



Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

SJSU | INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
AND SCHOLAR SERVICES

Topics Covered in Tutorial

What is OPT?

Eligibility Requirements

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Application Process Overview

Application Steps

Employment Authorization

Maintaining Status on Pre-Completion OPT

Optional Practical Training

“Temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student’s major area of study”

Up to 12 months may be authorized by USCIS

Pre-Completion

Occurs during your studies when:

- CPT is not an option;
- You are not eligible for CPT.

Post-Completion

Occurs after degree completion OR Grad students only: After completion of all course requirements and are only left with a project, thesis or comprehensive final exam.

*** This presentation will focus on Pre-Completion OPT.**

Eligibility

Pre-Completion OPT

1. Must have been a full-time student for at least one consecutive academic year;
 - a. *OPT eligibility requirements may reset due to a leave of absence or SEVIS record termination. Please consult with an ISSS Advisor for more information.
2. Be in valid F-1 status when requesting OPT I-20 from ISSS and when application is submitted to USCIS;
3. Be in good academic standing (minimum 3.0 for graduate students and 2.0 for undergraduate students);
4. Be physically present in the U.S. when requesting the OPT I-20 from ISSS and submitting your application to USCIS.

Important Information

Pre-Completion OPT

Full-Time vs. Part-Time

1. Pre-Completion OPT can be full-time (more than 20 hours per week) or part-time (20 hours or less per week).
2. Full-time Pre-Completion OPT is only available to students:
 - a. during summer or
 - b. Graduate students who have completed all course requirements and are only left with a project/thesis/comprehensive exam in their final semester.

Affect on Post-Completion OPT

Students are eligible for 12 months of Optional Practical Training. Time used for pre-completion OPT, will be subtracted from your 12 months.

1. Working Full-Time?
 - a. Time will be subtracted at the full rate.
 - b. Example: If your approved full-time Pre-Completion OPT dates are October 1, 2025 - December 1, 2025. This is 62 days of work, subtracted at the full rate. This would give you 303 days of Post-Completion OPT eligibility.
2. Working Part-Time?
 - a. Time will be subtracted at half the rate.
 - b. Example: If your approved part-time Pre-Completion OPT dates are October 1, 2025 - December 1, 2025. This is 62 days of work, subtracted at half the rate, is a total of 31 days subtracted. This would give you 334 days of Post-Completion OPT eligibility.

When to Apply

Pre-Completion OPT

1. You may submit the Pre-Completion OPT I-20 request to ISSS up to **100 days** BEFORE you want to start working.
 - a. Earliest ISSS can do a Pre-Completion OPT recommendation is 90 days before you want to start working.
2. Please see the ISSS web page for [Pre-Completion OPT](#) to find out the Fall, Spring and Summer Dates to eligible semester dates for Pre-Completion OPT.
3. OPT applications can take 2-3 months (sometimes longer) to get approved by USCIS. Therefore, we recommend that you apply early.

IMPORTANT: You must get a new I-20 with a Pre-Completion OPT recommendation BEFORE filing your Pre-Completion OPT application with USCIS.

Pre-Completion OPT Process

1. Recommend [scheduling a zoom appointment](#) to meet with an International Student Advisor from ISSS to discuss Pre-Completion OPT.
2. Email ISSS to request the Pre-Completion OPT I-20 Request iSpartan link.
 - a. international-office@sjsu.edu
3. **Student requests a Pre-Completion OPT I-20 from ISSS. *You will need this I-20 with Pre-Completion OPT recommendation from ISSS to file your Pre-Completion OPT application with USCIS.***
 - a. Complete the e-form.
 - b. Select the requested Pre-Completion OPT start and end dates. Review [Pre-Completion OPT web page](#) for allowable dates.
 - i. You are not required to have a job to request pre-completion OPT.
 - c. You will need to indicate full-time or part-time in your request.
 - i. Review slide for more details.
 - d. Academic Department (Major Advisor or Graduate Program Coordinator) information will need to be added into the e-form. Name, title and email address.
 - i. Request will be routed to ISSS once your Academic Department reviews request.
 1. Please note that it is your responsibility to notify your academic/major advisor of the OPT approval request. It will be sent via email to the indicated advisor.
 - ii. Once your Academic Department has signed off on your Pre-Completion OPT request, you will receive an email that your request has been routed to ISSS for processing.
4. **ISSS Receives Pre-Completion OPT I-20 Request**
 - a. Once submitted to ISSS, processing time is 5-7 business days.
 - c. DSO will review your eligibility for Pre-Completion OPT.
 - d. DSO will recommend Pre-Completion OPT in your SEVIS record and issue you a new I-20 with the OPT recommendation on page 2.
 - ii. DSO will email you the I-20 with Pre-Completion OPT recommendation.
 - iii. **You will need this I-20 to file your Pre-Completion OPT application with USCIS.**

