Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application Guide

For F-1 International Students

What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

Optional Practical Training is a benefit of F-1 student status. It allows students to have work authorization for off-campus employment <u>in their academic major field of study</u>. To be eligible, you must be a full-time student in valid status for one academic year.

The name of the work permit for OPT is the Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

OPT Application Process

The application is completed in three steps:

1. **Attend an OPT information session. (They occur each semester.)**

2. **Prepare your application materials**

   Allow approximately 1 week to gather and organize your materials for mailing

3. **Make an appointment with an International Student Advisor**

4. **Mail the application; Receive the Employment Authorization Document (EAD)**

   3 months on average after your application has been received by USCIS
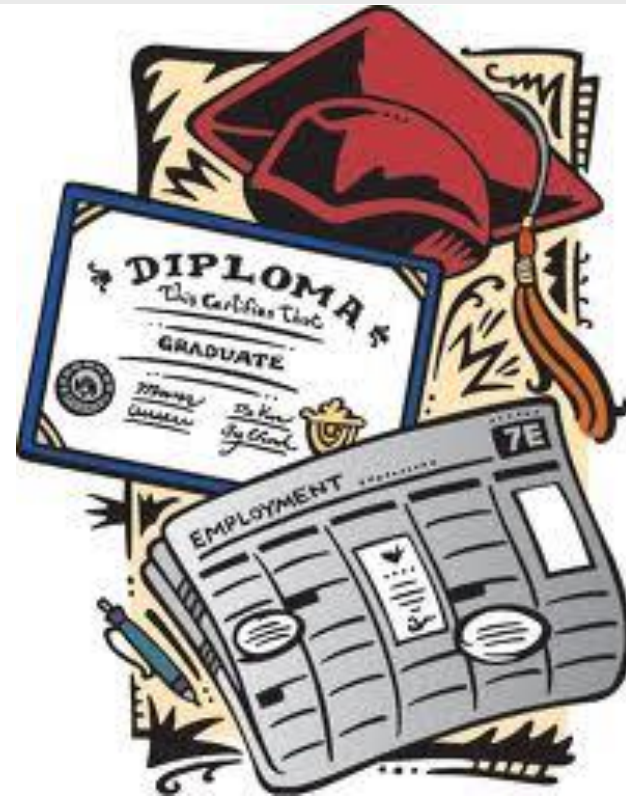
Highlights

1. One year of OPT is available after completing each degree program at a higher level. For example, you may use 12 months of OPT after completion of your Bachelor's, your Master's, and then your Doctorate = 3 years total.

2. OPT is available both before or after completing a degree program.

3. A job offer is not required to apply for OPT.

4. The employment may occur anywhere in the U.S.

5. No special permission is needed from USCIS to quit a job or change employers. However, you must notify an International Student Advisor of these changes.

6. During the period of OPT, a student remains in F-1 status.

7. An extension of OPT is allowed for up to 24 months if at the time of the extension you have a degree in a Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM) field and your employer is enrolled in E-Verify. For more information, see our web page.

Things to Remember

Stipulations

1. The application for post-completion OPT must be received by the USCIS no earlier than 90 days before program completion and no later than 60-days after your date of completion.

2. It may take up to three months to receive the EAD (Employment Authorization Document).

3. More than 90 days of unemployment during OPT is a violation of F-1 status.

4. Once you complete your degree and your I-20 has expired, you must have a valid EAD to begin working on or off campus.

5. Once the OPT application is submitted to the USCIS, it is impossible to change your selected authorization dates.

6. Canceling the OPT application is very difficult and must be discussed with an International Student Advisor.

7. OPT can only be extended beyond 12 months in limited circumstances (see item #7 at left.)

8. Employment must be related to the degree program noted on your I-20.

9. Students are required to report the following information to an International Student Advisor within 10 days of any change: name, residential address, employer name, employer address, employment status .

Types of OPT

Pre-completion OPT

Work permission before finishing degree

Post-completion OPT

Work permission after finishing degree

When employment occurs	Hours per week allowed to work	Comments
Summer or Winter Break (Pre-completion)	There is no minimum or maximum hours per week a student is required to work on pre-completion OPT.	The amount of time you use for pre-completion OPT will be deducted from your 12-month allowance. Part-time OPT is deducted from the 12 month limit at 50%. For example, if you work part-time for 4 months, only 2 months will be deducted. You will retain 10 months to use at another time.
Fall or Spring Semester (Pre-completion)	Must not exceed 20 hours per week. Graduate student who has completed all course work except the paper may work up to 40 hours per week. (Graduate Assistants must follow Graduate School employment policies)	**Students on Pre-completion OPT are not eligible for STEM Extension OPT or the H1B cap gap extension**
After degree completion (Post-completion)	Students must work more than 20 hours per week during post-completion OPT to be considered "employed" and maintaining F-1 status.	No more than 90 days of unemployment are allowed during the 12-month post-completion OPT period. See "Qualifying OPT Employment"

Application Deadlines

Pre-completion OPT
90 days before desired start date.

Post-completion OPT
You can submit your application to USCIS up to 90 days before the completion date of your program or 60 days after completion as long as you have not left the U.S. We recommend you apply as early as possible to avoid unexpected delays.

For a definition of "Completion of Program" as it refers to OPT, see page 8.

Is OPT right for you?

If you can answer "yes" to the questions on this page, you are ready to apply for OPT.

Yes!

No!

If you answer "no" to any of these questions, talk to an International Student Advisor about your situation.

Pre-Completion OPT

Have you been in F-1 status for one academic year? At Ball State, one academic year means enrollment for consecutive fall / spring or spring / fall semesters. You can count the time you spent at other U.S. schools in degree programs before you came to Ball State as long as your SEVIS I-20 was transferred to BSU.

Will your job offer still be valid three months from now? Getting the OPT permit can take three months. If your employer is not willing to wait for you, then it's not worth the effort to apply for OPT.

Do you plan on applying for STEM extension or H1B cap gap extension? Only eligible post-completion OPT students are eligible for these two extensions. If you want to apply for either of these extensions, you must submit a second application for post-completion OPT.

