

The logo for Carnegie Mellon University, featuring the text "Carnegie Mellon University" in a white serif font. The text is positioned on the left side of the slide, which has a dark blue background with a pattern of intersecting red, green, and yellow lines forming a grid.

**Carnegie  
Mellon  
University**

# Pre-Completion OPT Guide For F-1 Students

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OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION



# Pre-Completion OPT Overview

# What Is Pre-Completion OPT?

- Pre-Completion OPT is a form of temporary US work authorization. This work authorization is a way for F-1 students to gain practical training directly related to the student's field of study.

## Pre-OPT *Can* Be

- **Part-time (PT)**
  - (20 hours a week or less)
- OR*
- **Full-time (FT)**
  - (20 hours a week or more)
  - ONLY allowed FT during official breaks and vacations

## Pre-OPT *Must* Be

- Part-time (less than 20 hours per week) during the academic year and any semester when enrolled full-time
- Directly related to ***YOUR*** field and level of study



# Important Reminders

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During your Pre-Completion OPT period:

- You remain in F-1 Status (OPT is not a status, it is a benefit of your F-1 Status)
- You must still be an active full-time student in your CMU program

What work can you do during Pre-completion OPT?

- **Must** be related to **YOUR** field and level of study
- Paid, unpaid, contract
- Job title doesn't matter... **BUT** the nature of the work does



# How Is OPT Time Used/Counted?

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Immigration rules state that OPT:

- *Is allowed for a period of 12 months, per higher degree level (for Pre and Post OPT combined)*
  - i.e. Students cannot have 12 months of full-time Pre-Completion OPT, and then apply for Post-Completion OPT.
  - **Once USCIS approves OPT, then the OPT benefit is considered used! Even if you do not use the full Pre-Completion OPT time requested.**
  - Full-time Pre-OPT is allowed when school is **NOT** in session
  - Part-time Pre-OPT is allowed when school is in session (no more than 20 hours per week)



# IMPORTANT! Choosing OPT Dates!

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Choose OPT Dates *CAREFULLY!*

- *YOU CANNOT CHANGE OPT DATES* after you have submitted your OPT Application to USCIS.

OPT Pending?

- *NO WORK* without your approved EAD Card! You must have the physical EAD card before beginning work.

NOTE:

- Full-time Pre-Completion OPT is deducted from the 12 months of total OPT time at 100%, but you can only be full-time in the summer/official school breaks!
- Part-time Pre-Completion OPT deducted from the 12 months of total OPT time at ½ rate; part-time Pre-Completion can be used during the academic terms.



# IMPORTANT!

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If your Pre-Completion OPT takes place during your last semester, your Post-Completion OPT application may need to be filed while waiting for Pre-Completion OPT approval.

**2 SEPARATE APPLICATIONS** must be filed:

- 1 for Pre-Completion OPT
- 1 for Post-Completion OPT
  - Same time frame for approval
  - 2 fees!
  - If Pre-OPT is not approved yet, you must deduct **requested** Pre-OPT time when determining Post-OPT dates

# Pre-OPT Application – Three Step Process

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1

Complete and submit the “Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training Request e-Form” through your [MyOIE Portal](#).

- The e-form request must include the “[Pre-Completion OPT Academic Advisor Recommendation Form](#)”, which must be completed and signed by your program coordinator or academic advisor.
- 

2

Wait for your new I-20; do not apply without it!

- OIE will issue the I-20 with the recommendation within 10 business days.
  - The new I-20 will have your Pre-Completion OPT request listed on page 2.
- 

3

Gather all the needed documents and submit your application to USCIS

- After you have submitted your Pre-OPT application to USCIS, Pre-OPT dates you requested **CANNOT** be changed!
  - Check current [Processing Times](#) for applications and talk to your OIE advisor to understand how long government review of your application may take. Processing may take up to several months.
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# Timing of Your OPT Application

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## Be aware of USCIS processing times!

