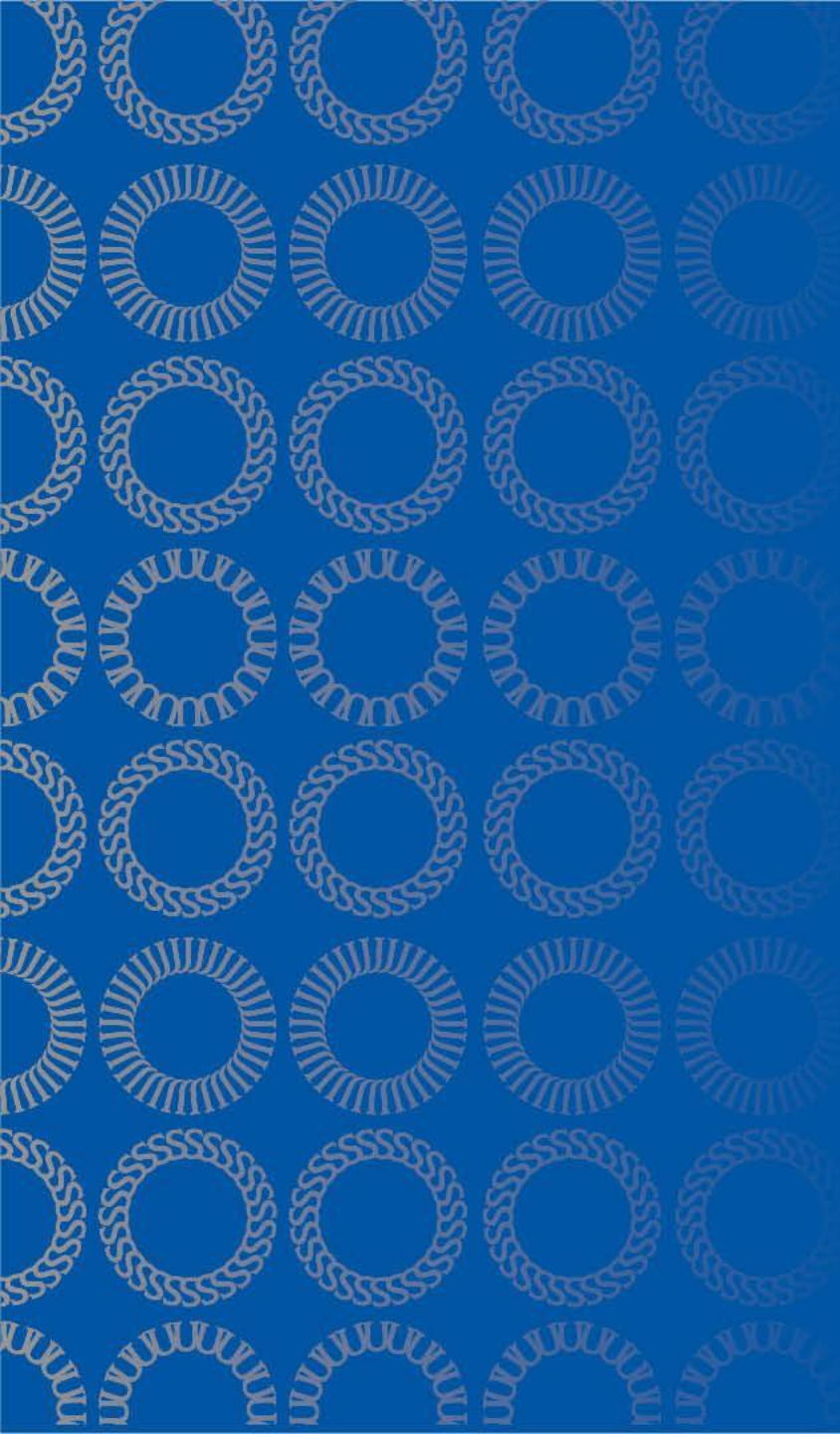




# Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

**SJSU** | INTERNATIONAL STUDENT  
AND SCHOLAR SERVICES

# Topics Covered in Tutorial

What is OPT?

Eligibility Requirements

Important Pre-Completion OPT Information

Application Process Overview

Application Steps

Employment Authorization

Maintaining Status on Pre-Completion OPT

# 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.**

# Eligibility

## Pre-Completion OPT

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.

# Important Information

## Pre-Completion OPT

### **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.

### **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.**

# Pre-Completion OPT Process

1. Recommend scheduling a zoom appointment to meet with an International Student Advisor from ISSS to discuss Pre-Completion OPT.
2. Email ISSS to request the Pre-Completion OPT I-20 Request iSpartan link.
  - a. international-office@sjsu.edu
3. **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.
4. **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

## 5. 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.
- 

USCIS offers 2 different ways to file an I-765 (OPT) application with USCIS.

\*You must choose one option. You cannot choose both options.

1. Mail application to [USCIS lockbox](#).
2. Online filing of [I-765](#).

# Filing I-765 (Pre OPT) with USCIS

You must have a new I-20 with Pre-Completion OPT recommendation from ISSS to file I-765 (Pre-Completion OPT) with USCIS.

USCIS offers 2 different ways to file an I-765 (Post-Completion OPT) application with USCIS. You must choose one option. You cannot choose both options. ISSS recommends you file online.