If you plan to work part-time during a fall or spring semester, will you also be enrolled in full time courses?

Are you willing to use some of the 12 months you are allowed for OPT? You will not have a full year of OPT after you graduate if you choose to use some of it for pre-completion employment.

Post-Completion OPT

Have you been in F-1 status for one academic year?
You can count the time you spent at other U.S. schools in degree programs before you came to Ball State as long as your SEVIS I-20 was transferred to BSU. At Ball State, one academic year means enrollment for consecutive fall / spring or spring / fall semesters.

Will you be completing your program of study at Ball State within the next three months? The application for OPT cannot be submitted earlier than 90 days before your completion date.

Are you enrolled full-time this semester or authorized by International Services to have a reduced course load? You must have approval from International Services before you withdraw from a course.

Step 1

Starting the OPT Application

1. Attend an OPT information session

2. Prepare the application materials.

3. Make an appointment to see an International Student Advisor

4. Bring all documents to the appointment

The OPT Request Form

Complete the OPT Request eForm on MyRCIP. The academic advisor you provide will receive an email asking them to complete additional information. Be sure you've spoken to your department about completing this process.

MyRCIP can be accessed at https://istart.bsu.edu

Choosing Authorization Date
On the eForm, you must indicate the date you want your work authorization to begin before meeting an International Student Advisor.
The authorization date you choose will be noted on your new OPT I-20 and cannot be changed. The dates will also be noted on your EAD.
•The **start date** is the day on which the EAD becomes valid and you can begin working. The "clock starts ticking" on the start date whether you have a job or not.
•The **end date** will automatically be 12 months later, unless you request a shorter period of time or your application is approved 61 days or more after your program completion date.

If you change your mind about your authorization dates…..
You will **NOT** be able to adjust your OPT authorization dates once you have mailed your application to USCIS. Consider the authorization dates carefully before submitting scheduling an appointment with an International Student Advisor.

OPT APPLICATION

Personal Email Address (not your BSU email)*

Your Phone Number*

999-999-9999

Have you been authorized for OPT in the past?*
○ Yes   ○ No

What **month** do you expect to graduate?

[▼]

What **year** do you expect to graduate?*

0

If you are a graduate student, will you complete all requirements, including thesis/dissertation prior to beginning your Post-completion OPT?
○ Yes   ○ No   ○ N/A

Requested OPT Authorization Begin Date *

📅 MM/DD/YYYY

The OPT Request Form

Expected Graduation Date

If you don't complete your program as expected….
Once your OPT I-20 has been created, changing your completion date can create serious complications for your OPT application. Consider your expected completion date carefully and make every attempt to finish your program on that day. Students who do not complete all coursework by the program end date may extend their program prior to the I-20 end date but they are limited to part time post-completion OPT until they satisfy all degree requirements.

Academic Advisor's Confirmation
Submitting your eForm triggers a request to the academic advisor you provide. This individual must confirm verifies your major, expected graduation date, and your registration status at the time of application.

Have you been authorized for OPT in the past?*
○ Yes   ○ No

What **month** do you expect to graduate?
[▼]

What **year** do you expect to graduate?*
[0   ]

If you are a graduate student, will you complete all requirements, including thesis/dissertation prior to beginning your Post-completion OPT?
○ Yes   ○ No   ○ N/A

Academic Advisor's BSU Department
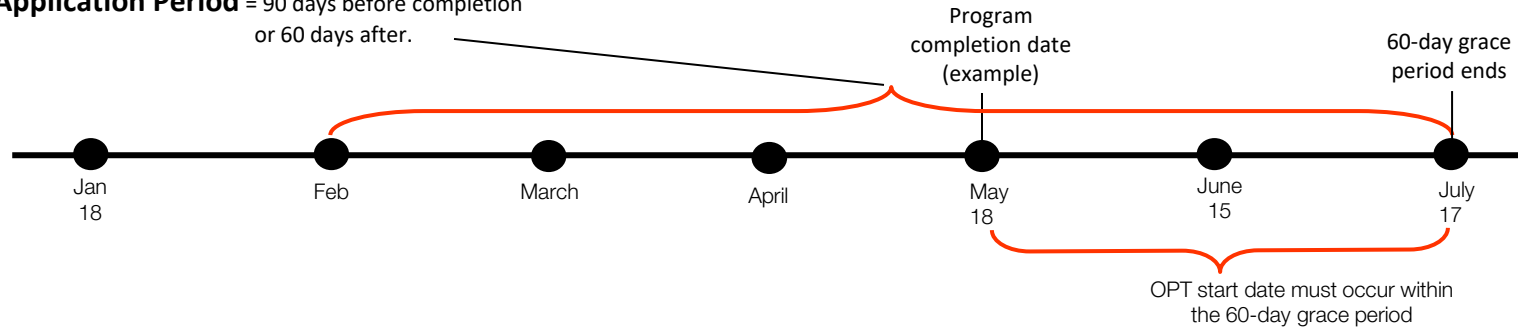[   ]

Academic Advisor's Name
[   ]

Academic Advisor's Email
[   ]

Re-type Academic Advisor's Email
[   ]

Academic Advisor's Phone
[999-999-9999   ]

The OPT Application Timeline

OPT Application Period = 90 days before completion or 60 days after.

Program completion date (example)

60-day grace period ends

Jan 18   Feb   March   April   May 18   June 15   July 17

OPT start date must occur within the 60-day grace period

Points to Consider

▪ You can submit your application to the USCIS up to 90 days before the completion date of your program or during the 60-day grace period after completion.

▪ If you leave the US during your 60-day grace period and you haven't applied for OPT, you lose your opportunity to apply for OPT.

▪ USCIS must receive your application no later than 30 days after your OPT I-20 has been issued or your application will be denied.

▪ It can take 3 months or more to receive the EAD from the USCIS.

▪ Your OPT start date can be no later than 60 days beyond your degree completion date.

▪ You cannot start working until you have received the EAD and your start date is current.

▪ If you receive the EAD before your start date has arrived, you cannot work until the start date (noted on the EAD).

▪ You cannot change your start date once the OPT I-20 has been mailed to USCIS.

