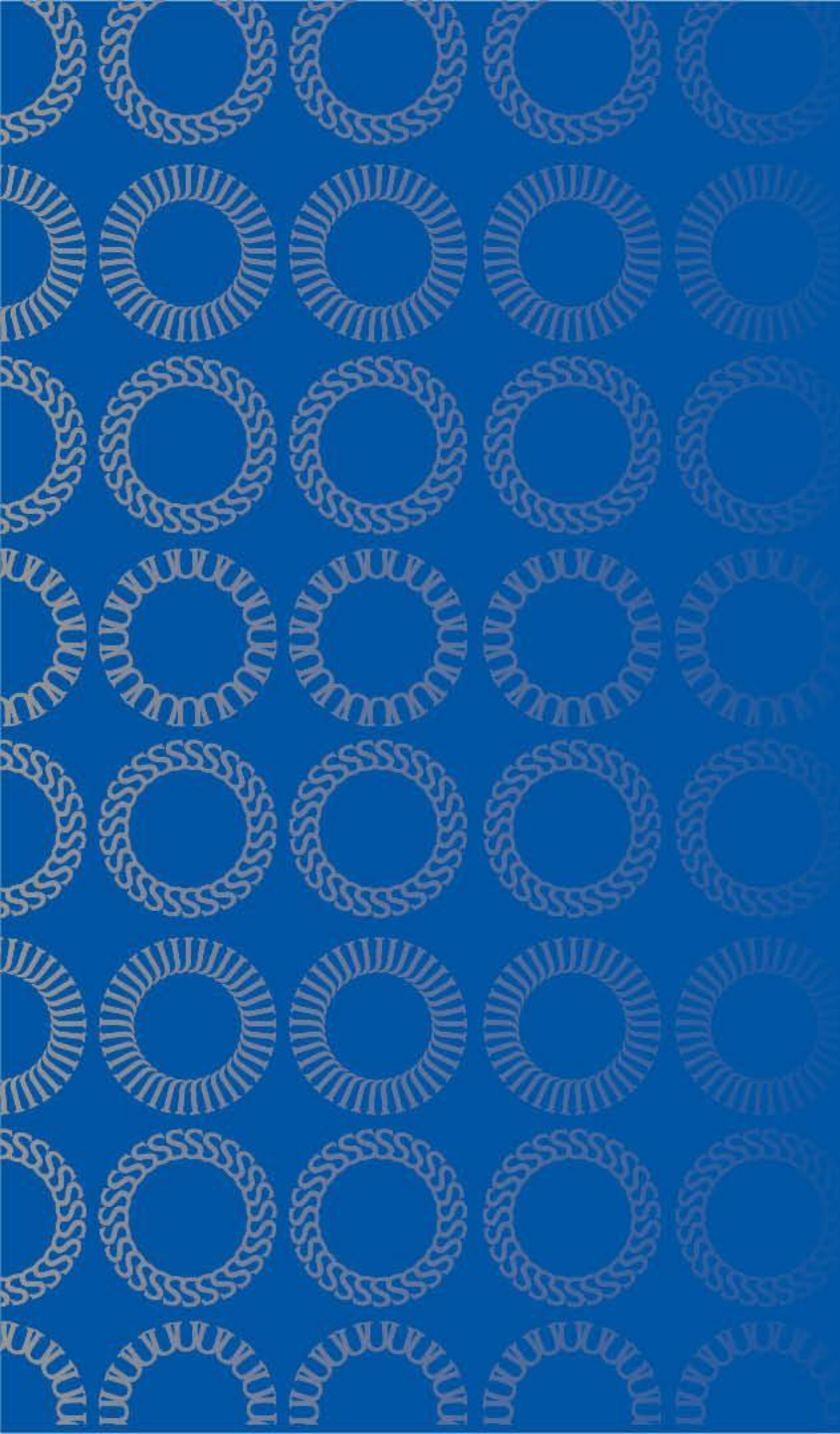




Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

SJSU | INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
AND SCHOLAR SERVICES

Pre-Completion OPT

This tutorial will give important information regarding the process for applying for Pre-Completion OPT, as well as student's responsibilities while on Pre-Completion OPT.

