flr.
- 7.c. City or Town
- 7.d. State S.F. ZIP Code

NOTE: Use 11 digit I-94 number.

Other Information

- 8. Alien Registration Number (A-Number) (if any) A-
- 9. USCIS Online Account Number (if any)
- 10. Gender Male Female
- 11. Marital Status Single Married Divorced Widowed
- 12. Have you previously filed Form I-765? Yes No
- 13.a. Has the Social Security Administration (SSA) ever officially issued a Social Security card to you? Yes No

NOTE: If you answered "No" to Item Number 13.a., skip to Item Number 14. If you answered "Yes" to Item Number 13.a., provide the information requested in Item Number 13.b.

13.b. Provide your Social Security number (SSN) (if known)

14. Do you want the SSA to issue you a Social Security card? (You must also answer "Yes" to Item Number 15, Consent for Disclosure, to receive a card.) Yes No

NOTE: If you answered "No" to Item Number 14, skip to Part 2, Item Number 18.a. If you answered "Yes" to Item Number 14, you must also answer "Yes" to Item Number 15.

15. Consent for Disclosure: I authorize disclosure of information from this application to the SSA as required for the purpose of assigning me an SSN and issuing me a Social Security card. Yes No

NOTE: If you answered "Yes" to Item Numbers 14 - 15, provide the information requested in Item Numbers 16.a. - 17.b.

Father's Name
Provide your father's birth name.

- 16.a. Family Name (Last Name)
- 16.b. Given Name (First Name)

Mother's Name
Provide your mother's birth name.

- 17.a. Family Name (Last Name)
- 17.b. Given Name (First Name)

Your Country or Countries of Citizenship or Nationality
List all countries where you are currently a citizen or national. If you need extra space to complete this item, use the space provided in Part 6, Additional Information.

- 18.a. Country
- 18.b. Country

Part 2. Information About You (continued)

Place of Birth
List the city/town/village, state/province, and country where you were born.

- 19.a. City/Town/Village of Birth
- 19.b. State/Province of Birth
- 19.c. Country of Birth
- 20. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

Information About Your Last Arrival in the United States

- 21.a. Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record Number (if any)
- 21.b. Passport Number of Your Most Recently Issued Passport
- 21.c. Travel Document Number (if any)
- 21.d. Country That Issued Your Passport or Travel Document
- 21.e. Expiration Date for Passport or Travel Document (mm/dd/yyyy)
- 22. Date of Your Last Arrival Into the United States, On or About (mm/dd/yyyy)
- 23. Place of Your Last Arrival Into the United States
- 24. Immigration Status at Your Last Arrival (for example, B-2 visitor, F-1 student, or no status)
- 25. Your Current Immigration Status or Category (for example, B-2 visitor, F-1 student, parolee, deferred action, or no status or category)
- 26. Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Number (if any) N-

Information About Your Eligibility Category

27. Eligibility Category. Refer to the Who May File Form I-765 section of the Form I-765 Instructions to determine the category for this application.

28. (e)(3)(C) STEM OPT Eligibility Category. If you entered the eligibility category (e)(3)(C) in Item Number 27, provide the information requested in Item Numbers 28.a. - 28.c.

28.a. Degree

28.b. Employer's Name as Listed in E-Verify

28.c. Employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a Valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number

29. (e)(3)(C) Eligibility Category. If you entered the eligibility category (e)(2)(b) in Item Number 27, provide the receipt number of your F-1B spouse's most recent Form I-797 Notice for Form I-29, Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker.

30. (e)(8) Eligibility Category. If you entered the eligibility category (e)(8) in Item Number 27, have you EVER been arrested for and/or convicted of any crime? Yes No

NOTE: If you answered "Yes" to Item Number 30, refer to Special Filing Instructions for Those With Pending Asylum Applications (e)(8) in the Required Documentation section of the Form I-765 Instructions in about providing court dispositions.

(e)(3)(B) Eligibility Category. If you entered the eligibility category (e)(3)(B) in Item Number 27, please provide the receipt number of your spouse's or parent's Form I-797 Notice for Form I-40.

31.b. If you entered the eligibility category (e)(3)(B) or (e)(3)(C) in Item Number 27, have you EVER been arrested for and/or convicted of any crime? Yes No

NOTE: If you answered "Yes" to Item Number 31.b., refer to Employment-Based Nonimmigrant Categories, Item 8 - 9, in the Who May File Form I-765 section of the Form I-765 Instructions for information about providing court dispositions.

Part 3. Applicant's Statement, Contact Information, Declaration, Certification, and Signature

NOTE: Read the Penalties section of the Form I-765 Instructions before completing this section. You must file Form I-765 while in the United States.

Applicant's Statement

NOTE: Select the box for either Item Number 1.a. or 1.b. If applicable, select the box for Item Number 2.

- 1.a. I can read and understand English, and I have read and understand every question and instruction on this application and my answer to every question.
- 1.b. The interpreter named in Part 4, read to me every question and instruction on this application and my answer to every question in a language in which I am fluent, and I understood everything.
- 2. At my request, the preparer named in Part 5, prepared this application for me based only upon information I provided or authorized.

Applicant's Contact Information

- 3. Applicant's Daytime Telephone Number
- 4. Applicant's Mobile Telephone Number (if any)
- 5. Applicant's Email Address (if any)
- 6. Select this box if you are a Salvadoran or Guatemalan national eligible for benefits under the ABC settlement agreement.

Applicant's Declaration and Certification

Copies of any documents I have submitted are exact photocopies of unaltered, original documents, and I understand that USCIS may require that I submit original documents to USCIS at a later date. Furthermore, I authorize the release of any information from any and all of my records that USCIS may need to determine my eligibility for the immigration benefit that I seek.

I furthermore authorize release of information contained in this application, in supporting documents, and in my USCIS records, to other entities and persons where necessary for the administration and enforcement of U.S. immigration law.

I understand that USCIS may require me to appear for an appointment to take my biometrics (fingerprints, photograph, and/or signature) and, at that time, if I am required to provide biometrics, I will be required to sign an oath reaffirming that:

- I reviewed and understood all of the information contained in, and submitted with, my application; and
- All of this information was complete, true, and correct at the time of filing.

I certify, under penalty of perjury, that all of the information in my application and any document submitted with it were provided or authorized by me, that I reviewed and understand all of the information contained in, and submitted with, my application and that all of this information is complete, true, and correct.

Sign in BLUE ink

Applicant's Signature

- 7.a. Applicant's Signature
- 7.b. Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy)

NOTE TO ALL APPLICANTS: If you do not completely fill out this application or fail to submit required documents listed in the Instructions, USCIS may deny your application.

Part 4. Interpreter's Contact Information, Certification, and Signature

Provide the following information about the interpreter.

Interpreter's Full Name

- 1.a. Interpreter's Family Name (Last Name)
- 1.b. Interpreter's Given Name (First Name)
- 2. Interpreter's Business or Organization Name (if any)