

## **Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

### **What is Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)?**

Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training is for students who have not yet met the requirements to complete their degree, but would like authorization to work in their field of study.

### **Who is eligible for Pre-Completion OPT?**

Students maintaining F-1 status who have completed two semesters of full-time study by the requested employment start date are eligible to apply for Pre-Completion OPT.

### **When should I apply?**

You can apply for Pre-Completion OPT up to 90 days prior to the requested start date. If they receive the application packet more than 90 days before the requested start date, it will be denied and the application fee will not be refunded.

You must file your application to USCIS no more than 30 days past the date of issuance on your I-20. If it is past the 30 days, it will be denied.

### **How do I choose my OPT dates?**

With processing times of about up to 90 days, you want to allow time for the OPT card to arrive. You cannot begin working until both the card arrives and are within the authorized dates of employment listed on the card. We recommend you choose your dates accordingly.

You must also choose an end date for your OPT. The date cannot go past the end date of your program. If you are applying for full-time pre-completion OPT, this can only be authorized during official college breaks. The start date must be after the semester ends and the end date must be before the next semester begins.

### **How many hours can I work on Pre-Completion OPT?**

You are authorized to work part-time (up to 20 hours) per week while classes are in session and are allowed to work full time (over 20 hours) during official college breaks (summer and winter)

## How does Pre-Completion OPT affect my Post-Completion OPT?

Pre-completion OPT time **does** take away from the 12 month authorized Post-Completion OPT time. Part-time pre-completion OPT deducts from your post-completion OPT at ½ the rate (i.e. 2 months pre-completion = 1 month post-completion.) Full-time will deduct at 100% of the rate (i.e. 1 month pre-completion = 1 month post-completion.)

## Do I need a job before I apply?

No, a job is not needed. However, it is highly suggested that you have a job as this time will deduct from the time you receive on your post-completion OPT.

## What work can I do?

You can work at any job that is related to your field of study. It can be paid or unpaid. Job title does not matter, but the nature of the work does matter as it should be related to your field of study.

## How long does it take USCIS to approve my application?

Processing times take on average 3 months.

## When can I apply for a Social Security Number?

If you do not have a Social Security Number already, the I-765 Form allows you to apply for a SSN while filing for OPT (see section 10 on I765 form.)

## What are the steps to apply for Pre-Completion OPT?

### 1. Apply for the Pre-completion OPT I-20 from ISS:

- a. Submit a Pre-Completion OPT Request Form, signed by both yourself and your academic advisor
- b. Pick up your I-20, check it over, and mail it with the rest of the required items no more than 30 days after the issuance date on the I-20.

*(cont.)*

**2. Send your application and all required documents to USCIS:**

- a. G-1145 Form. This will provide with E-notification that your file was received. (Free and optional)
- b. A check or money order for \$410.00 made out to the **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**. (DO NOT WRITE ON THE BACK OF THE CHECK!) Your name and address must be on the check. Write your I-94 # on the bottom left hand of the check (in the “memo” or “for” section.)
  - i. For money orders, use the following address for the receiver:

PO Box 660867  
Dallas, TX 75266

- c. Two passport style photographs taken within the last 6 months. Each photo must be cut to 2 inches by 2 inches with your name and I-94 # printed lightly on the back in pencil. Photos must have been taken within the past 6 months. Place the photos and check/money order in an envelope. Write your name and I-94 # on the outside of the envelope as well.
- d. Complete form I-765 **online** using the PDF version located at the following website <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf> you will need Acrobat Reader to open the file.
  - i. **Be sure to enter (c) (3) (A) in step # 20. Print completed form I-765 and sign in BLUE INK.**
  - ii. Double-check your address. Will you be there in 3 months? If unsure, you can use ISS’s address.
- e. All I-20s, Visa, Passport, I-94 card/electronic print out. If you wish to receive an E-notification that your application was received by USCIS you can print and complete form G-1145 and include it with this packet. <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf>

**3. Make a copy of your completed I-20 application for your records.**

**4. Make an appointment with ISS to bring in your application to be reviewed by an advisor.**

**5. Mail your entire packet by certified return receipt mail (allows you to track the package.)** If you are staying with the New York/New Jersey area, all packets mailed by USPS should be sent to:

USCIS  
PO Box 660867  
Dallas, TX 75266

**Once I receive my EAD card, what should I do?**

- Make sure to check the dates are correct on the card.
- Make a copy of the card and bring or email it to ISS for our records.
- You must inform ISS of any employment you receive and if you change your address.
- You cannot start working until you receive your EAD card and the start date on the card has arrived.

## Pre-Completion OPT Request Form

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE STUDENT:**

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

RCC ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street) (City/State) (Zip Code)

Check here if you have a secondary MAJOR

OPT Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ OPT End Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full- Time or Part- Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Passport Expiration: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you applied for OPT before (Circle one): NO YES

If YES, please indicate for which education level: Associates Bachelors Masters

I understand that all periods of Pre-Completion OPT will be deducted from the available period of post-completion OPT.