- Always check the USCIS website for processing times. Select “I-765...”, and “Potomac Service Center” from the drop-down menus.
- Premium Processing option available



## “What Dates Can I Choose For My Pre-OPT Application?”

- Start date: Start date of employment
- End date: End date of employment (can’t go past program end date listed on your I-20)
  - Summer: OPT can start after classes/finals end and must end before start of fall term



**NO WORK** until you have received your EAD Card and you are within start and end dates on the card!

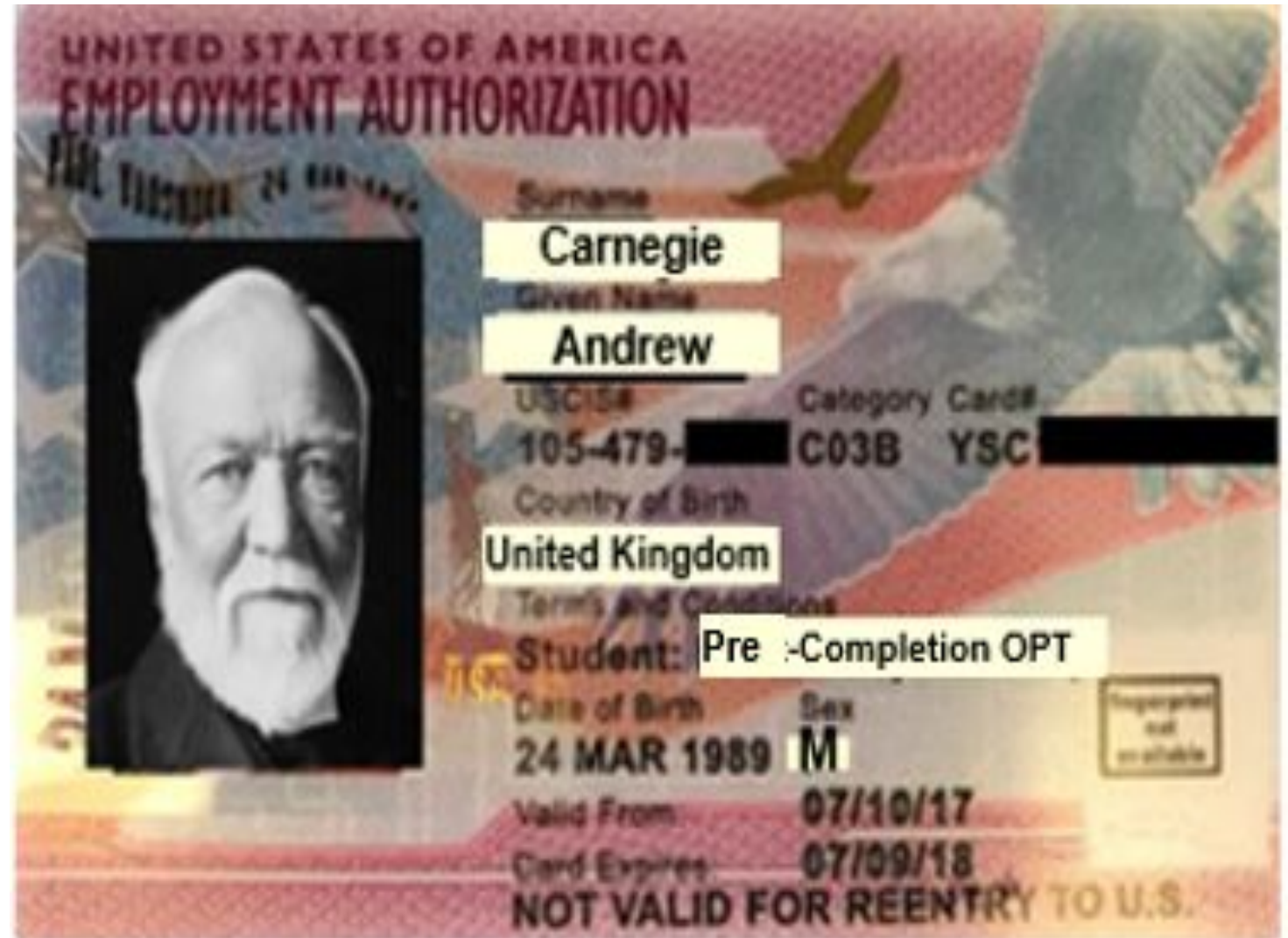


# THE GOAL?

An approved Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card)