1. Online filing of [I-765](#).
2. Mail application to [USCIS lockbox](#).

**See next slide for Comparison**

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\*Go to ISSS [Pre-Completion OPT webpage](#) for the following tutorials:

1. Online filing of I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT
2. Mailing I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT

*Only if you are unable to file online, then you can mail your application and supporting documents to [USCIS](#). Review ISSS Mailing I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT tutorial . (BEFORE mailing your application, we highly recommend [meeting with an Advisor](#) from ISSS to find out why you are unable to file online).*

# Online Filing vs. Mailing Application

ISSS recommends that you file online. *\*You must choose one option. You cannot choose both options. **\*Do not file with USCIS until you have the I-20 with OPT recommendation from ISSS.***

## Online Filing

- Save all required documents for Pre-Completion OPT application on your computer.
- Create online account with USCIS.
- 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.

*\*Review slides 11-14\**

## Mailing Application to USCIS

- Gather all required documents for Pre-Completion OPT application.
- Complete I-765.
- Make a copy of your complete application, prior to mailing.
- Mail application to USCIS.
- If application is rejected, it will be returned to you. ***\*If your application is returned to you, contact ISSS, to get a new I-20 (outside 30 day filing window).***

*\*Review slides 15-16\**

# Required Documentation if Filing Online

## For filing the online I-765 Post-Completion 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 post-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 if 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 if 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.

# Required Documentation if Mailing

## For mailing the I-765 Pre-Completion OPT Application to USCIS

**Assemble your documents using the suggested order below; held together by a paper clip or binder clip. Do not staple your documents together.**

1. Application/filing fee. Fees are subject to change, so please refer to [uscis.gov/i-765](https://uscis.gov/i-765) for the current filing fee amount.
  - a. You will need to use a personal check, cashier's check or money order [from a U.S. bank account] payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security". If needed, search online about how to write a check.
2. 2 recent passport-style color photographs
  - a. You will need to get new passport style color photographs taken.
  - b. Review the [Department of State photo guideline](#) for size dimensions.
    - 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).
3. Form [G-1145](#), E-notification of Application/Petition Acceptance.
4. Form [I-765 Application for Employment Authorization](#). (All pages, completed, and signed).
  - a. Read the [USCIS Instructions for Form I-765](#).
  - b. Review slides 7-27 of [Mailing I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT](#) for ISSS I-765 Completion Guide.
5. Photocopy of new I-20 with OPT recommendation.
  - a. You will need to make sure you have a new I-20 from ISSS with the appropriate OPT recommendation.

**\*Make sure you have signed and dated page 1 of the I-20, in the appropriate section, prior to making the copy.**
6. Photocopy of valid passport biographical page.
  - a. **\*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.**
  - b. **\*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.**
7. Photocopy of F-1 visa stamp, if applicable.
8. Form I-94 record of arrival.
  - a. Retrieve I-94 at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>
  - b. If you have a paper I-94, include a copy both sides of the card
  - c. 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.
9. Photocopy of any Employment Authorization Document (EAD), from SJSU and/or other schools.
10. Photocopies of all previous CPT, OPT or STEM OPT I-20's, from SJSU and/or other schools.
  - a. **Make sure you have signed and dated page 1 of the I-20, in the appropriate section, prior to making the copy.**
11. Proof of enrollment for the current semester.
  - a. Submit documentation to show that you have been enrolled full-time for one academic year.
  - b. University Transcript.

# Review and Mail to USCIS

## For mailing the I-765 Pre-Completion OPT Application to USCIS

- **Review your application prior to mailing to USCIS.**
  - Review the [Form I-765](#) for the correct edition date and that you have signed the appropriate page.
    - USCIS will not accept a digital signature on the Form I-765.
  - We recommend that you make a copy of your entire application packet before mailing to USCIS.
- **Mail your entire application to the [USCIS lockbox](#).**
  - You will mail to the lockbox location for Foreign students.
  - You will have to select the correct address based on how you are mailing your application.
  - We recommend using Fed Ex or UPS.
  - If you mail via USPS, then use tracking.

# Pre-Completion OPT Process

## 6. 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. If you filed online, then you will receive notification that your application was received on the day that you filed the application with USCIS. .
  - 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/mailed your OPT application with USCIS.
  - ii. If your application is returned back to you (if you mailed it) or if you receive a RFE 'Request for Evidence' from USCIS, please contact ISSS.
  - iii. USCIS offers premium processing.

\*You can learn more about premium processing in our [FAQ](#) section on our [Pre-Completion OPT webpage](#).

ISSS does not recommend the premium processing option, as long as you have built in sufficient time (e.g. 2-3 months) to apply for OPT.

# 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. Use [USCIS Case Status Online](#) to check the status of your application.
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 <Service Center> select 'Potomac Service Center', click the 'Get Processing Time' button.
4. Use [USCIS Case Status Online](#) to check the status of your application.
5. 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.

## 7. Student receives EAD card.

- Once your OPT application has been approved, USCIS will mail you 2 documents, separately:
  - Form I-797 approval notice;
  - EAD (Employment Authorization Document).
- You cannot start working until:
  - Your OPT has been approved;
  - You have the EAD card;
  - 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](mailto:international-office@sjsu.edu)

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