

Carnegie Mellon University

Office of International Education

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F-1 PRE-Completion Optional Practical Training Information

FIRST:

- READ this application packet **thoroughly!** Including the “Frequently Asked Questions” (page 3).
- Have your academic advisor/program coordinator complete the [Pre-Completion OPT Academic Advisor Recommendation Form](#).

SECOND

- Submit your completed Pre-Completion OPT Request Form through your [MyOIE Portal](#) account (instructions [here](#)).
 - **DON'T FORGET** to update your address and personal email/phone number in your [SIO account](#)!
 - Complete e-form request. **ANY ERRORS** on your Pre-Completion OPT e-form request will be cause for a denial from OIE and will require you to resubmit all materials to OIE through your MyOIE Portal.
- OIE will issue a new Pre-OPT I-20 for you in 10 business days recommending Pre-Completion OPT.
- You will send a photocopy of this new I-20 with your entire Pre-Completion OPT application to USCIS.

THIRD:

- **Keep copies of everything you mail to USCIS for your own records!**
- Prepare all application materials listed below and send by UPS or FedEx.
 - You should also insure your package to USCIS for the amount of the OPT application [fee](#).
- Mail the OPT application to USCIS. Check the [filing locations for Form I-765](#) (Click on Foreign students and use address for F-1 OPT)
 - You will receive a Receipt Notice (form I-797) from USCIS – **SAVE THIS FOR YOUR RECORDS.** The Receipt Notice will have a tracking number (located in the ‘Receipt Number’ box on the I-797). This can be used to follow the progress of your case at www.uscis.gov.
 - Your case will stay in “Initial Review” status until it is approved.
- Your Pre-Completion OPT application **MUST** be received by USCIS within 30 days of the issue date as noted on the new Pre-Completion OPT I-20.

Application Process:

APPLICATION MATERIALS (submitted in this order):

- Fee information can be found on the USCIS [website](#). You can pay by:
 - A US Check or Money Order - payable to the “US Department of Homeland Security.” **NO CASH!**
 - A credit card – to pay by credit card you must fill out [G-1450 Form](#) and attach it to your application.
- [G-1145 Form](#). 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.
- [Two “passport” photos](#). Print your name and write your admission number (I-94#) on the back of each photo.
 - **NO GLASSES** can be worn in the passport photos. 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!).
 - **Passport photos can be obtained at:**

Tartans Ink (412-268-4828) University Center, Lower Level	Rite Aid (412-521-3900) 1700 Murray Avenue	US Post Office (412-421-1388) 1800 Murray Ave., Sq. Hill
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- [I-765 Form](#) (follow instructions on how to complete form on page 2).
- Sign the new Pre-OPT I-20 bottom of page 1.**
- A copy (**NOT** original) of page 1 and 2 of the new Pre-Completion I-20 from OIE with the request for OPT listed on page 2.
- 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 from your current degree level (**signed!**). If missing I-20(s), write a cover letter.
- A copy of your [I-94 Record](#).
 - Printout of the electronic [I-94 Record](#) – **Do Not send a copy of your “Travel History Page”**
- A copy of the photo page (identification page) and expiration date page of your passport.
- A copy of the most recent F-1 visa sticker in your passport (even if expired).
- A copy of any previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card(s), if applicable.

Instructions For Completing Form I-765:

Download the [Form I-765](http://www.uscis.gov) from www.uscis.gov and complete it as a form-fillable pdf **OR** if the form does not allow for certain characters – you can hand write the information in black ink. **Remember to write clearly!**

>Part 1

Check the 1.a box: “Permission to Accept Employment.”

>Part 2

#1 **Name:** Type or write your name as it is listed on your passport.

#2, #3, #4 **Other Names Used:** Leave this blank unless you have had a legal name change with an updated passport.

#5 **U.S. Mailing Address:** This must be an address where you can receive mail for at least the next 5 months into the future. **Governmental Mail is NOT FORWARDED.** If the EAD is sent to an address with a “forwarding order”, or if you cannot receive mail at the address you used on the I-765, then your EAD will be returned to USCIS. Put both your name on inside and outside of the mailing address mailbox. You should also put a notice on the inside of the mailbox saying, “do not return the priority mail.”

#6 **If your mailing address is the same as your physical address,** then check **YES** and skip to question #8.

#7 **Physical Address:** Enter the address where you currently live in the US –**ONLY**– if it is different from the information entered in #5.

Note: If you indicate a physical address on the I-765 that is **NOT located in Pennsylvania, then refer to the I-765 instructions on the USCIS [website](#) for which lockbox your application should be mailed.**

#8 **“Alien #:** If you have an A-Number, enter that information. If not, or if you lost this information, then you can leave this blank.

#9 **USCIS Account:** Leave BLANK.

#10: **Gender:** List Gender as shown in your passport.

#11 **Marital Status:** Enter current marital status.

