



STANTON UNIVERSITY

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OPT (Optional Practical Training)

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a period during which undergraduate and graduate students with F-1 status who have completed or have been pursuing their degrees for more than nine months are permitted by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to work for at most one year on a student visa towards getting practical training to complement their field of studies. F-1 students are usually permitted a total of 12 months of practical training.

Step 1: Obtaining the International Student adviser (DSO) recommendation

Since you must first obtain a new SEVIS I-20 with the International Student adviser/DSO's OPT endorsement, you need to come to the International Student adviser/DSO to request OPT and apply for it. To apply, first

1. Download and complete the I-765 Form in PDF format on-line and print it. Sign the hard copy, making sure not to write outside the allotted area. For an "F-1 student seeking Optional Practical Training in an Occupation Directly related to Studies", you fill in the category (c)(3)(B)
2. Download and complete the OPT Recommendation Request Form and bring the completed form to the International Student adviser/DSO. Please come prepared to the International Student adviser/DSO office with your desired employment start and end dates.
3. Bring to the International Student adviser/DSO
 - a) Your current I-20 and all previously issued I-20's.
 - b) Your passport and I-94 card.
- 4.
5. Pay the \$200 processing fee via Populi. Come back to pick up and sign your I-20.

Step 2: Mailing your EAD applications to USCIS

1. Sign your New I-20.
2. We suggest that you send your application to the USCIS by certified mail, return receipt requested or by a courier service such as FedEx to provide you with proof that your application was timely in the event that the application is lost. Photocopy the entire application before you send it so that you have a copy for your records.

Include the following documents in your application:

1. Completed Form I-765 (your address on the I-765 on the form is extremely important- see STEP 3)
2. Required \$410 filing fee (no cash) payable to the "Department of Homeland Security" by bank check, money order (Please note: a money order is more difficult to track than a check), or personal check—only if your name and address are preprinted on the front.
3. Photocopies of all I-20's issued to you since you first entered in F-1 status. Include all pages. Do not send the Originals.
4. Photocopies of the identification page of the passport
5. Photocopies of both sides of the I-94 card

6. Photocopies of both sides of any previously issued EAD cards if applicable.
7. Two recent photos of yourself. The USCIS requires that the photos meet the specifications for the full frontal/passport type of photos and not be more than 30 days old when the application is filed. We recommend that you write your name on the back of each picture in pencil.
8. Mail your application to the USCIS Service Center.

| <u>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:</u> | <u>For Express mail and courier deliveries:</u> |
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| <p>USCIS PO Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036</p> | <p>USCIS Attn: AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034</p> |

Step 3: Receiving Your EAD Card in the Mail

Address: The address you put on the I-765 has to be one at which you can reliably receive mail up to four months from the time you mail the application. An “undeliverable” address is the major source of problems with OPT applications.

USCIS will send all mail related to the EAD to the address indicated on the I-765 form, even if you later update your address with the International Student adviser/DSO and in SEVIS.

U.S. government mail will not be forwarded to another address, even if you change it with the postal service.

The address must be within the jurisdiction of the USCIS Regional Service Center to which the application is being submitted or the application will not be processed.

If you are using an address of a friend, your name should be indicated somewhere on the mail box. If the mail carrier does not recognize your name, the envelope with the EAD card will be returned to USCIS. Use "C/O" (care of) the name of your friend in the address to help avoid confusion.

Processing time: The USCIS can take from 6 to 12 weeks (or more) to process an EAD application. Regulations provide that if an employment application has not been adjudicated within 90 days from the date of receipt, an applicant may go to the District Office for "interim employment authorization", valid up to 240 days. If you have not received a response from the USCIS within 90 days of your application, please contact the International Student adviser for information about interim employment authorization.

Vermont Service Center (VSC): To find out more about the VSC and its processing procedures, visit the [USCIS Web page](#).

Step 4: Report your employment information to the SU.

Submit a photocopy of your EAD card to your ISA/DSO.

If you haven't already, secure employment. (You have 90 days from your OPT start date).

Once your employment is confirmed, submit Employment Verification Form and Employment Letter.

Receive your new OPT I-20 that lists your employer's information from your ISA.

If you cannot secure employment within 90 days, your OPT I-20 will be terminated. Please report to school immediately.

If you change your employment, you must report to the school. Both Employment Verification Form and Employment Letter are required again. Upon submission of the documents, you will receive a new OPT I-20.

Common Questions About OPT

1) Can I leave the U.S. while my OPT is processing?

Although certain agencies have stated that students who have completed their studies may travel outside the U.S., the regulation says that an EAD card plus a letter from the employer are required for re-entry. The student must decide whether to take the risk or not.

2) Can I travel outside the U.S. after I receive my EAD card?

Once you receive your EAD card you are allowed to travel outside the U.S., however, you will want to make sure to have the following documents in your possession to be granted re-entry:

- Signed I-20 within a 6 month period
- EAD card
- Valid U.S. visa
- Valid passport
- Letter from your employer verifying employment. This is required.

3) What happens after the EAD expires?

After your EAD card expires you must either leave the U.S. or start a new program of study with a new I-20 within 60 days.

4) Do I have to inform Stanton University of address and phone number changes?

Yes. You must inform Stanton University of any address or phone number changes within 10 days. USCIS requires you to update this information to our office to maintain your immigration status while engaging in Optional Practical Training.

5) What happens if I don't graduate in time?

OPT requests can be cancelled, but it is a complicated process. You should inform the SU office as soon as possible that you will not be completing your program as planned, so that we can extend your program on your I-20, if necessary. If your I-20 expires, your options are limited, and you may lose your OPT benefit.