NOTE: You can only *legally* work in the U.S. when:

- You have received your EAD Card, *and*
- You are within the dates listed on the card

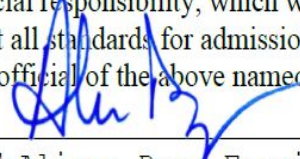


# IMPORTANT! The 30-Day OPT I-20 Rule!

## SCHOOL ATTESTATION

I certify under penalty of perjury that all information provided above was entered before I signed this form and is true and correct. I executed this form in the United States after review and evaluation in the United States by me or other officials of the school of the student's application, transcripts, or other records of courses taken and proof of financial responsibility, which were received at the school prior to the execution of this form. The school has determined that the above named student's qualifications meet all standards for admission to the school and the student will be required to pursue a full program of study as defined by 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6). I am a designated school official of the above named school and am authorized to issue this form.

X

  
SIGNATURE OF: Alison Day, Foreign Student and Scholar  
Advisor

DATE ISSUED

30 July 2020

PLACE ISSUED

Pittsburgh, PA

- Your OPT application MUST be received by USCIS *within 30 days* of the date your OPT I-20 is issued.
- If I-20 is received by USCIS more than 30 days after its issuance date, your OPT application will be *DENIED!*



Request your Pre-Completion  
OPT I-20

# MyOIE Portal – OPT e-Form Request

1

REMEMBER – YOU SHOULD READ THE PRE-COMPLETION OPT INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE YOU SUBMIT THIS E-FORM!\*

2

Login to your MyOIE Portal account:

- Click “F-1 Practical Training”
- Click “Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training Request Form”

3

Next complete the Pre-Completion OPT e-form as required

- Remember, it takes OIE up to 10 business days to process immigration documents.



The screenshot shows the MyOIE portal interface. At the top, there is a red header with "CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY" and "MyOIE" below it. A navigation menu on the left includes "Home", "F-1 Practical Training" (highlighted in yellow), "F-1 Student Services", "Orientation", and "Pre-Arrival". Below this is a "STUDENTS ABROAD" section. On the right, under "F-1 Practical Training", there is a "Tasks" section with two items: "Curricular Practical Training Request Form" (marked with a 'C' icon) and "Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training Request Form" (marked with a 'P' icon and highlighted in yellow).

# MyOIE Portal – OPT e-Form Request

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4

Confirm your current residential address

- If the residential address listed is incorrect, then you must STOP filling in your e-form, login to [SIO](#), and update your current residential address – **BEFORE** – submitting your OPT e-form request.
- 

5

Next complete the Pre-OPT e-form as required

- US address, Passport Expiration (Passport **MUST** be valid), **Pre-OPT Start and End Dates you are requesting**, Department, Do you have multiple majors/degrees, Have you had OPT before, etc.
- 

6

Finally, you must upload the required documents, and you must **CERTIFY** that all the information you submitted is accurate and correct.

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\*If needed, you can save this e-form as a DRAFT\*

# Pre OPT e-Form Request Documents To Upload

1. Copy of previously issued EAD Card (s) if applicable
2. Copy of most recent I-94 Record (**NOT** Travel History)
  - Confirm information on your I-94 Record is correct!
  - Contact OIE if there are any mistakes!



