OPT Online Application

Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) Guidelines

North Park University
Office of International Affairs

What is OPT?

○ OPT is training/employment that is directly related to an F-1 **academic student's** major area of study. It is intended to provide students with practical experience in their field of study upon completion of a degree program in the U.S.   It can be either paid or unpaid.

- ○ Available after completing each level of education (i.e., Bachelors, Masters)

- ○ One year of work authorization for non-STEM degrees

- ○ Two-year extension available for approved STEM degrees

- ○ Must apply for approval from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

Eligibility

- F-1 academic student who has attended a Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) approved school for one academic year.

- Student is on track to complete their degree this term.

- Student must have a valid passport and be in F-1 status (no status violations).

- OPT employment must be related to the student's major area of study.

- Note: No specific job offer is required to request OPT.
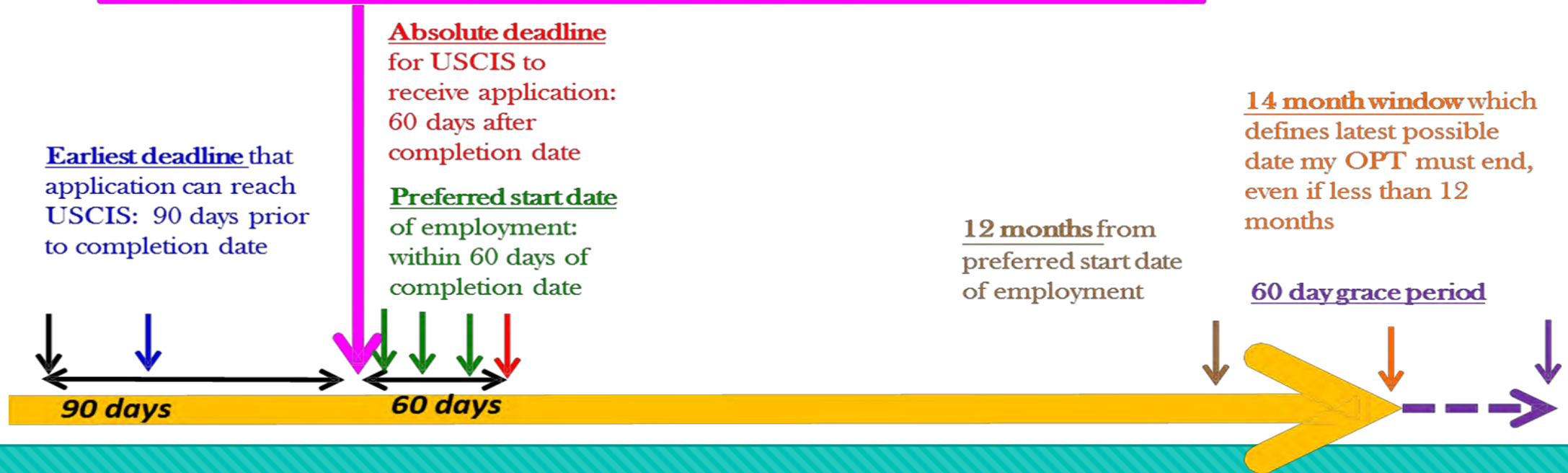
When to apply for OPT

Important Dates – December 2023 grads

I-20 Program End Date: December 15, 2023

First day to apply: September 18, 2023

Last day to apply: February 13, 2024

OPT "start date" between December 16 – February 13, 2024

Important Dates – May 2024 grads

I-20 Program End Date: May 11, 2024

First day to apply: February 12, 2024

Last day to apply: July 9, 2024

OPT "start date" between May 12 – July 9, 2024

How to Apply Online for Post-Completion OPT

○ Follow the step-by-step instructions provided by OIA

○ DO NOT submit your online OPT application without your OPT I-20 with your OPT recommendation. You request this new I-20 from the Office of International Affairs (OIA).

○ Alternatively, you can submit a paper application to USCIS via mail.

How do I request my
OPT I-20?

Step #1: Apply for Graduation

○ Once you complete the Graduation Application, you will wait for an email from the Office of the Registrar who will send you and your Academic Advisor a "Degree Audit."

○ You may NOT apply for OPT if you are not on-track to graduate this semester.

Step #2: Request OPT I-20

You must complete the OPT I-20 Request form (Docusign):

- ✓ Fill out the form, including your requested start date for OPT
- ✓ Form will be sent automatically to your advisor to confirm that you are on track for graduation
- ✓ OIA will prepare your new I-20

Step #3: Sign your OPT I-20

- ✓ You will be sent a PDF that you can print-out and sign or you may stop by the Center of Student Engagement Front Desk in the Johnson Center to pick-up the original copy.

- ✓ DO NOT FORGET TO SIGN YOUR NEW I-20!

- ✓ Upload this I-20 with your OPT Application

Step 1: Prepare Your Documents

When you submit the online I-765 application for Post-Completion OPT, you will need to have your documents ready to upload.

Save all documents as .pdf or .jpeg documents and follow USCIS's requirements for file names. Do not use foreign characters.