Pre-Completion OPT Process

5. Student files Form I-765 and supporting documents with USCIS.

- a. **Do not file your application with USCIS until you have a new I-20 with Pre-Completion OPT recommendation from ISSS.**
 - b. USCIS must receive your pre-completion OPT application within 30 days of the date your pre-completion OPT was recommended by ISSS, or your pre-completion OPT application will be denied.
 - i. DSO will tell you when your pre-completion OPT recommendation was done, when they email you the I-20.
 - ii. We recommend checking this [date calculator](#) to find your deadline for USCIS to receive your application. If the deadline is on a Saturday or Sunday, we recommend that it be received by the Friday before
 - iii. If you are unable to file within 30 days, then contact ISSS for an updated I-20.
 - c. Review checklist for documents needed to apply.
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USCIS offers 2 different ways to file an I-765 (OPT) application with USCIS.

*You must choose one option. You cannot choose both options.

1. Mail application to [USCIS lockbox](#).
2. Online filing of [I-765](#).

Filing I-765 (Pre OPT) with USCIS

You must have a new I-20 with Pre-Completion OPT recommendation from ISSS to file I-765 (Pre-Completion OPT) with USCIS.

USCIS offers 2 different ways to file an I-765 (Post-Completion OPT) application with USCIS. You must choose one option. You cannot choose both options. ISSS recommends you file online.

1. Online filing of [I-765](#).
2. Mail application to [USCIS lockbox](#).

See next slide for Comparison

*Go to ISSS [Pre-Completion OPT webpage](#) for the following tutorials:

1. Online filing of I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT
2. Mailing I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT

Only if you are unable to file online, then you can mail your application and supporting documents to [USCIS](#). Review ISSS Mailing I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT tutorial . (BEFORE mailing your application, we highly recommend [meeting with an Advisor](#) from ISSS to find out why you are unable to file online).

Online Filing vs. Mailing Application

ISSS recommends that you file online. ***You must choose one option. You cannot choose both options. *Do not file with USCIS until you have the I-20 with OPT recommendation from ISSS.**

Online Filing

- Save all required documents for Pre-Completion OPT application on your computer.
- Create online account with USCIS.
- File I-765 for Pre-Completion OPT.
- Upload supporting documents in online application.
- Receive same day notification, receipt number, that application has been filed with USCIS.

Review slides 11-14

Mailing Application to USCIS

- Gather all required documents for Pre-Completion OPT application.
- Complete I-765.
- Make a copy of your complete application, prior to mailing.
- Mail application to USCIS.
- If application is rejected, it will be returned to you. ****If your application is returned to you, contact ISSS, to get a new I-20 (outside 30 day filing window).***