#12 **Have you ever before filed an I-765 before:**

- Check YES -> if you have filed an I-765 Form with USCIS in the past.
- If that does not apply to you -> then check NO.

#13.a **Has the SSA ever issued you an SSN:** Check yes or no.

#13.b **If you answered YES to 9a:** Then enter your social security number.

#14, 15 **(If you do not have an SSN) Do you want the SSA to issue you an SSN:**

- If you check NO -> Skip to #18.
- If you check YES -> Answer questions 15, 16.a to 17.b.

#18.a **Country of Citizenship or Nationality:** Enter your passport’s country – if more than one – use the one listed on your I-20.

#19.a, 19.b, 19c, **Place of Birth:** Enter your place of city/state/country of birth (if you do not have a state/province, then leave it blank).

#20 **Date of Birth:** **REMEMBER** to write this in the US date style format (mm/dd/yyyy)!

#21.a **I-94 Number:** You can find this I-94 [website](#).

#21.b **Passport Number:** Enter most recent passport number.

#21.c **Travel Document:** Leave Blank.

#21.d **Country that issued your passport/travel document:** Enter your passport’s country (the one listed on your I-20).

#21.e **Passport Expiration Date:** Enter most recent passport expiration date (mm/dd/yyyy).

#22 **Date of the last arrival into the US:** Check the POE (Point of Entry) Stamp in your passport. **DO NOT check I-94 “Travel History Page”.**

#23 **Place of your last arrival into the US:** Check the POE (Point of Entry) Stamp in your passport. **DO NOT check I-94 “Travel History Page”.**

*#24 **Status of last entry:** For most, it will be “F-1 Student” (This could be different if you changed your status inside the US*).

#25 **Current Immigration Status:** Input “F-1 Student”.

#26 **Current SEVIS Number:** Find this on your immigration document.

#27 **Eligibility Categories: Fill out as follows. For summer or part-time OPT PRIOR to graduating: (c) (3) (A)**

SKIP Questions #28 through #31.b.

>Part 3

#1.a to 2 **Applicant’s Statement:** Check as it applies to you.

#3, #4, #5 **Contact Information:** Enter in US phone numbers and a **PERSONAL** email address.

#7.a, 7.b **Certification: Sign and date the I-765 in dark blue ink. Sign WITHIN the box – do not go outside the box.**

>Part 4-5

If this applies to your situation, fill in as applicable – **OR** – if this doesn’t apply to you, draw a diagonal line across each page you are not completing, and write “NA” next to your line. **(NOTE: Page 5 requires your signature – so DO NOT draw a diagonal line across that page)**

>**Part 6:** Complete this section only if you have been approved for **CPT and/or OPT**, and/or you have used a different **SEVIS ID in F-1 status** in the US in the past. If you need to complete this section because one or more of these apply to you, please complete item 1. For **each** of the items listed above, complete one box in Part 6. We suggest using the following to complete the Page number, Part Number, and Item number, as this information is required specific to Category (c)(3)(C) (per the I-765 [instructions](#), page 4):

• Page 3, Part 2, Item 27

- We suggest this format – see an example in the OIE Pre-Completion OPT [PowerPoint](#):

○ **CPT Authorizations:**

- Degree level (Bachelor’s, Master’s, or PhD), **Full-Time or Part-Time, CPT**, with Employer Name: Start date to End date (You can find your CPT details on the I-20 that was approved for each period of CPT).

○ **OPT Authorizations:**

- Degree level (Bachelor’s, Master’s, or PhD), Pre-Completion OPT, Start date to End date (You can find your OPT details on the I-20).

• Page 3, Part 2, Item 26

○ **Previous SEVIS ID Number(s):**

- Degree level (Bachelor’s, Master’s, or PhD), Program Start Date – Program End Date, SEVIS ID: N00.... (You can find your SEVIS Number in the top right-hand corner of your I-20)

REMINDERS: MAINTAINING STATUS WHILE YOU ARE ON Pre-Completion OPT

- ❑ REQUIRED UPDATES. You are required to report your updated address in SIO. Remember to update your address again when you return to start classes the next term.

TRAVELING ABROAD WHILE ON Pre-Completion OPT:

- ❑ In order to have a smooth re-entry into the U.S. while on OPT, you must have: Valid Passport (for 6 months into the future) -> Valid F-1 Visa Stamp/Sticker -> Pre-Completion OPT I-20 (signed for travel within the past 12 months)

CHOOSING YOUR START DATE

You Pre-Completion OPT start date relates to when you are applying for the benefit:

Full-time Pre-Completion OPT for summer term:

- Start date can be after classes/finals end
- End date must be before the start of next semesters classes

Part-time Pre-Completion OPT for the fall/spring term:

- End date cannot go past your program completion date.