We recommend that you take the time to review all slides, then [contact](#) International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) Office or [book an appointment](#) with an ISSS Advisor, if you have further questions.
international-office@sjsu.edu

Optional Practical Training

“Temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student’s major area of study”

Up to 12 months may be authorized by USCIS

Pre-Completion

Occurs during your studies when:

- CPT is not an option;
- You are not eligible for CPT.

Post-Completion

Occurs after degree completion OR Grad students only: After completion of all course requirements and are only left with a project, thesis or comprehensive final exam.

*** This presentation will focus on Pre-Completion OPT.**

Pre-Completion OPT

- Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training is a type of work authorization that allows international students in F-1 status to work in the United States prior to their degree completion.
- Employment on Pre-Completion OPT must be directly related to the student's major field of study.
 - Pre-Completion OPT gives students the opportunity to gain real-world professional experience in their major field of study prior to completing their degree.
- Students must first receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS before they can begin working.
- For employment that is not within commuting distance to SJSU during the fall and/or spring semester, it is limited to remote only.
 - Summer employment, as long as it is not your final term, can be outside of the area or state.
- Students are eligible for 12 months of Optional Practical Training.
 - Time used on Pre-Completion OPT, will be subtracted from your 12 months.

Important Information

Full-Time vs. Part-Time

1. Pre-Completion OPT can be full-time (more than 20 hours per week) or part-time (20 hours or less per week).
2. Full-time Pre-Completion OPT is only available to students:
 - a. during summer or
 - b. Graduate students who have completed all course requirements and are only left with a project/thesis/comprehensive exam in their final semester.
 - i. For employment that is not within commuting distance to SJSU during the fall and/or spring semester, it is limited to remote only.

Important Information

Affect on Post-Completion OPT

Students are eligible for 12 months of Optional Practical Training. Time used for pre-completion OPT, will be subtracted from your 12 months.

1. Working Full-Time?
 - a. Time will be subtracted at the full rate.
 - b. Example: If your approved full-time Pre-Completion OPT dates are October 1, 2025 - December 1, 2025. This is 62 days of work, subtracted at the full rate. This would give you 303 days of Post-Completion OPT eligibility.

2. Working Part-Time?
 - a. Time will be subtracted at half the rate.
 - b. Example: If your approved part-time Pre-Completion OPT dates are October 1, 2025 - December 1, 2025. This is 62 days of work, subtracted at half the rate, is a total of 31 days subtracted. This would give you 334 days of Post-Completion OPT eligibility.

When to Apply

Pre-Completion OPT

1. You may submit the Pre-Completion OPT I-20 request to ISSS up to **100 days** BEFORE you want to start working.
 - a. Earliest ISSS can do a Pre-Completion OPT recommendation is 90 days before you want to start working.
2. Please see the ISSS web page for [Pre-Completion OPT](#) to find out the Fall, Spring and Summer Dates to eligible semester dates for Pre-Completion OPT.
3. OPT applications can take 2-3 months (sometimes longer) to get approved by USCIS. Therefore, we recommend that you apply early.

IMPORTANT: You must get a new I-20 with a Pre-Completion OPT recommendation BEFORE filing your Pre-Completion OPT application with USCIS.

Eligibility

1. Must have been a full-time student for at least one consecutive academic year;
 - a. *OPT eligibility requirements may reset due to a leave of absence or SEVIS record termination. Please consult with an ISSS Advisor for more information.
2. Be in valid F-1 status when requesting OPT I-20 from ISSS and when application is submitted to USCIS;
3. Be in good academic standing (minimum 3.0 for graduate students and 2.0 for undergraduate students);
4. Be physically present in the U.S. when requesting the OPT I-20 from ISSS and submitting your application to USCIS.