Review slides 15-16

Required Documentation if Filing Online

For filing the online I-765 Pre-Completion OPT Application to USCIS

- **2 x 2 Photo of You**
 - You will need to get a new passport style color photograph taken.
 - Review the [Department of State photo guidelines](#).
- **Form I-94**
 - Retrieve I-94 at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>
 - If you have a paper I-94, include a copy both sides of the card
 - If you changed your status to F-1 and have not left the US since getting F-1 status, you will need to submit a copy of your I-797A approval notice.
- **Employment Authorization Document (EAD) or Government ID**
 - Copy of previous EAD card, if you have ever had OPT(pre- or post-completion) or STEM OPT.
 - If you do not have an EAD, then you will need to submit a copy of your passport bio page.
 - *If your passport will be expiring within 6 months, you will need to write a letter acknowledging your passport expiration date and that you plan on renewing your passport before it expires.
 - *If your I-94 has your old passport number on it, then you will need to submit a copy of your current and your previous passport.
- **Proof of Enrollment**
 - Submit documentation to show that you have been enrolled full-time for one academic year.
 - University Transcript.
- **Previously Authorized CPT or OPT**
 - Upload all copies of I-20's that have CPT authorization or any previous OPT or STEM OPT authorization.
- **Form I-20**
 - I-20 with pre-completion OPT recommendation from ISSS.

****Filing code is (c) (3) (A) for Pre-Completion OPT***

Additional Information if Filing Online

For filing the online I-765 Pre-Completion OPT Application to USCIS

Additional Information

Complete this section to give additional useful information that you would like USCIS to know.

**You are required to indicate any current or previous employment authorizations that have been authorized in your SEVIS record [CPT, OPT (Pre, Post or STEM), Economic Hardship, or Special Student Relief (SSR) from SJSU and/or other schools.] (See next slide for details).*

Additional information may also include:

*Passport information: Only if your I-94 information or F-1 visa has your old passport number on it, then enter the expired passport information here.

*SEVIS ID number: If you have had a different SEVIS ID number, other than the number listed on your current I-20.

Additional Information if Filing Online

For filing the online I-765 Pre-Completion OPT Application to USCIS

Additional Information Continued

Give the details of your currently authorized post-completion OPT

Also, If you had previous CPT authorization:

Section: Select “Evidence”

Question: “Previously authorized CPT or OPT”

Additional Information: Enter the type of employment authorization, indicate if part-time or full-time, degree level, authorization dates, and any receipt numbers (IOE or YSC) associated with the authorization.

Example for CPT: CPT; Full-time; Master’s; Authorized (05/31/2020 - 08/15/2020).

Example for OPT: Post-Completion OPT; Full-time; Master’s; Authorized (01/21/2021 - 01/20/2022); IOE123456789.

Review and Submit Online to USCIS

For filing the online I-765 Pre-Completion OPT Application to USCIS

- **Review your application**
 - This is where you can check your application before you submit.
 - Check to make sure that you have spelled things correctly as well as entered any dates in the US format of MM/DD/YYYY.
- **Your application summary**
 - This is a summary of all the information that you have provided in your application.
- **Your statement**
 - You must read and agree to the statements that are listed in this section.
- **Your signature**
 - Type in your full legal name, for the digital signature.
- **Pay and submit**
 - The final step to submit the Form I-765 is to pay the required application fee.
 - The filing fee is non-refundable and subject to change. Please go to <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> for the current filing fee.

Required Documentation if Mailing

For mailing the I-765 Pre-Completion OPT Application to USCIS

Assemble your documents using the suggested order below; held together by a paper clip or binder clip. Do not staple your documents together.