▪ As long as you have applied for OPT, your F-1 status remains valid while you are waiting for the EAD even if there is a gap between your completion date and the start date of OPT. During this "gap," you can remain in the U.S. or travel abroad and re-enter as an F-1. More details on traveling while on OPT are discussed on pages 25-26.

Timelines illustrating two common scenarios can be seen on the next page.

# Choosing Authorization Dates --Typical Scenarios

Scenario 1: *Student with a job offer submits her OPT application early*

On Feb.18, Lin mails her application for OPT to the USCIS. She is completing her program on May 18 and chooses June 15 as the OPT start date because she has a job offer beginning that day. She receives the EAD on May 1. Her employer is pleased to see proof of the work permission early even though she cannot start working until June 15, as noted on the EAD. Lin decides to go home for one month to celebrate her program completion.
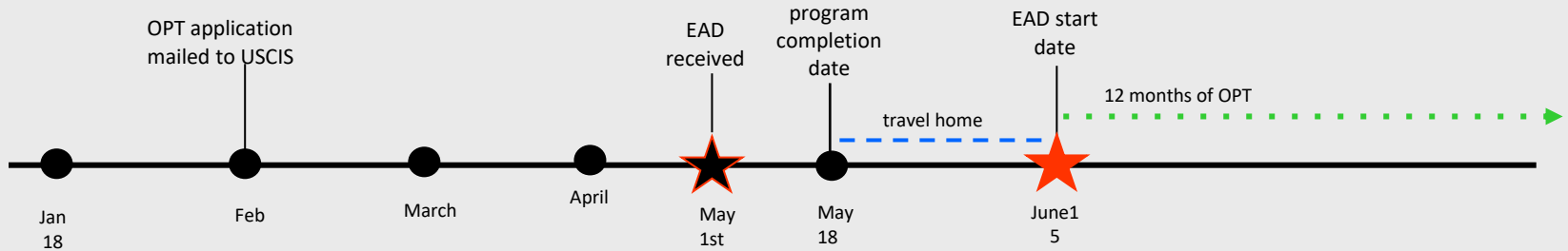
Scenario 2: *Student with no job offer submits his OPT application rather late*

Surendra doesn't have a job offer or time to search for one until after he finishes school. He chooses the latest date possible to start his OPT--July 17 --- which is the 60th day after his completion on May 18. He knows that he will be legal to stay in the U.S. as long as he has submitted the OPT application on time. He finally mails his OPT application on May 1. On July 17, Surendra still hasn't received his EAD, so he can't work. Surendra receives his EAD on August 1 and it expires the following year on July 16. Surendra has lost 13 days of his 12 month OPT because his application was approved after the latest available OPT start date.
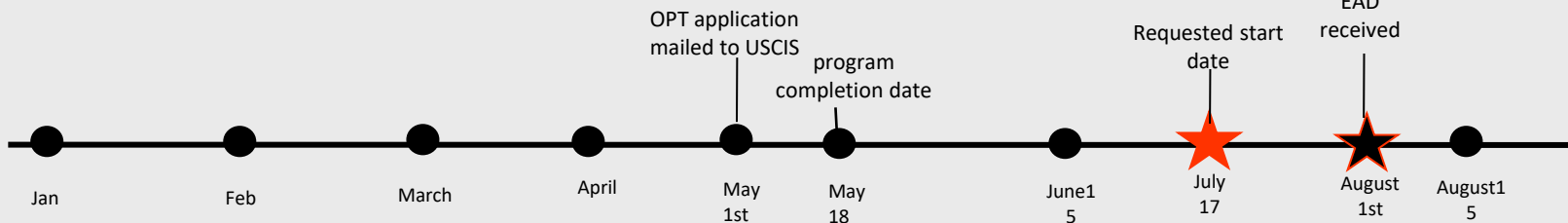
Your OPT I-20

Call the receptionist at the Rinker Center to make an appointment with an International Student Advisor.

This sample shows how your I-20 will be updated for OPT purposes.

Check It for Accuracy!

Page 1
When you pick up your OPT I-20, make sure to check the following items:

Item #4: The education level will be updated if you have changed it. This usually only happens when a Ph.D. candidate decides to graduate with a Master's degree. If this is not accurate, contact an International Student Advisor

Item #5: The program end date will be updated to match the completion date on your OPT Request Form. It may look like it will expire soon, but don't worry --- the I-20 remains valid for the length of your OPT authorization period.

This issue is important to note especially if you plan to travel abroad during your OPT period.

Item #10: Make sure the Advisor has signed it. Also, make sure the I-20 was issued less than 30 days in the past.

Item #11: Make sure you have signed and dated the I-20 after receiving it from International Services.

I-20 Page 3: No Changes

This page of your I-20 will not change. It contains a description of the F-1 regulations affecting your stay in the U.S. You should have already read them at some point during your stay in the U.S. If not, it's never to late--read them now!

Your OPT I-20

Page 2: Authorization Information and Travel Endorsement

On this page of your OPT I-20, you will see the following information:

▪ The authorization dates you have selected

▪ A new travel endorsement from the International Student Advisor. Traveling while on OPT is allowed, with certain precautions. Details of travel-related issues are covered on pages 25-26 of this Guide.

NOTE Your OPT <u>application</u> must be sent to the USCIS no later than 30 days after the date of I-20 issuance. If your I-20 is more than 30 days old, see an International Student Advisor for instructions.

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status
OMB NO. 1653-0038

SEVIS ID: N0000178236 (F-1)   **NAME: Charlie Cardinal**

EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATIONS

TYPE	FULL/PART-TIME	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
PRE-COMPLETION OPT	FULL TIME	REQUESTED	08 MAY 2017	08 AUGUST 2017

CHANGE OF STATUS/CAP-GAP EXTENSION

AUTHORIZED REDUCED COURSE LOAD

CURRENT SESSION DATES

CURRENT SESSION START DATE	CURRENT SESSION END DATE
09 JANUARY 2017	05 MAY 2017

TRAVEL ENDORSEMENT

This page, when properly endorsed, may be used for re-entry of the student to attend the same school after a temporary absence from the United States. Each endorsement is valid for one year.