Pre-Completion OPT Process

1. We recommend that you [schedule an appointment](#) to meet with an ISSS Advisor from to discuss Pre-Completion OPT. The Pre-Completion OPT I-20 Request is hidden in iSpartan. After meeting with an ISSS Advisor they will email you the link.
2. Student requests a Pre-Completion OPT I-20 from ISSS. ***You will need this I-20 with Pre-Completion OPT recommendation from ISSS to file your Pre-Completion OPT application with USCIS.***
 - a. Complete the e-form.
 - b. Select the requested Pre-Completion OPT start and end dates. Review [Pre-Completion OPT web page](#) for allowable dates.
 - i. You are not required to have a job to request pre-completion OPT.
 - c. You will need to indicate full-time or part-time in your request.
 - i. Review slide for more details.
 - d. Academic Department (Major Advisor or Graduate Program Coordinator) information will need to be added into the e-form. Name, title and email address.
 - i. Request will be routed to ISSS once your Academic Department reviews request.
 1. Please note that it is your responsibility to notify your academic/major advisor of the OPT approval request. It will be sent via email to the indicated advisor.
 - ii. Once your Academic Department has signed off on your Pre-Completion OPT request, you will receive an email that your request has been routed to ISSS for processing.
3. **ISSS Receives Pre-Completion OPT I-20 Request**
 - a. Once submitted to ISSS, processing time is 5-7 business days.
 - c. DSO will review your eligibility for Pre-Completion OPT.
 - d. DSO will recommend Pre-Completion OPT in your SEVIS record and issue you a new I-20 with the OPT recommendation on page 2.
 - ii. DSO will email you the I-20 with Pre-Completion OPT recommendation.
 - iii. ***You will need this I-20 to file your Pre-Completion OPT application with USCIS.***

Pre-Completion OPT Process

4. Student files Form I-765 and supporting documents with USCIS.

- a. **Do not file your application with USCIS until you have a new I-20 with Pre-Completion OPT recommendation from ISSS.**
- b. USCIS must receive your pre-completion OPT application within 30 days of the date your pre-completion OPT was recommended by ISSS, or your pre-completion OPT application will be denied.
 - i. DSO will tell you when your pre-completion OPT recommendation was done, when they email you the I-20.
 - ii. We recommend checking this [date calculator](#) to find your deadline for USCIS to receive your application. If the deadline is on a Saturday or Sunday, we recommend that it be received by the Friday before.
 - iii. If you are unable to file within 30 days, then contact ISSS for an updated I-20.
- c. Review checklist for documents needed to apply.

Online Filing of I-765

You will need to file the I-765 online.

**USCIS is no longer allowing for students to mail in their I-765 application.*

Go to ISSS [Pre-Completion OPT webpage](#) for the tutorial, “Online Filing of I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT”.

- Save all required documents for Pre-Completion OPT application on your computer.
- Create online account with USCIS. Use your personal/non-SJSU email address to create the online account.
 - *Since your SJSU email will be deactivated one year after you graduate.
- File I-765 for Pre-Completion OPT.
- Upload supporting documents in online application.
- Receive same day notification, receipt number, that application has been filed with USCIS.