1. Application/filing fee. Fees are subject to change, so please refer to uscis.gov/i-765 for the current filing fee amount.
 - a. You will need to use a personal check, cashier's check or money order [from a U.S. bank account] payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security". If needed, search online about how to write a check.
2. 2 recent passport-style color photographs.
 - a. You will need to get new passport style color photographs taken.
 - b. Review the [Department of State photo guideline](#) for size dimensions.
3. Form [G-1145](#), E-notification of Application/Petition Acceptance.
4. Form [I-765 Application for Employment Authorization](#). (All pages, completed, and signed).
 - a. Read the [USCIS Instructions for Form I-765](#).
 - b. Review slides 7-27 of ISSS [Mailing I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT](#) for I-765 Completion Guide.
5. Photocopy of I-20 with Pre-Completion OPT recommendation.
6. Photocopy of valid passport biographical page.
 - a. *If your passport will be expiring within 6 months, you will need to write a letter acknowledging your passport expiration date and that you plan on renewing your passport before it expires.
 - b. *If your I-94 has your old passport number on it, then you will need to submit a copy of your current and your previous passport.
7. Photocopy of F-1 visa stamp, if applicable.
8. Form I-94 record of arrival.
 - a. Retrieve I-94 at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>
 - b. If you have a paper I-94, include a copy both sides of the card
 - c. If you changed your status to F-1 and have not left the US since getting F-1 status, you will need to submit a copy of your I-797A approval notice
9. Photocopy of any Employment Authorization Document (EAD) [front and back sides], from SJSU and/or other schools.
10. Photocopies of all previous CPT, OPT or STEM OPT I-20's, from SJSU and/or other schools.
11. Proof of enrollment for the current semester.
 - a. Submit documentation to show that you have been enrolled full-time for one academic year.
 - b. University Transcript.

Review and Mail to USCIS

For mailing the I-765 Pre-Completion OPT Application to USCIS

- **Review your application prior to mailing to USCIS.**
 - Review the [Form I-765](#) for the correct edition date and that you have signed the appropriate page.
 - USCIS will not accept a digital signature on the Form I-765.
 - We recommend that you make a copy of your entire application packet before mailing to USCIS.
- **Mail your entire application to the [USCIS lockbox](#).**
 - You will mail to the lockbox location for Foreign students.
 - You will have to select the correct address based on how you are mailing your application.
 - We recommend using Fed Ex or UPS.
 - If you mail via USPS, then use tracking.

Pre-Completion OPT Process

6. USCIS processes Pre-Completion OPT application.

- a. Within 2-3 weeks of USCIS receiving your Pre-Completion OPT application, a paper receipt (Form I-797) will be mailed to the mailing address that you provided as your mailing address in your application (Form I-765).
 - i. If you filed online, then you will receive notification that your application was received on the day that you filed the application with USCIS. .
 - ii. Review the receipt for any errors in your name or date of birth. If there are errors, please contact ISSS.
- b. Processing of your OPT application can take 2-3 months, sometimes longer.
 - i. You cannot change your requested OPT dates, once you have filed/mailed your OPT application with USCIS.
 - ii. If your application is returned back to you (if you mailed it) or if you receive a RFE 'Request for Evidence' from USCIS, please contact ISSS.
 - iii. USCIS offers premium processing.

*You can learn more about premium processing in our [FAQ](#) section on our [Pre-Completion OPT webpage](#). ISSS does not recommend the premium processing option, as long as you have built in sufficient time (e.g. 2-3 months) to apply for OPT.

While I-765 is Pending

What you can do while your application is pending with USCIS.

1. Do not work.
 - a. You cannot start working until your OPT has been approved, you have your EAD card in hand, then work within the authorized dates (noted on the card) in a job (paid or unpaid) that is related to your major.
2. Use [USCIS Case Status Online](#) to check the status of your application.
3. Check processing time online.
 - a. Click [here](#) to check I-765 application processing times at Potomac Service Center.
 - i. Under <Forms> select 'I-765', for <Service Center> select 'Potomac Service Center', click the 'Get Processing Time' button.
4. Use [USCIS Case Status Online](#) to check the status of your application.
5. If you receive an RFE 'Request for Evidence' or RFI 'Request for Information', please contact ISSS.

Maintaining F-1 Status on Pre-Completion OPT

- Maintain your F-1 status by continuing to be enrolled and pursuing your degree.
- Do not work until your Pre-Completion OPT has been approved, you have your EAD card in hand, then work within the approved dates indicated on your EAD card.
- All employment must be directly related to your major field of study.
 - Employment can be paid or unpaid.
 - You are not required to report your employment to ISSS or via the SEVP Portal during Pre-Completion OPT.
- Report living address and any change in living address within 10 days of the change directly in your mySJSU account.

THANK YOU!

Email: international-office@sjsu.edu

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