The screenshot shows the U.S. Customs and Border Protection website. At the top, there is a header with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection logo and the text "U.S. Customs and Border Protection Securing America's Borders". On the right side of the header, it says "OMB No. 1651-0111" and "Expiration Date: 11/30/2014". Below the header, there are two tabs: "Get I-94 Information" and "I-94 FAQ". The "I-94 FAQ" tab is selected. Underneath, there is a section titled "Most Recent I-94". A red box highlights the following information:

Admission (I-94) Record Number: 280410763    GBR45678911    [Print](#)

Most Recent Date of Entry: 2014 May 18

Class of Admission: F1

Admit Until Date: D/S

Details provided on the I-94 Information form:

Last/Surname: **Carnegie**

First (Given) Name: **Andrew**

Birth Date: **12/31/1979**

Passport Number: **GBR45678911**

Country of Issuance: **United Kingdom**

Below the red box, there is a button labeled "Get Travel History". At the bottom of the page, there are two informational messages:

- ▶ Effective April 26, 2013, DHS began automating the admission process. An alien lawfully admitted or paroled into the U.S. is no longer required to be in possession of a preprinted Form I-94. A record of admission printed from the CBP website constitutes a lawful record of admission. See 8 CFR § 1.4(d).
- ▶ If an employer, local, state or federal agency requests admission information, present your admission (I-94) number along with any additional required documents requested by that employer or agency.

# OPT e-Form Request Documents To Upload

3. Finally, you must upload a completed & signed Academic Advisor Pre-OPT Recommendation Form

**Bachelors and Masters Students:**  
Term You Will Graduate

This is to certify that \_\_\_\_\_ will receive the degree of \_\_\_\_\_ in  
(Student's Full Name) (Degree Level)  
the field/major of \_\_\_\_\_ and is expected to complete all requirements for the  
(Field of Study/Major)  
degree at the end of \_\_\_\_\_ Term Or (**PhD's ONLY**) on this specific date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Fall/Spring/Summer) (mm/dd/yyyy \*actual completion)

**PhD Students:**  
Exact Completion Date, if different from end of term

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Academic Advisor/Authorized Department Personnel - Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Telephone Number and/or email address)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Academic Advisor/Authorized Department Personnel)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Your academic advisor completes this section.



# Check Your New I-20 for Accuracy

✓ CHECK YOUR PRE-OPT I-20 FOR *ACCURACY!*

✓ You will find your Pre-OPT Requested Dates listed on page 2 of your new Pre-OPT I-20.

✓ Your Pre-Completion OPT I-20 will be signed for travel.

## EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATIONS

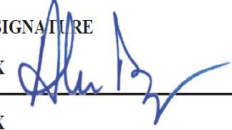
TYPE	FULL/PART-TIME	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
Pre-Completion OPT Time	Part	REQUESTED	31 August 2020 2020	23 December

## AUTHORIZED REDUCED COURSE LOAD

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## 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
Alison Day	DSO	X 	09/24/2020	Pittsburgh, PA
		X		
		X		
		X		

# Choose How to File the I-765



# Choosing How to File - Online or by Mail

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## **F-1 students have the option of filing their Form I-765 electronically.**

The benefits to filing your request online include:

- No paper mailing involved
- You can pay using a credit or debit card (no need to use a check or money order)
- A receipt number is generated immediately after submission
  - No need to file Form G-1145
  - Students will have less wait to receive their receipt number
  - Access to application "case status" in your USCIS account



# Choosing How to File - Online or by Mail

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## Keep in Mind:

- The processing time for the EAD card **is the same** whether you file electronically or via mail.
- Do not submit an online application AND a mail-in request. Duplicate applications may be denied.
- You **MUST** file Form I-765 from within the U.S. whether you choose the online filing option or mail your request.
- Regardless if you file online or by mail you cannot edit your request after submission.

Students may choose to file their application online or by mail. Students have reported success with the online application and it seems to minimize potential application errors, but the decision is up to the applicant.



# Ready to File?

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If you will file **online**, proceed to [Slide 22 \(The I-765 Application - Online\)](#).