Designated School Official	TITLE	SIGNATURE	DATE ISSUED	PLACE ISSUED
	Advisor	X *Advisor*		
		X		
		X		
		X		

Step 2

Preparing and Mailing the OPT Application

1. Gather the required materials

2. Complete the form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

3. Meet with an International Student Advisor

4. Mail your application package to the USCIS Service Center

Gather and Photocopy the Required Application Materials

Photocopy each document for your records.
Make sure that all photocopies are clear and legible!

Application Fee $410	Form I-765	Photocopies of Your:	I-94	Photocopy of Passport & Visa	2 Photos
		1. **New OPT I-20** 2. **All previous I-20s***			

Application Fee $410

Use a personal check or money order made payable to "**U.S. Department of Homeland Security**"

Make sure there is a name and address printed on the check (do not use the "temporary checks" often issued by the bank when you open a new account).

Form I-765

Pages 15-18 of this Guide will give you instructions on how to download and complete this form.
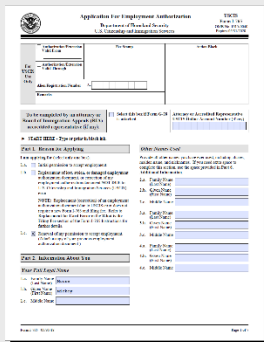
Photocopies of Your:

1. **New OPT I-20**
2. **All previous I-20s***

Make sure all your I-20s are signed before copying them.

Keep the originals for your records.

*Optional. We suggest you include these if you have ever used Curricular Practical Training (CPT) or OPT previously.

I-94

Your most recent I-94 record can be printed from the CBP webpage: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home

Photocopy of Passport & Visa

Your passport biographical information page (and passport extensions if applicable) **and** F-1 visa stamp or copies of the front and back of past EAD cards.

2 Photos

OPT photos need to be a certain size. See Page 19 of this Guide.

Write your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo in case they get separated from your application.

Form I-765:
Application for Employment Authorization

The I-765 is the USCIS form you need to submit. It is your official OPT application. A sample I-765 form is shown here.

The I-765 form can be downloaded from the USCIS web site.

(www.uscis.gov) Click on "forms" and scroll to I-765)

Important: You must always use the most current version of the I-765. It is best to download the I-765 right before you mail your application since the USCIS updates their forms frequently.

How to Complete the I-765
Completing the I-765 for OPT is a simple task, but a few items can be confusing. The next two pages will cover how to complete those "tricky" questions so that you can avoid any delays in receiving your work authorization.

Completing the I-765

1. Note the table at the top of the form where it says "For USCIS Use Only." Do not need to complete this area.
2. Check the box for "Initial permission to accept employment."

Part 2. Information About You
Items #5-7: Address in the United States
The address you put here is where the EAD will be mailed. If this is different than your current physical address, complete #7.
NOTE: It may take 3 months for your application to be approved. If you plan to move after you mail your application, use a friend or family member's address to receive your EAD. If you are moving out of state, talk to an International Student Advisor about where to submit this application.

Item #12: Previously filed Form I-765
Check "yes" if you have ever requested an EAD. This could be for Hardship Employment, or previous OPT at any level, with any institution. You will be able to provide details about these requests at the end of the application.

Items #13-17: Social Security Number (SSN)
If you have an SSN, check "yes" for #**13.a**, and fill in the number for #**13.b.**
If you do not have a number, check "no". You may apply for an SSN by checking "yes" on #**14** and #**15**, then completing the information about your parents in #**16-17**.

Your U.S. Mailing Address

5.a. In Care Of Name (if any)
Donald Duck

5.b. Street Number and Name
1234 Disney St

5.c. [X] Apt. [ ] Ste. [ ] Flr.   10

5.d. City or Town
San Francisco

5.e. State CA   5.f. ZIP Code 94117
(USPS ZIP Code Lookup)

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

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

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.)
[X] 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.
[X] 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)   Mouse

16.b. Given Name (First Name)   Mortimer

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

17.a. Family Name (Last Name)   Squeak

17.b. Given Name (First Name)   Melinda

Completing the I-765

Items 21-28
Item #21.a: I-94 Number
Use your current I-94 number, found at the top of your I-94.

Item #22: Date of Last Arrival into the U.S.
This entry date can be found on your I-94.

Item #23: Place of Last Entry into the U.S.
The name of the city where you went through Customs. This information can be found on the CBP webpage (under "Travel History").

Item #24: Status at Last Arrival
The status you held upon entering the U.S. For most students it should be F-1, but you may have entered the U.S. in another status like F-2 or H1-B.

Item #25: Current Immigration Status
Should be F-1 student. If not, talk to an Advisor immediately.

Item #27: Eligibility Category
Use the following codes depending on the type of OPT you are requesting:
      (c) (3) (A) Pre-Completion OPT
      (c) (3) (B) Post-Completion OPT (see sample here)
Please note: *(c)(3)(C)* should be used for 24-month STEM Extensions. You can apply for the Extension only after completing most of the original 12-month OPT period.

Items #28-28.c: STEM OPT
Only individuals eligible for the 24-month extension need to complete this section. If you entered *(c)(3)(A)* or *(c)(3)(B)* on item #20, you should not fill out this section.

21.a. Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record Number (if any)
► 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 1 0

21.b. Passport Number of Your Most Recently Issued Passport
B123456

21.c. Travel Document Number (if any)

21.d. Country That Issued Your Passport or Travel Document
Mexico

21.e. Expiration Date for Passport or Travel Document (mm/dd/yyyy)
01/22/2028

22. Date of Your Last Arrival Into the United States, On or About (mm/dd/yyyy)
08/15/2018

23. Place of Your Last Arrival Into the United States
San Francisco

24. Immigration Status at Your Last Arrival (for example, B-2 visitor, F-1 student, or no status)
F-1 Student

25. Your Current Immigration Status or Category (for example, B-2 visitor, F-1 student, parolee, deferred action, or no status or category)
F-1 Student

26. Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Number (if any)
► N- 0011111111

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 appropriate eligibility category for this application. Enter the appropriate letter and number for your eligibility category below (for example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii)).
(c) (3) (B)

28. **(c)(3)(C) STEM OPT Eligibility Category.** If you entered the eligibility category (c)(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

Completing the I-765

Part 3. Applicant's Statement, Contact Info, Signature
Item #1
Indicate whether or not you used an interpreter to complete this application. If you did, you will need to add their information to Part 4.