****Do not file with USCIS until you have the I-20 with Pre-Completion OPT recommendation from ISSS.***

Required Documentation for Filing Online

For filing the online I-765 PreCompletion OPT Application to USCIS

- **2 x 2 Photo of You**
 - You will need to get a new passport style color photograph taken.
 - Review the [Department of State photo guidelines](#).
 - Photos need to be current, taken within the last 30 days, and not previously used for a previous application submitted to the U.S. government (such as passport, visa, OPT/STEM).
 - These photos should not be taken by you or your friend. You will need to go to a place that takes passport style color photographs. (CVS, Walgreens, UPS Store).
- **Form I-94**
 - Retrieve I-94 at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>
 - If you have a paper I-94, include a copy both sides of the card
 - If you changed your status to F-1 and have not left the US since getting F-1 status, you will need to submit a copy of your I-797A approval notice.
- **Employment Authorization Document (EAD) or Government ID**
 - Copy of previous EAD card, if you have ever had OPT(pre- or post-completion) or STEM OPT.
 - If you do not have an EAD, then you will need to submit a copy of your passport bio page.
 - *If your passport will be expiring within 6 months, you will need to write a letter acknowledging your passport expiration date and that you plan on renewing your passport before it expires.
 - *If your I-94 has your old passport number on it, then you will need to submit a copy of your current and your previous passport.
- **Proof of Enrollment**
 - Submit documentation to show that you have been enrolled full-time for one academic year.
 - University Transcript.
- **Previously Authorized CPT or OPT ****
 - Upload all copies of I-20's that have CPT authorization or any previous OPT or STEM OPT authorization.
- **Form I-20 ****
 - I-20 with pre-completion OPT recommendation from ISSS.

****For any I-20 that you are uploading, make sure that you have done the following. Please print, (hand) sign and date page 1 of the I-20. Once you have signed and dated page 1 of the I-20, make a copy to submit with your OPT application to USCIS.**

***Filing code is (c)(3)(A) for Pre-Completion OPT.**

Additional Information for Filing Online

For filing the online I-765 Pre-Completion OPT Application to USCIS

Additional Information

Complete this section to give additional useful information that you would like USCIS to know.

**You are required to indicate any current or previous employment authorizations that have been authorized in your SEVIS record [CPT, OPT (Pre, Post or STEM), Economic Hardship, or Special Student Relief (SSR) from SJSU and/or other schools.] (See next slide for details).*

Additional information may also include:

*Passport information: Only if your I-94 information or F-1 visa has your old passport number on it, then enter the expired passport information here.

*SEVIS ID number: If you have had a different SEVIS ID number, other than the number listed on your current I-20.

Additional Information for Filing Online

For filing the online I-765 Pre-Completion OPT Application to USCIS

Additional Information Continued

Give the details of your currently authorized post-completion OPT

Also, If you had previous CPT authorization:

Section: Select “Evidence”

Question: “Previously authorized CPT or OPT”

Additional Information: Enter the type of employment authorization, indicate if part-time or full-time, degree level, authorization dates, and any receipt numbers (IOE or YSC) associated with the authorization.

Example for CPT: CPT; Full-time; Master’s; Authorized (05/31/2020 - 08/15/2020).

Example for OPT: Post-Completion OPT; Full-time; Master’s; Authorized (01/21/2021 - 01/20/2022); IOE123456789.

Review and Submit Online to USCIS

For filing the online I-765 Pre-Completion OPT Application to USCIS

- **Review your application**
 - This is where you can check your application before you submit.
 - Check to make sure that you have spelled things correctly as well as entered any dates in the US format of MM/DD/YYYY.
- **Your application summary**
 - This is a summary of all the information that you have provided in your application.
- **Your statement**
 - You must read and agree to the statements that are listed in this section.
- **Your signature**
 - Type in your full legal name, for the digital signature.
- **Pay and submit**
 - The final step to submit the Form I-765 is to pay the required application fee.
 - The filing fee is non-refundable and subject to change. Please go to <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> for the current filing fee.

Pre-Completion OPT Process

5. USCIS processes Pre-Completion OPT application.

- a. Within 2-3 weeks of USCIS receiving your Pre-Completion OPT application, a paper receipt (Form I-797) will be mailed to the mailing address that you provided as your mailing address in your application (Form I-765).
 - i. You will be able to access your receipt notice in your USCIS online account.
 - ii. Review the receipt for any errors in your name or date of birth. If there are errors, please contact ISSS.
- b. Processing of your OPT application can take 2-3 months, sometimes longer.
 - i. You cannot change your requested OPT dates, once you have filed your OPT application with USCIS.
 - ii. If you receive a RFE 'Request for Evidence' from USCIS, please contact ISSS.