If you will file by **mail**, proceed to [Slide 29 \(The I-765 Application - Mail\)](#).

- Remember, you should only submit **one** application! Duplicate applications (for instance, mailing one and submitting one online) can cause issues and result in denial.

# The I-765 Application – Online



# What Do I Include With My Online Application?

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## Prepare the Required Documents

We have found the documentation needed for the paper I-765 and the online I-765 is different. The necessary documentation for online filing is listed below, but not limited to the items below. Be certain to read the instructions in the online application and follow the prompts carefully.

Prepare by scanning all documents:

- One U.S. passport-sized photo (no glasses)
- Most Recent I-94 Record Copy
- Photocopy of signed pre-completion OPT I-20
- Copies of previous EADs (if applicable)



# Create/Log In to Your USCIS Account and Begin the Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)

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Create an account at [File Online: USCIS](#).

Use an email address that will not expire. Please note, if you previously created an account using your Andrew email and it has expired, you may need to create a new USCIS account.

## Begin the *Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)* and Fill Out All Required Sections

After you have created your account, log-in and select "File a form online" under "Select What You Want To Do." Then select "Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)." Follow the prompts in the online form to complete all the required sections and attach all the required documents.



# Select your Eligibility Category and Reason for Applying

What is your eligibility category?

 You can file your request online only for certain eligibility categories

If your eligibility category does not appear on the drop-down list, you must file a paper [Form I-765](#). If you submit online and are not eligible for one of the listed categories, your application may be denied.

(c)(3)(C) STEM Extension

What is your reason for applying?

- Initial permission to accept employment
- Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document or correction of my employment authorization document NOT DUE to US Citizenship and Immigration Services error
- Renewal of permission to accept employment



# What I-20s Should I Upload?

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## **Follow the steps outlined in the Online I-765 Application.**

- You should upload exactly what the online application requests.
- If the application only requests your I-20 that reflects the pre-completion OPT recommendation, that is all you are required to upload for the online process.
- Remember that this could change – but if you follow the directions exactly, you will be providing what USCIS needs to process your application.



# Online Application Tips

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- The USCIS system will keep your application stored for up to 30 days. If you begin a draft, please be sure to log in so you don't lose your progress.
- Keep in mind USCIS must receive your pre-completion OPT application within 30 days of your I-20 issuance. USCIS will save your draft submission for up to 30 days as long as you continue to log in. **If you wait longer than 30 days to log in again, USCIS will delete your draft to protect your data.**

# Review and Submit your Online Application

Before you submit your form, make sure to review all sections for accuracy. Make any needed corrections. We also highly recommend that you download a PDF copy of your responses to save for your records. You can do this by clicking on "View draft snapshot."

The screenshot shows a web interface for reviewing an I-765 application. On the left is a navigation sidebar with the following items: "Getting Started" (with a downward arrow), "About You" (with a downward arrow), "Evidence" (with a downward arrow), "Additional Information" (with a downward arrow), "Review and Submit" (with an upward arrow and highlighted), "Review your application", "Your application summary", and "Your statement". The main content area is titled "Review the I-765 form information" and includes a "Print" button. Below the title, there is a summary of the application information and a "View draft snapshot" button. At the bottom of the main content area, there are two sections: "Getting Started" and "Basis of eligibility".

**IMPORTANT!** In addition to printing or saving a copy of your I-765 before you submit, you should also save copies of all other submission materials.