Items #3-7
Print your telephone number and email address, read the Declaration & Certification section, and then sign your name and print the date in items **7.a** and **7.b**.

Part 6. Additional Information
If you have previously engaged in employment off-campus (OPT, CPT, hardship employment, etc.), you will indicate that information here. We suggest following the formatting here to provide your SEVIS ID, degree level, kind of work, and dates.

If You Receive a "Request for Evidence (RFE)"

We strongly advise you to see an International Student Advisor if you receive an RFE. If there is a problem with your application, USCIS will send you a notice by mail called the "Request for Evidence (RFE)."
An RFE does not mean that your application has been rejected. It simply means that you need to send in additional documents before your EAD can be issued. Please pay close attention to the response deadline on the RFE. If you fail to meet this deadline, your application will be automatically canceled.

Getting an RFE will delay the processing of your application - usually by about one month. For this reason, it is important to make sure that you have completed the I-765 correctly and sent the proper documents to USCIS.

Part 6. Additional Information

If you need extra space to provide any additional information within this application, use the space below. If you need more space than what is provided, you may make copies of this page to complete and file with this application or attach a separate sheet of paper. Type or print your name and A-Number (if any) at the top of each sheet; indicate the **Page Number**, **Part Number**, and **Item Number** to which your answer refers; and sign and date each sheet.

1.a. Family Name (Last Name): Mouse

1.b. Given Name (First Name): Mickey

1.c. Middle Name:

2. A-Number (if any) ► A-

3.a. Page Number: 3   3.b. Part Number: 2   3.c. Item Number: 26

3.d.
```
Current SEVIS ID N0011111111,
Master's Degree
Previous CPT:
Part-time 1/15/2018-5/15/2018,
Full-Time 5/20/2017-8/15/2017
```

4.a. Page Number: 3   4.b. Part Number: 2   4.c. Item Number: 26

4.d.
```
Previous SEVIS ID N0022222222
Bachelor's Degree
Previous CPT:
Part-time 05/14/2015-08/15/2015
Previous OPT:
Post-Completion 05/21/2016-05/20/2017
```

Photo Specifications

The photos you are required to use for the OPT application must meet the specifications of U.S.–style passport photos. To see a full description of these specifications, go to the U.S. Department of State web site.

Most places that take passport photos are already familiar with the specifications. However, you may want to print this page, or the pages from the web site above to take with you when you get your photo taken.

Frequently Asked Questions

What type of paper are the photographs to be printed on?
The photos should be printed on thin photo-quality paper.

Do the photos have to be in color?
Yes, the photos must be in color.

How big must the photos be?
The photos must measure exactly 2 inches by 2 inches.

A well-composed photo

Can hats or religious headgear be worn for the photo?
Unless worn daily for religious reasons, all hats or headgear should be removed for the photo. In all cases, no item or attire should cover or otherwise obscure any part of the face.

Can eyeglasses be worn for the photo?
Eyeglasses worn on a daily basis can be worn for the photo. However, there should be no reflections from the eyeglasses that obscures the eyes. Dark glasses or nonprescription glasses with tinted lenses are not acceptable unless you need them for medical reasons.

7 Steps to Successful Photos:

1. Your photo should show your full face, front view, eyes open.
2. Make sure the photo shows your full head, from top of hair to bottom of chin; height of head should measure 1 inch to 1-3/8 inches (25mm to 35mm).
3. Your head should be centered within the frame.
4. Make sure eye height is between 1-1/8 inches to 1-3/8 inches (28 mm and 35 mm) from bottom of photo.
5. The background should be plain white or off-white.
6. There should be no distracting shadows on the face or in the background.
7. Make sure you have a natural expression.
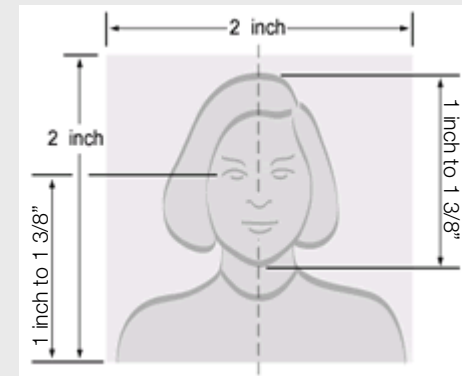
Write your name and I-94 number *lightly* on the back of each photo in case they get separated from your application.

Preparing and Mailing the OPT Application: Mailing Options

Express Mail

We recommend **FedEx or DHL** as the best, most reliable options.

If you use express mail, use the express mail (courier) address at the USCIS, which is different from the regular mail address. FedEx mail service costs about $10.

Certified Mail / Return Receipt

"Certified Mail / return receipt" service is available through the U.S. Postal Service. You can request this service at the post office and pay a minimal fee (approx. $2). With certified mail, you will get a receipt showing what date the USCIS got your application.

A sample of the Certified Mail form and receipt is shown here.

In some cases, it may take up to 10 days for your application sent through the U.S. Postal Service to be officially received.

USCIS Service Center
P.O. Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

Joe Kwon
123 Main Street
Muncie, IN 47303

Mailing Your Application: Final Review Before Mailing

Checklist Review

Put the following items in an 8.5" x 11" envelope and mail them to the USCIS address listed online.

❏ Check for **$410** made payable to:
"U.S. Department of Homeland Security."
See this link for USCIS check–writing instructions :
ttp://www.uscis.gov/files/article/Check_Instructions.pdf

❏ Form I-765 (original)

❏ <u>Copy</u> of OPT I-20 (optional: copies of previous I-20s). Don't forget to sign the OPT I-20!