Application Materials

- ❑ Passport identification page
- ❑ I-94 arrival record
- ❑ Digital Photos - you must prepare a digital passport-style photo taken within the last thirty days
- ❑ All I-20s with CPT authorization or previous OPT authorization
- ❑ Any I-20 from a previous school or degree program, if applicable.
- ❑ Any previously issued Employment Authorization Documents (EAD) cards, if applicable
- ❑ Your new OPT I-20 obtained from the Office of International Affairs (OIA)
  - ❑ Once you have read through this entire application packet and are ready to apply, please request a your OPT I-20, using the form provided by OIA.
  - ❑ Be sure to sign your new I-20 in ink at the bottom of page 1, in the "Student Attestation" section
  - ❑ Confirm your I-20 has the correct requested start date. No date changes are allowed once you submit your application.

Step 2: Create Your myUSCIS Account

Create Account	Set up your myUSCIS account by going to uscis.gov and selecting "Sign In" --> "Create Account"
Enter Email	Use a personal e-mail to create your myUSCIS account. Do not use your school e-mail.
PIN	The system will send you a one-time PIN to log into your account; you will need to continue to use two-factor authentication when signing-in to your account.
Create Account	Follow all other USCIS instructions to finalize the account creation process.
Save Password	Save your log-in information as you will need to return to your account to continue your application.
Next Steps	Once you create your myUSCIS account, read through USCIS's Tips for Filing Forms Online page. After you have reviewed the information, start your online I-765 application (next step).

Step 3: Prepare and Submit Your Online I-765 Application for Post-Completion OPT

Important Notes on Timing: You must submit your application within 30 days of your OPT I-20 issuance date or your application will be denied.

Look for the option to "File a Form Online"

Look for the option to file Form I-765 (toward the bottom) - be sure to select the correct form!

Once you have selected Form I-765, you will be prompted to start the online I-765 application

You should make an edit to you online application every 30 days or your form progress will reset, and you will need to start over.

Section 1: *"Getting Started"*

Basis of eligibility: select the correct eligibility code

(c)(3)(B) for post-completion Optional Practical Training (most common - for employment following graduation)
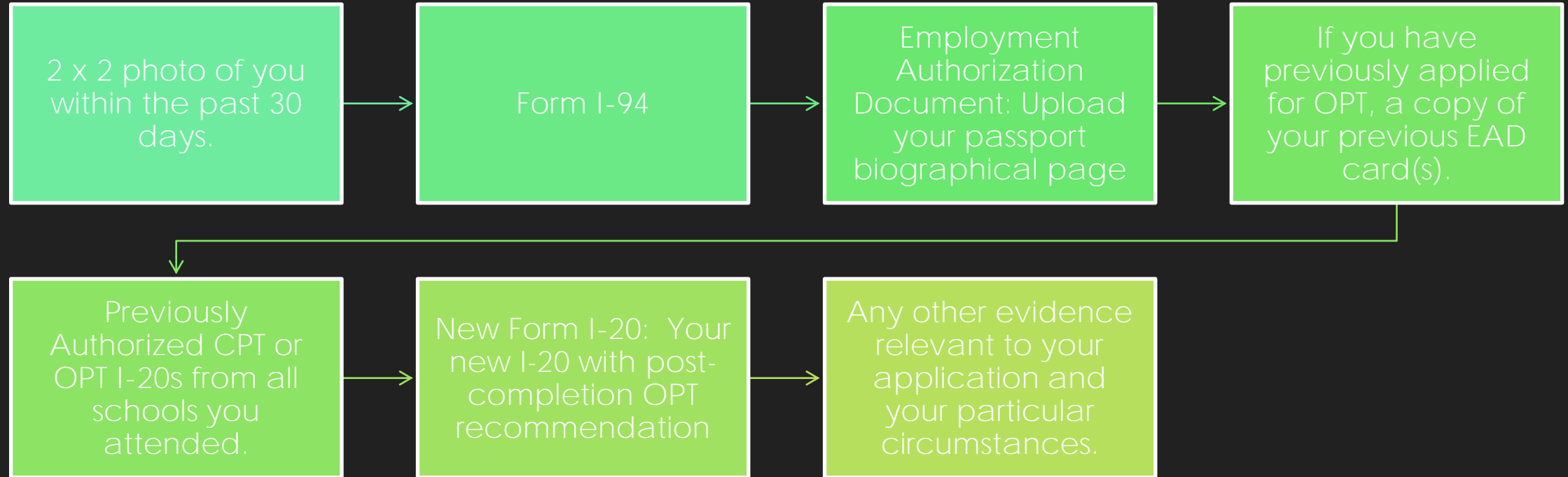
Reason for applying:

For post-completion OPT for your first time at this academic level, select "initial permission to accept employment"

Section 2: "About You"

- Your name:
  - Include any names you have identified as currently or in the past
- Your contact information:
  - Current mailing address: Address where you wish to receive your card.
    - If you will move in the next 4-5 months, it is recommended you include a friend or family member's address on your I-765. Put their name in the "in care of" field.
  - If you include a friend or family member's address, select "no" to the question is your current mailing address the same as your physical address?
  - Under "where in the United States do you currently live" enter your current address even if you will move during your OPT application process.
- Other information: F-1 students generally do not have an A-number or a USCIS online account number
- Fill-in all other requested information as applicable.