# The I-765 Application – Mail

# What Do I Include With My Mailed Application?

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## What To Include?:

- ✓ G-1145 Form
- ✓ \*Check (payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security) **OR**,
  - ✓ Form G-1450 – to pay by Credit Card. The fee amount is found on the USCIS website. Click the 'Filing Fee' tab.
- ✓ Completed, signed I-765 Form
- ✓ Two U.S. passport-sized photos (No Glasses)
- ✓ Copies of all I-20s issued to you from your current degree level, including the pre-completion OPT I-20
- ✓ Copy of most recent I-94 Record (**NOT Travel History Page**)
- ✓ Copy of **VALID** passport
- ✓ Copy of F-1 visa sticker (even if expired)
- ✓ Copy of previous EAD (if you've applied for OPT before)

# G-1145 Form

**Complete this form and clip it on top of the first page of your immigration form(s).**

Applicant/Petitioner Full Last Name Your LAST NAME	Applicant/Petitioner Full First Name Your First Name	Applicant/Petitioner Full Middle Name Your Middle Name
E-mail Address xxxxxxx@gmail.com		Mobile Phone Number (Text Message) 412-123-4567

- G-1145 Form:

- Should be the 1<sup>st</sup> page of your OPT application
- Free to file
- More like 2-4 weeks...
- Disregard the form's expiration date but be sure to download from [uscis.gov](http://uscis.gov) website.

**When Will I Be Notified?**

We will send the e-Notification within 24 hours after we accept your application

**USCIS**

**Form G-1145**  
**Expires 9/26/14 Y**

# A Personal Check

Prepare Your Check Following the Format of the Image Below

- NOTE: There are different options for paying the I-765 Fee. You can find additional information about this on the [USCIS website](#).
- Checks must be issued by a U.S. bank.
- Confirm the fee amount on the [USCIS website](#). Scroll down and Click 'Filing Fee'

Your Name  
123 Street Name  
City, State, Zip Code  
(123) 456-7890

1025

DATE mm/dd/yyyy

PAY TO THE ORDER OF U.S. Department of Homeland Security \$ XXX.XX

Write out the dollar amount in words here. \_\_\_\_\_ DOLLARS

MEMO Form I-765 for SEVIS #N000XXXXXX

Sign Your Name Here \_\_\_\_\_

⑆000000000⑆ ⑆000000000⑆ 1025



# A Personal Check

Prepare Your Check Like The Image Below

Leave the back of the check **BLANK**



# G-1450 Form (for Credit Card Payments Only)

<b>Applicant's/Petitioner's/Requester's Information (Full Legal Name)</b>		
Given Name (First Name)	Middle Name (if any)	Family Name (Last Name)
<b>Credit Card Billing Information (Credit Card Holder's Name as it Appears on the Card)</b>		
Given Name (First Name)	Middle Name (if any)	Family Name (Last Name)
<b>Credit Card Holder's Billing Address:</b>		
Street Number and Name	Apt. Ste. Fl. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Number
City or Town	State	ZIP Code
<b>Credit Card Holder's Signature and Contact Information:</b>		
Credit Card Holder's Signature		
Credit Card Holder's Daytime Telephone Number	Credit Card Holder's Email Address	
<b>Credit Card Information</b>		
Credit Card Number	<b>Credit Card Type:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Visa <input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard <input type="checkbox"/> American Express <input type="checkbox"/> Discover	Authorized Payment Amount
Credit Card Expiration Date (mm/yyyy)		\$ <input type="text"/> .00
Form G-1450 01/04/18 <span style="float: right;">Page 1 of 1</span>		

"Petitioner" is person applying for the OPT.

## Card Holders Information

- Can be your information or a friends  enter that information here.
- Make sure "Card Holder" SIGNS the form!