**TO BE COMPLETED BY AN ACADEMIC ADVISOR ONLY:**

The above-named student is applying for permission to engage in employment for OPT as provided in the immigration regulations for F-1 students. OPT is employment in a job related to the student’s field of study and is intended to enhance and supplement the formal, classroom education. US Immigration and Citizenship Services (USCIS) will authorize OPT.

- International Student Services (ISS) must have a statement from the student’s academic advisor indicating the date the student is expected to complete all degree requirements or the expected date of completion. The date of completion is not necessarily the end of the term or the graduation date, but the date all requirements for the degree are fulfilled.
- This date must accurately reflect the actual completion date of his/her program. Students may not continue working on campus after the end date that you confirm below until they have OPT from USCIS.

Please complete the information below and return it to the student so we may process the student’s request. Should you have any questions, call ISS at ext. 4193.

I certify that the above student will complete All the requirements for their degree on: \_\_\_\_\_  
(mm/dd/yyyy) please be accurate)

Major: \_\_\_\_\_ Degree to be received: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Advisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Pre-Completion OPT USCIS Application Checklist

**You must submit all the following items to USCIS. Please put the packet together in the following order.**

- ❑ Fee of \$410. Make check payable to the “US Department of Homeland Security.” You may send a money order or personal check drawn on a US bank, NO CASH. Your name and address must be on the check. Write your I-94 # on the bottom left hand of the check (in the “memo” or “for” section.)
- ❑ G-1145. Use this form if you wish to receive email or text confirmation (within 1 week) of your receipt number from the Lockbox facility. Clip the form to the front of the OPT application. Find the form at: [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).
- ❑ Two “passport” photos. Print your name and write your admission number (I-94#) on the back of each photo. Use powder to prevent glaring and be sure there are no shadows in your photos! You may put the photos and check in an envelope and attach carefully to the front of the I-765 (do not staple photos!).
- ❑ Original I-765 form (follow instructions on how to complete form on page 2).
- ❑ A copy (NOT original) of page 1 and 2 of the new pre-completion I-20 from ISS with the recommendation for OPT on page 2. Sign the new I-20 in blue ink. This I-20 cannot be more than 30 days old when it arrives at USCIS or OPT will be denied!
- ❑ A copy of ALL previously issued I-20 documents dating back to beginning of F-1 status (signed in item #11).
- ❑ A copy of your I-94 record.
  - Both sides of your I-94 card (front and back - even if the back is blank) OR
  - Printout of the electronic I-94 record from [www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94)
- ❑ A copy of the photo page (identification page) and expiration date page of your passport.
- ❑ A copy of the most recent F-1 visa page in your passport (even if expired).
- ❑ A copy of any previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD) OPT card, if you have had one.

## Form I-765 Instructions for Pre-Completion OPT

- ❑ **Download the form I-765 from [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) and complete it as a form-fillable pdf.** Do NOT complete the form by hand. A machine-readable scanner reads the form.
- ❑ **Check the first box: “I am applying for: permission to accept employment.”**
- ❑ **Complete lines 1 through 16:**
  - **#1 Name:** Type your family/last name in all capital letters and your first name in sentence case.
    - **If your full name does not fit, a separate paper will need to be included to fit your entire name.**
  - **#3 U.S. Mailing Address:** This must be an address at which you can receive mail for at least the next 90 days. You cannot put in a forwarding order on this address - the immigration service’s envelopes state “Do Not Forward.” If the EAD is sent to an address with a forwarding order, or if you cannot receive mail at the address you use, your EAD will be returned to the immigration service. If you want to use a friend’s address, you need to make sure your name is on the mailbox. If you want your department to receive mail for you, check with your department first. You may use ISS to collect your mail – but we are unable to track the progress of your case. If you choose to use ISS as your mailing address, put the address as:
 

Rockland Community College  
International Student Services  
145 College Road, Suffern, NY 10901

*NOTE: If you use the ISS address, you will receive an email as soon as your card arrives in the office.*

If the mailing address you indicate on the I-765 is not located in New York/New Jersey, refer to the I-765 instructions ([www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)) for the proper mailing address for your application.

- **#9- 13 Social Security Information:** If you need a SSN, please be sure to complete steps 10-13 with the appropriate information. You will receive your SSN approximately 10 business days after your OPT is approved.
- **#14 Alien Registration Number:** Use your I-94 number either found on the upper left side of the I-94 card that you received when you entered the US (small white card in your passport) or taken from [www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94). It is usually an 11-digit number – sometimes the last two digits are separated by a space.
- **#15 Previous Employment Authorization:** The answer is “no” unless you have previously applied for an EAD (OPT card) at this or any other institution. It is “no” even if you have had CPT or an H-1B visa.
- **#20 Eligibility Categories:** For F-1 Post-Completion OPT, fill out as follows:
  - **For pre-completion Optional Practical Training: ( c ) ( 3 ) ( A )**
- **Skip #21-23**
- **Certification:** Sign and date the I-765 in **dark blue ink using a ballpoint pen**. Sign WITHIN the 2 lines.

**You may not change your OPT dates once you have filed the application with USCIS!**  
**You may not begin work until you have received the EAD card and are within the start and end date.**