***You may not change your Pre-Completion 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.***

Pre-Completion OPT – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)? What are the eligibility requirements to apply for F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

Practical training is the opportunity to apply knowledge gained in your degree program. The training must be directly related to your level and field of study. OPT is recommended by OIE and authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). To be eligible to apply for OPT, you must: (1) have been in full-time student status for at least one academic year by the requested start date of your Pre-Completion OPT. This authorization can take 3 to 5 months or more to obtain. Further information can be found on the OIE [website](#).

2. When can I apply?

You are eligible to apply for Practical Training no earlier 90 days before you complete the one-year academic requirement. SEVP recommends that you apply for Pre-Completion OPT no earlier than 90 days before your requested OPT employment start date. Your Pre-Completion OPT application **MUST** be receipted by USCIS within 30 days of the issue date as noted on the new OPT I-20 (item 10) to avoid denial.

3. How can I use OPT while I am still in my program?

You may use Pre-Completion OPT while you are still in your degree program as follows: (1) part-time while school is in session, (2) full-time during annual vacation periods. These periods of OPT used before you graduate will be deducted from the total allowable period of 12 months. Part-time OPT will be deducted at one-half the full-time rate.

4. What if I apply for Pre-Completion OPT and don't get the EAD in time? OR What if I lose my offer or decide I don't want to work using my Pre-Completion OPT?

You cannot begin work without the EAD in hand and unless you are within the dates printed on the card. If you do not have the EAD, you would need to negotiate with your employer to defer your work start date. Authorization for OPT is granted by USCIS. Their standard processing time is 90+ days or more. Therefore, it is important that you apply for the authorization well in advance of the date you wish to start working. You may apply up to 90 days before your requested Pre-Completion start date. **Note: The Pre-Completion OPT I-20 cannot be more than 30 days old when it arrives at USCIS or OPT will be denied!**

5. How long does it take to get authorization for Pre-Completion OPT and when should I apply?

It takes OIE 5 to 10 business days to process, your new OPT I-20. After you mail your OPT application to USCIS, it takes USCIS approximately 3 to 5 months to approve OPT. Therefore, it is important that you apply for the authorization well in advance of the date you wish to start working.

6. My Pre-Completion OPT I-20 was issued almost 30 days ago, and I haven't filed yet. What do I do?

Your OPT application **MUST** be received by USCIS prior to 30 days of the issue date as noted on the new OPT I-20 to avoid denial. If you delay filing the application, you must come to OIE's front desk to request a new I-20 with a new OPT issue date. The new I-20 will take at least 10 business days to re-issue. To be safe, file at least 2 weeks before the 30-day timeout of the OPT I-20.

7. Do I need to have a job to apply for Pre-Completion OPT? Or while I am on Pre-Completion OPT?

NO. You **DO NOT** need to have a job offer before applying for Pre or Post-Completion Optional Practical Training application.

8. Does the job I have while on OPT must be paid employment, or can it be unpaid?

For Pre-Completion OPT, the employment **DOES NOT** have to be paid employment. Therefore, interning or volunteering in a position directly related to the academic field would be considered "employed" for the purposes of Pre-Completion OPT employment.

9. Do I have to do anything with OIE while I am on Pre-Completion OPT?

YES! Immigration regulations **REQUIRE** that while you are on Pre-Completion OPT, you **MUST** report your address information with OIE. You must enter changes (within 10 days) in [SIO](#).

10. Is my ability to travel while on Pre-Completion OPT impacted?

No, if you have your valid I-20, valid passport, and valid F-1 visa. The EAD is not necessary for travel while on Pre-Completion OPT. When you get the Pre-Completion OPT I-20 back from OIE, it will be automatically signed for travel. For questions about travel and visa renewal, always consult the OIE [website](#).

Employment Related Information

Employment Eligibility Verification (I-9): When you begin work, you and your employer must complete a form entitled "Employment Eligibility Verification" (IRS Form I-9) which verifies your eligibility to work in the U.S. The I-9 must be updated each time you receive a renewal of your work permission. This form requires you to document your identity and work authorization. For F-1 students, the most typical combination of documentation is your passport, I-94 Departure Record, I-20, and EAD.

Social Security Number (SSN): For payroll purposes, you will also need to provide your SSN. If you do not already have an SSN, you are required to bring your passport, I-94 record, OPT I-20, and EAD to the Social Security Administration (SSA) and apply for an SSN card. The same documents are required for a replacement card. ****To find the closest SSA, visit on the SSA [website](#).**

Social Security Withholding and Other Taxes: In general, F-1 students who have been in the U.S. fewer than five years are "non-residents for tax purposes" and are exempt from Social Security (FICA) and Medicare taxes. If you are a non-resident for tax purposes and your employer does withhold FICA, speak to your payroll office. You and your employer can refer to Internal Revenue Service Publication 519, "U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens" for additional information. Your earnings are subject to applicable federal, state, and local taxes. Tax returns must be filed on or before April 15 each year for the previous calendar year. The results of the filing will determine if any of the withheld income taxes can be refunded to you.