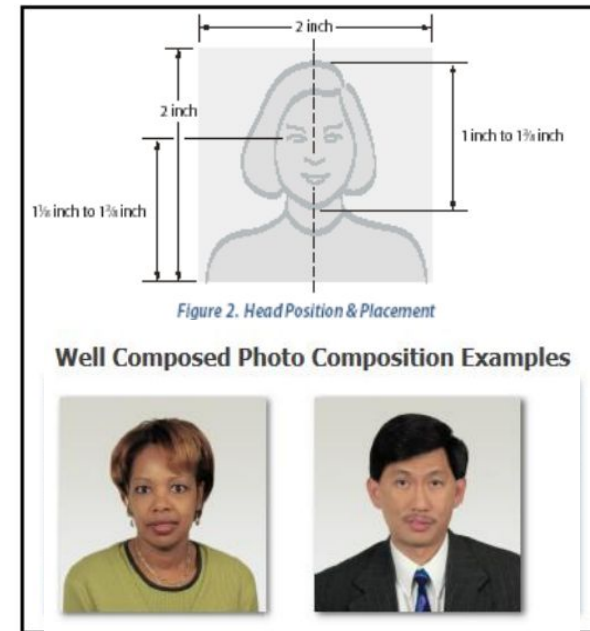
If you wish to pay by credit card – please fill-out at attached the G-1450 Form to your application.

**US Banks ONLY!**  
Type or Print in Black Ink

# Photos

## *OIE Cannot Check Photos!*

- Write your name **AND** I-94 # on the back of the photos!
  - Write lightly – don't damage the photo!
- Make sure they are the correct size!
- **Photos taken within past 30 days!**
- NO glasses!
- White or off-white background with no shadows!
- You can include your check & photos in a white envelope, marked with your name and I-94 number
- Attach envelope to application
- Do not staple photos!





# Form I-765

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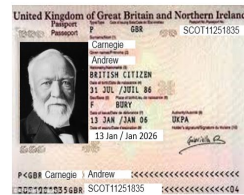
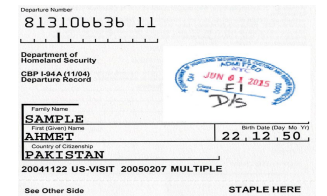
For a detailed guide on how to complete the I-765, please refer to our [sample I-765](#).

This sample guide will walk you through how to complete the paper form. Please note this guide is intended for the paper form only. If you are applying online, please refer to the earlier slides in this document as well as the instructions on the USCIS Website.

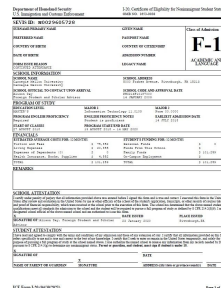
# Additional Required Documents – *Photocopies*



- I-94 Record Printout, *OR*
- A photocopy of White I-94 Card (front & back)



- Photocopy of your **VALID** passport photo page **AND** a photocopy of your most recent F-1 Visa Sticker



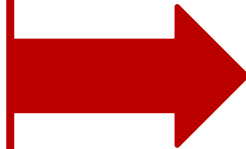
- **ALL** I-20s from your current degree level, including your new pre-completion OPT I-20. *Remember to Sign all I-20s before photocopy them!*

# Optional Cover Letter

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Cover letter **NOT** required unless something is missing or further explanation is required:

- Missing I-20
- Missing EAD



## Sample OPT Cover Letter

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[DATE OF REQUEST]

[STUDENT NAME]:  
[SEVIS ID NUMBER]:  
[OPT REQUESTED: PRE or POST-COMPLETION or STEM]  
[OPT DATES REQUESTED]:

Dear USCIS Officer:

Please accept this cover letter for my F-1 [PRE or POST-COMPLETION or STEM] Practical Training request. I am writing this letter because [REASON FOR LETTER].

Enclosed, please find my [PRE or POST-COMPLETION or STEM] application materials

Please contact me if you require additional information or documentation to process this request.

Sincerely,

[SIGNATURE OF STUDENT]

[NAME OF STUDENT]

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## *BEFORE* You Mail Your Application...

### ***DOUBLE CHECK EVERYTHING!***

- Did you check that you are using the most recent/updated I-765 Form?
- Did you check the box at the top of the I-765 Form (page 1) indicating what you are applying for?
- Did you sign and date your I-765 Form on page 5?
- Did you include all 7 pages of the I-765 Form?
- Did you check the USCIS website to make sure that your application fee is correct?
- Did you check the F-1 I-765 mailing instructions on the USCIS website?
- Make a copy of all application materials before you package and ship it to USCIS.