Section 3: "Evidence"

2 x 2 photo of you within the past 30 days. → Form I-94 → Employment Authorization Document: Upload your passport biographical page → If you have previously applied for OPT, a copy of your previous EAD card(s).

Previously Authorized CPT or OPT I-20s from all schools you attended. → New Form I-20: Your new I-20 with post-completion OPT recommendation → Any other evidence relevant to your application and your particular circumstances.

Section 4: *"Additional Information"*

- This section is to provide additional explanation or information for your responses in your I-765 or for your uploaded evidence. This section does not allow for uploads.

- In this section you can include additional information such as:
  - Previous SEVIS ID #s or previous academic studies (Section: About You; Page: Your immigration information; Question: What is your SEVIS number?)
  - If you have missing I-20s for previously authorized CPT or OPT, include those details (Section: Evidence, Page: Form I-20, Question: I-20 Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status)

Section 5: Review and Submit

○ MyUSCIS will review your I-765 for completeness. It is your responsibility to check that all uploaded documents are correct.   Correct any errors under the "alerts and warnings" section.

○ If there are no alerts or warnings, your I-765 has been checked for completeness.

○ There is an option to print this page or save your draft I-765 as a .pdf file. Please review your application for accuracy and save a copy for your records

Section 6: Submit Payment

○ Once your application is complete, the system will direct you to Pay.gov, a US government payment site, to pay the required I-765 application fee ($410)

○ There, you will be able to pay the application fee using a US credit / debit card or through an ACH transfer (direct withdrawal) from your US checking account.

- IMPORTANT: Once you submit your payment information and that payment is successfully received, USCIS considers your application OFFICIALLY SUBMITTED.
  - You cannot change or edit your I-765 application responses after payment has been submitted.
  - The fee is non-refundable once payment has been made.
- Once your application is submitted, USCIS will assign a receipt number.
  - You can print out an electronic receipt from your myUSCIS portal.
  - A paper receipt (I-797) will be mailed to you within a few weeks.

Premium Processing (OPTIONAL)

Premium Processing

- [Premium Processing](#) requires a separate I-907 application form, by paper or online

- Additional $1,500 fee

- Guarantees processing of an OPT application within 30 calendar days, which means they will issue an approval notice, a denial notice, a notice of intent to deny, or a request for evidence.

Should I apply for Premium Processing?

- Given current USCIS processing times (~2-3 months), it is not be necessary.

- OIA encourages students to consider current processing times, when their OPT application was received by USCIS, their requested OPT start date, and potential travel plans before paying for premium processing.

- You can check current USCIS's OPT processing time by going to the USCIS processing times website.

Waiting for Approval

Check your mail!

You should receive three items in the mail in the weeks/months after applying for OPT:

1. I-797 Receipt Notice
2. I-797 Notice of Approval
3. EAD Card

Retain all notices for your records.

Check your case status

- You can log back into myUSCIS to check for any updates.

- Often, any RFEs (Requests for Evidence) will be emailed to you and/or posted here. These require your immediate attention.

- You can also check your case through this USCIS website, using your receipt number.

What should I do if I get an RFE?

- If you do receive a "request for evidence" (RFE) via email or mail please notify OIA immediately.

- This means you are required to submit or resubmit (additional) information regarding your application.

- Failure to comply with an RFE may result in a denial of your OPT application.

- You will need to upload or mail in the additional evidence requested.

Travel During OPT

While OPT application is pending:

- Travel during this time frame is strongly discouraged.

- If OPT is approved while you are outside of the U.S., you will need to receive the EAD card via mail to be re-admitted.

After OPT is approved:

- Students are generally permitted to travel after receiving OPT approval.
- Remember to carry valid travel documents:
  - Passport
  - Visa
  - EAD Card
  - I-20 with OPT request and travel signature (within 6 months)
- Do NOT travel if your visa is expired, unless you plan to renew it.

Reporting Employment

SEVP OPT PORTAL

- You will be emailed login information AFTER your OPT has been approved and the start date has been reached. Learn more and review the User Guide at https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/create-an-sevp-portal-account

- To report changes, make updates in the SEVP OPT Portal or contact OIA.

- You must report any changes to your contact or employment information (including breaks in employment) within 10 days.

- You must have employment related to major/program of study.

- Your OPT will end if you accrue a total of 90 days of unemployment (counted from the start of your OPT period) or if you transfer your SEVIS record to another school.

OPT Information Session, Part 2
covers all reporting & travel guidelines
in more detail!

Recording & resources available on
ISS website.

Online Resources

- OPT Application Instructions and Request form – click here to access on the NPU website

- USCIS website on Optional Practical Training

- Study in the States: STEM Extension OPT Hub

- Study in the States: Training Opportunities in the U.S.

QUESTIONS?