Premium Processing

- If you want an expedited adjudication, USCIS offers **Premium Processing** for an additional fee. If you want to add Premium Processing you will need to file the [Form I-907](#) in your USCIS Online Account.
- You may file the [Form I-907](#) either concurrently with your I-765 OR at a later time as long as your I-765 application is still pending.
- If you add Premium Processing, USCIS will take adjudicative action within **30 business days**.
 - Business days **excludes** weekends and federal holidays;
 - You can use a [Business Day Calculator](#) to understand when you can expect an update from USCIS.
- Adding Premium Processing does NOT guarantee approval within 30 business days. If you receive a Biometrics Appointment, the Premium Processing clock will stop and will only restart again after you have attended your Biometrics Appointment.
- You can learn more about premium processing in our [FAQ](#) section on our [Pre-Completion OPT webpage](#).

Biometrics Appointment

- Students may receive a Biometrics Appointment Notice to provide their photograph and/or fingerprints at a USCIS Application Support Center.
- Students should carefully monitor their USCIS Online Account for updates (check both the “Case Status” tab and “Documents” tab for updates). The Appointment Notice will generally be available in the USCIS Online Account first. The physical appointment notice may take 2-3 weeks to be delivered.
- Refer to the Biometrics Appointment Notice for documents to bring with you to the appointment. In general, you will need to take the Biometrics Appointment Notice and your Passport.
- Within 1-2 days after attending the Biometrics Appointment, the USCIS Online Case Status should state that USCIS will continue to process your case as at the date you attended the appointment, and nothing further is pending.
- Appointments may be rescheduled in the USCIS Online Account, however, this must be done at least one day prior to the scheduled date.
- If you miss your scheduled appointment due to unavoidable circumstances, reach out to ISSS immediately.

How to find your Biometrics Appointment Notice in the USCIS Online Account.



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services



My Account

My Account ▾

Resources ▾

Sign Out

Your Cases

I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

Submitted on May 5, 2026 | Receipt #

Download PDF ▾

Case Status

Case History

Documents

USCIS Notices

File	Date Sent	Action
Appointment Scheduled.pdf	May 15, 2026	N/A
Receipt Notice.pdf	May 5, 2026	N/A

Your uploads

While I-765 is Pending

What you can do while your application is pending with USCIS.

1. Do not work.
 - a. You cannot start working until your OPT has been approved, you have your EAD card in hand, then work within the authorized dates (noted on the card) in a job (paid or unpaid) that is related to your major.
2. Monitor your USCIS online account for any time sensitive information and updates.
 - a. Biometrics Appointment.
3. Check processing time online.
 - a. Click [here](#) to check I-765 application processing times at Potomac Service Center.
 - i. Under <Forms> select 'I-765', for <Form Category> select 'Based on a request by a qualified F-1 academic student [(c)(3)]', for <Field Office or Service Center> select 'Service Center Operations (SCOPS)>', click the 'Get Processing Time' button.
4. If you receive an RFE 'Request for Evidence' or RFI 'Request for Information', please contact ISSS.

Employment Authorization

EAD work permit

- Report EAD typographic error(s) to ISSS.
- Only work based on given dates printed on card, unless there is an error.
- Paid or unpaid employment, must be directly related to major field of study.

6. Once OPT is approved, student receives approval notice and EAD card.

- a. Once your OPT application has been approved, USCIS will mail you 2 documents, separately:
 - i. Form I-797 approval notice;
 - ii. EAD (Employment Authorization Document).
- b. You cannot start working until:
 - i. Your OPT has been approved;
 - ii. You have the EAD card;
 - iii. Work within the dates authorized on your EAD.



Maintaining F-1 Status on Pre-Completion OPT

- Maintain your F-1 status by continuing to be enrolled and pursuing your degree.
- Do not work until your Pre-Completion OPT has been approved, you have your EAD card in hand, then work within the approved dates indicated on your EAD card.
- All employment must be directly related to your major field of study.
 - Employment can be paid or unpaid.
 - You are not required to report your employment to ISSS or via the SEVP Portal during Pre-Completion OPT.
- Report living address and any change in living address within 10 days of the change directly in your mySJSU account.

THANK YOU!

Email: international-office@sjsu.edu

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