# Mailing OPT Application – FedEx/UPS

NOTE: OPT Applications ***MUST*** be mailed from within the United States!

- Make sure that you checked the F-1 (I-765) mailing instructions on the USCIS [website](#)?
  - Click on “Foreign Students” and see the row with
  - ‘F-1 Optional Practical Training’ for the most up to date mailing address.
  - Note the distinct mailing address for FedEx and UPS deliveries.
- OIE recommends using Express Mail (FedEx or UPS).
  - That you mail your application packet with ***Tracking!***
  - That you save a copy of the Express Mail receipt that you receive from FedEx and UPS.
    - This can help you prove that your application arrived at USCIS.





# After you Apply for Pre-Completion OPT



## What Happens After You Submit your I-765 Application

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### You should receive from USCIS:

- (mailed applications only) Text message or email with your receipt number within 2 to 4 weeks
- Paper Receipt Notice - within 4 weeks
- Paper Approval Notice -within 2-5 months
- EAD Card -within 2-5 months

If you think you made a mistake on your Pre-Completion OPT Application, do not send a duplicate application.

Contact OIE for advice on the specific mistake. Make sure to specify whether you filed online or by mail.

# What Happens After...

- Once you receive your Receipt Number from USCIS, you can check your OPT case status on the USCIS website.
  - *NOTE: This website is not 100% accurate.*
- Case status will stay/remains in "received status" until your OPT has been approved.

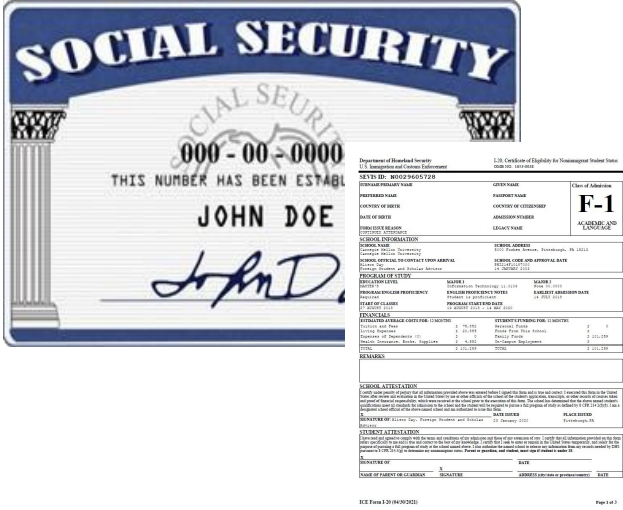


The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the USCIS website with links for NEWS, CITIZENSHIP, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (with the agency logo), GREEN CARD, and TOOLS. Below the navigation bar, a red oval highlights the text "my Case Was Received" with a blue signature above it. Below this, a paragraph of text reads: "On November 3, 2014, we received your Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, Receipt Number EAC1590041809, and sent you the receipt notice that describes how we will process your case. Please follow the instructions in the notice. If you do not receive your receipt notice by December 3, 2014, please call Customer Service at 1-800-375-5283. If you move, go to [www.uscis.gov/addresschange](http://www.uscis.gov/addresschange) to give us your new mailing address."

# Social Security Number (SSN)

If you don't have a Social Security Number (SSN), you will need to apply for it:

- ✓ Use Pre-completion OPT I-20 and EAD to apply for an SSN (Instructions on OIE [website](#))
- ✓ Apply in person at SSN office
- ✓ Card mailed in 7-10 days – keep in safe place!
- ✓ Do not apply more than 30 days before the EAD start date
- ✓ SSN is **NOT** work authorization – you can start work without it as long as you have your EAD.



# Additional Questions?

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Office of International  
Education

Cyert Hall, 1st Floor  
(Atrium Level)

[oi@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:oi@andrew.cmu.edu)

[www.cmu.edu/oi](http://www.cmu.edu/oi)