❏ Printout of most recent I-94

❏ Copy of previous EAD, if applicable

❏ Copy of your passport biographical page and F-1 visa stamp (if you have one)

❏ 2 Passport Photos (with name and I-94# written lightly with pencil on back)

Application Deadline

The USCIS must receive your application no later than **30 days after your OPT I-20** has been issued. The issue date is located next to the Adviser's signature on Page 1 of the OPT I-120. Please account for mailing time.

USCIS Mailing Addresses
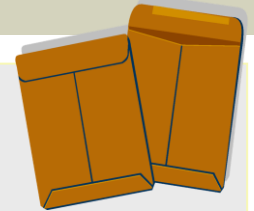
For the most accurate information, you will need to visit
https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses

The mailing address you need may depend upon the kind of application you are filing, the state to which you would like to have the approval mailed, and the shipment method you use (USPS or express courier).

E-Notification

To receive an e-mail and/or a text message that your application has been accepted at USCIS, complete Form G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance and clip it to the first page of your application.

Filing Your Application Online

Online Filing Notes

❑ Uploaded documents must be no larger than 6MB, and saved in one of the following formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, TIFF

❑ Photos must be no larger than 6MB, and saved in one of the following formats: JPG, JPEG, or PNG

❑ Passport photo should be 600p x 600p

❑ File names cannot include special characters (@,#,*, etc.) or foreign characters

❑ If applying for Post-completion OPT, you must upload proof of previous CPT/OPT under "Additional Information"

❑ Payments can be made via ACH transfer (US-based banks only) or credit/debit card (Visa, Mastercard, American Express, or Discover).

USCIS Online

Create an online account at https://uscis.gov/file-online
Use your personal (non-BSU) email address.

You'll be able to select Form I-765 from the list of available forms, and then complete the form and upload the appropriate documents.

Form I-765 can be filed online for Pre-completion, Post-completion, or STEM OPT.

All supporting documents must be uploaded prior to submitting your form, and payment must be made at time of filing.

You will be directed to Pay.gov to make your payment. Clicking "continue" on the payment page will submit your application. You will not be able to go back to make any changes or corrections.

Click "Go to my cases" to see your receipt number. Check back frequently for any updates or communications from USCIS.

Step 3

Receiving Your EAD

1. The Notice of Action from USCIS

2. Traveling Abroad on OPT

3. Applying for a Visa

4. Frequently Asked Questions

The Notice of Action/ Receipt Notice
This is your OPT application receipt from USCIS. It normally takes 3-6 weeks to get it in the mail. You will need this document to check the status of your request, and to travel outside the U.S. (before receiving your EAD.)

Your Address Information
Make sure your name and address are correct on the receipt notice. If they are incorrect, contact us immediately.

The "Receipt Number"
This is your "case number." You can check the status here: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do.
It's important to check the status regularly. If the Service Center sends you a Request for Further Evidence (RFE), you'll see the notification here, and can look for the RFE in the mail. The site will also alert you if there are any delivery problems.

The Received Date & Notice Date
The "Received Date" is when USCIS entered your case in the system and began processing your application. The "Notice Date" is when the Notice of Action was produced.

Signature Confirmation Delivery
USCIS will require photo ID and a signature to deliver your EAD. We recommend signing up for USPS Informed Delivery to track your EAD card and coordinate delivery.

The Notice of Action

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Form I-797C, Notice of Action

THIS NOTICE DOES NOT GRANT ANY IMMIGRATION STATUS OR BENEFIT.

NOTICE TYPE	NOTICE DATE
Receipt	June 24, 2013

CASE TYPE	USCIS ALIEN NUMBER
I-765, Application for Employment Authorization	

RECEIPT NUMBER	RECEIVED DATE	PAGE
SRC1390325994	June 20, 2013	1 of 1

DATE OF BIRTH
August 25, 19■

EL PASO, TX 79968   13   3223

NAME AND MAILING ADDRESS

PAYMENT INFORMATION:

Application/Petition Fee:	$380.00
Biometrics Fee:	$0.00
Total Amount Received:	$380.00
Total Balance Due:	$0.00

Traveling Abroad on OPT

Since you will remain in F-1 status during your 12-month OPT authorization period, traveling abroad and re-entering the U.S. as an F-1 is allowed (In fact, if you re-enter in a status other than F-1, you will lose your OPT eligibility). However, be aware that any time you leave the U.S. , there is no guarantee that you will be allowed to re-enter. Being denied entry is more probable for some people than others, although in general, Ball State students have not reported problems. To avoid problems, make sure you have the proper documents as listed here.

Documents Required For Re-entry to the U.S.

The travel documents you will need depend on the timing of your re-entry to the U.S.:

✔ **Before** Completing Your Program and ✔ **Before** Getting Your EAD	✔ **After** Completing Your Program and ✔ **Before** Getting Your EAD	✔ **After** Completing Your Program and ✔ **After** Getting Your EAD
▪ A valid passport	▪ A valid passport	▪ A valid passport
▪ A valid F-1 visa	▪ A valid F-1 visa	▪ A valid F-1 visa
▪ Your OPT I-20 with a valid travel endorsement signed on page 2 by an International Student Advisor	▪ Your OPT I-20 with a valid travel endorsement signed on page 2 by an International Student Advisor (only valid for **6 months while on OPT**)	▪ Your OPT I-20 with a valid travel endorsement signed on page 2 by an International Student Advisor (only valid for **6 months while on OPT**).
▪ Evidence of continued enrollment (e.g. print-out of transcripts course schedule)	▪ The OPT receipt- Notice of Action	▪ The EAD (Employment Authorization Document)
▪ Evidence of financial support	▪ Evidence of financial support for the OPT period is strongly recommended (such as a bank statement or letter from sponsor or employer)	▪ Evidence of financial support for the OPT period is strongly recommended (such as a bank statement or letter from sponsor or employer)
	▪ If you have employment, a job offer letter from the employer is strongly recommended.	▪ A job offer letter is required.

Applying for a Visa

If you are traveling abroad and the F-1 visa in your passport has expired, you must obtain a new one before re-entering the U.S. To apply for a new visa during OPT, the basic documents you will need are:

1) A valid passport

2) A valid I-20 with travel endorsement from an International Student Advisor within the past 6 months

3) The EAD

4) A job offer in your academic major field of study

5) Evidence of sufficient funds (e.g. a bank statement, a letter from a sponsor or a job offer letter)

Check the U.S. Department of State web site for more information about getting a visa at www.travel.state.gov.

Tips for Travelers

• Be prepared to tell the U.S. immigration officer at the U.S. port-of-entry your plans for the OPT year. They may want to know:

 -What have you done to find a job?

 -What kind of job do you plan to look for?

 -What will you do after the OPT is expired?

 -How will you support yourself while you are job-seeking?

• If you travel after getting your EAD, you must have a job offer letter to be able to re-enter the U.S.

• Don't leave the U.S. for long periods of time during the OPT year. A few weeks of vacation is reasonable, but if you are gone for several months, you may encounter difficulty in re-entering. Remember, unemployment is limited to 90 days.

• Be careful about trying to re-enter the U.S. close to the expiration date of your OPT. You may not be allowed to re-enter as an F-1.

•Students who need to apply for a new visa should consult International Student Services prior to travel to discuss the visa application process and possible risks.

•Don't attempt to re-enter the U.S. in a status other than F-1 unless you are willing to forfeit your OPT permanently.

Frequently Asked Questions

How can I know the status of my OPT application?
As soon as you have your Notice of Action, check the USCIS website at https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do. The main information you can get from this is whether your application has been approved yet or is still in process.

When will I get my EAD?
USCIS will mail the EAD to you at the address you gave on the I-765 form. It should arrive approximately 3-5 months from the "received" date indicated on the Notice of Action.

How will I get my EAD card?
USCIS has begun using the U.S. Postal Service's (USPS) Signature Confirmation Restricted Delivery service to mail secure documents. You must present identification to sign for your documents upon delivery. You will have the option to designate an agent to sign on your behalf by completing the Postal Service's PS Form 3801 or PS Form 3801-A. You are ***strongly encouraged*** to sign up for USPS Informed Delivery to receive delivery status notifications. This will also allow you to arrange for pickup at a post office at a convenient date and time by going to the USPS website and selecting "hold for pickup." You can find more information about tracking the delivery of your EAD card on the USCIS website.

I never received a "Notice of Action."
USCIS usually sends this within 3-6 weeks of their receipt of the EAD application. If you have not received the Notice of Action after this time, check your bank account to see if USCIS cashed your check. If so, you can request a copy of the check from your bank that should have your USCIS tracking number printed on it (ten digits beginning with "YSC…").

Is there any way to change the information on the EAD application (address, dates, etc.) once I have mailed the application?
After you have mailed your application, no changes can be made except for address updates. If you change your address while your application is pending, contact an International Student Advisor for instructions. You will need your receipt number.

USCIS said that my EAD was approved, but I have not received it yet – can I start working?
No. Employers are required to verify that you are eligible to work before they can put you on payroll. You must be able to show them the EAD when you begin employment.

USCIS said that my application was approved over 6 weeks ago. I still haven't received it. Is there a problem?
There may be. Have you moved? If so, did you update your OPT address? See an International Student Advisor for more information.

90 days have passed since the receipt date. What can I do?
Verify your status at https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do. If your application has been approved, wait until the card arrives (2-4 weeks after approval). If the application is still pending, see an Advisor.

How do I contact the USCIS?
The number on the Notice of Action (1-800-375-5283) is the National Customer Service line. Be sure to have your receipt number ready before you call.

How do I get an extension of my EAD?
Only students who have completed certain STEM majors and have an employer who is enrolled in E-Verify are eligible for a 24 Month Extension.

Frequently Asked Questions

What counts as employment?
Immigration counts paid, unpaid, and volunteer work related to your field of study as employment.

Is there a minimum number of hours I need to work?
There is no minimum for students on Pre-Completion OPT. All students on Post-Completion OPT are required to work more than 20 hours per week.

I have been unemployed for 80 days. What is going to happen on the 90th day?
If you accumulate 90 days or more of unemployment, you are in violation of status which may affect your ability to travel in and out of the US in F-1 status, future immigration benefits, and change of status applications.
To avoid the status violation, you may:
1. Secure unpaid or volunteer work related to your major for more than 20 hours per week;
2. Gain admission to a new program of study;
3. Leave the US and report your departure to an International Student Advisor
4. Apply to change your status.

If I change jobs, do I get another 90 days of unemployment?
No. You are allowed 90 days of unemployment, total. This includes all periods in between jobs.

I lost my EAD. How can I get it replaced?
The only way to replace it is with a new EAD application. You must submit the same items as the initial application to USCIS (fee, photos, forms, etc.) and it will take 3-5 months. It is impossible to replace an EAD if you are outside the U.S.

Do I need a Social Security Number (SSN) to work in the US?
If you plan to engage in paid work in the U.S., you will need a valid SSN. To apply, please visit your nearest Social Security Office. More details can be found on the Social Security Administration website. The Social Security Administration will process your application and mail your SSN to you.

Do I need to complete any forms with my employer to begin working?
Yes. Within the first 3 days of beginning work, you and your employer must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification (Form I-9). This form will be kept on file by your employer and must be updated each time your work permission is renewed. Your employer will provide this form and assist you in its completion.

Can I change employers while on OPT?
Yes. OPT work authorization is not job-specific. You may change employers, or have multiple employers at the same time, as long as each position is directly related to your major. You must update the employer information with an International Student Advisor within 10 days of the change.

Do I pay taxes while working on OPT?
Students in F-1 status are subject to all federal, state and local taxes that may apply. Check the IRS' web site, www.irs.gov for tax information and to see if your country has a tax treaty with the US.
In general, F-1 students who have been present in the US for less than 5 calendar years are exempt from Social Security (FICA) and Medicare taxes. Be sure to bring this to the attention of your employer, as many employers are unfamiliar with this provision of the tax laws. See publication 519, available on the IRS web site, for information on how to claim salary incorrectly deducted for FICA or Medicare.

Frequently Asked Questions – Working on OPT

What if I am not able to complete my degree program by the completion dated noted on the OPT I-20?
If your application has not been adjudicated, you can withdraw your application and request a program extension of your I-20. Your fee will not be refunded.
If your application has already been approved, and you are:
> **An undergraduate student:** You must extend your I-20 end date if you still have course work to complete. Your OPT will be limited to part time during the semester until you finish your degree. You are still held to the 90 day unemployment rule. See an International Student Advisor before that completion date has passed.
> **A graduate student:** Graduate students finishing their dissertation or thesis cannot change their program end date. They are eligible to work full time before filing and are held to the 90 day unemployment rule. It is important that the student finish their degree before their OPT ends.

What status do I have between my degree completion date and the start of my OPT (EAD start date)?
If you have chosen a start date well after your degree completion date, you will still remain in F-1 status. Even though there seems to be a gap in your status, you are still legally allowed to remain in the U.S. or re-enter the U.S. from abroad during this time.

Can I go to school while on OPT?
Time spent going to school should only be an incidental part of your stay in the U.S. If you decide to go back to school full-time, you must get a new I-20 from the school and forfeit the remainder of your OPT time.

Do I need to do anything with International Student Services while on OPT?
Yes. As a condition of your F-1 status, all students must report any changes in address and employment information to an International Student Advisor within 10 days of any changes.

Can I start working without pay while waiting for my EAD?
No. USCIS see it as "employment without authorization" and is a risky situation for you and your employer.

Does my visa need to be valid while on OPT?
Your visa only needs to be valid to re-enter the U.S. from abroad. Thus, if it expires while you are still in the U.S., there is no problem. Your *F-1 immigration status* remains valid as long as you have an EAD that has not expired.

Do my wife or kids get a new OPT I-20 too?
When your new OPT I-20 is printed, you should also receive I-20s for your family members with the updated information. If you did not, see an International Student Advisor to have these documents printed.

*My EAD says "not valid for re-entry" on it. Does that mean I can't travel?*
All EADs are marked with this notation. It simply means that you must carry other documents to show proof of your eligibility to re-enter the U.S. such as your I-20 and valid F-1 visa. The EAD alone is not enough to re-enter the U.S.

How long can I stay in the US after the end date of my OPT?
You have 60 days after your OPT ends to leave the US, request a transfer of your I-20, or change your status. You cannot work.

The Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
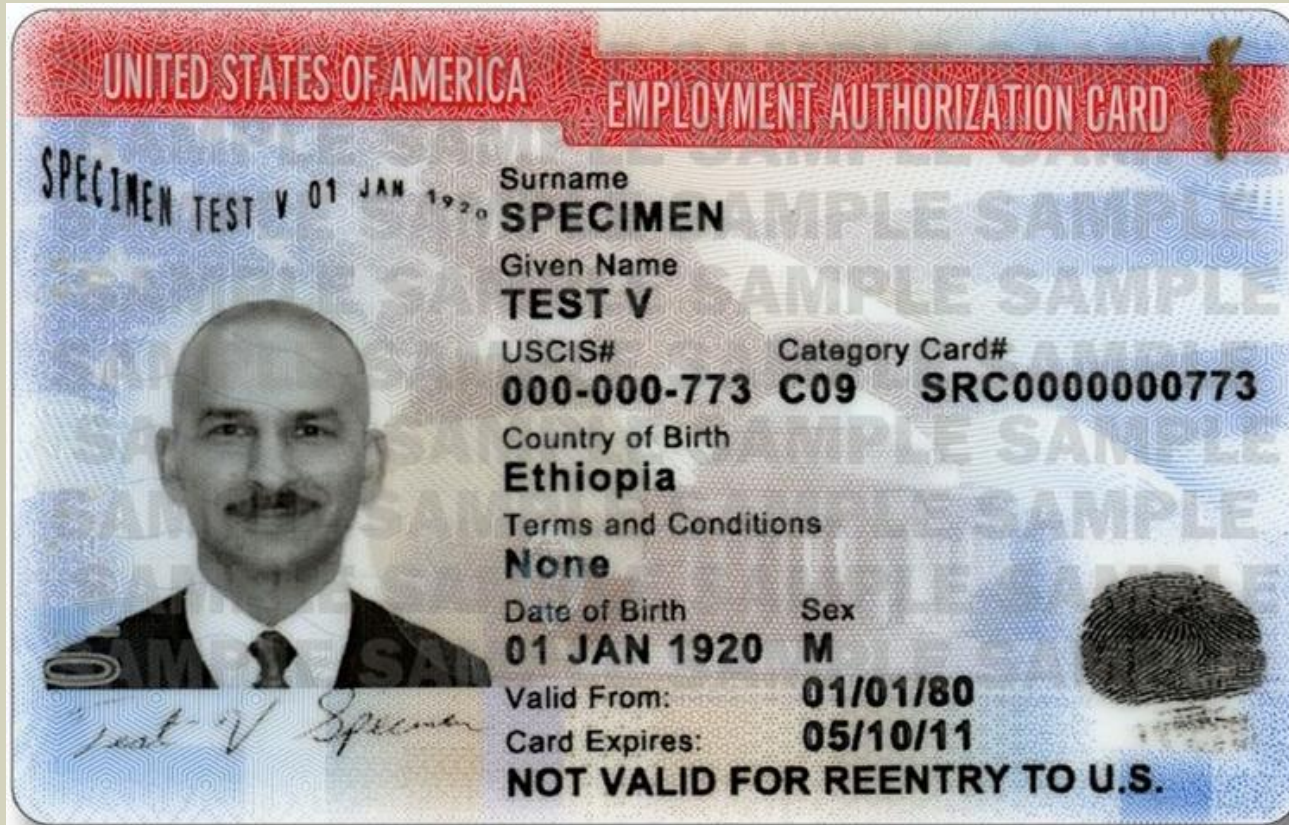
Reporting Requirements on OPT

The following information must be reported to an International Student Advisor during the OPT period of authorization:

- Your Name

- Your Residential address

- Your Phone and email address

- Employer name

- Employer address

- Start Date of Employment

- Date of departure from the U.S (only required if you decide to exit the U.S and complete your OPT prior to the end date of your OPT)

You are required to report this information within **10 working days of any changes**.

Back to International Student Services