



**OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)  
FOR  
F-1 STUDENTS**

**2020-2021**

## Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1 Students

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization before completing their academic studies (pre-completion) and/or after completing their academic studies (post-completion). However, all periods of pre-completion OPT will be deducted from the available period of post-completion OPT.

### Types of OPT

All OPT must be directly related to your major area of study. If you are an F-1 student, you may be eligible to participate in OPT in two different ways:

- Pre-completion OPT ( C ) ( 3 ) ( A ): You may apply to participate in pre-completion OPT after you have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year. You do not need to have had F-1 status for the one full academic year; you can satisfy the "one full academic year" requirement even if you had another nonimmigrant status during that time.

If you are authorized to participate in pre-completion OPT, you may work part time (20 hours or less per week) while school is in session. You may work full time when school is not in session.

- Post-completion OPT ( C ) ( 3 ) ( B ): You may apply to participate in post-completion OPT after completing your studies. If you are authorized for post-completion OPT, you may work part time (20 hours or less per week) or full time.

#### Important Notes:

- *If you participated in pre-completion OPT, USCIS will deduct that amount of time from your post-completion OPT authorization period. For example, if you participated in 10 months of pre-completion OPT, you would be eligible for only up to 2 months of post-completion OPT.*
- *Application must be submitted no earlier than 90 days before completion of degree.*

Completion date - The completion date refers to the date that your degree requirements are completed or at the end of your I-20 whichever is earlier. This will be verified in letter from your academic advisor. This date may not necessarily be the same as the official college graduation ceremony date.

## WHEN TO APPLY?

### Pre-Completion OPT

- Must apply within 30 days of your DSO enters the recommendation for OPT into your SEVIS record, and
- May apply up to 90 days before you complete a full academic year, as long as you do not start OPT employment until you complete one full academic year.

### Post-Completion OPT

- Must apply within 30 days of your DSO entering the recommendation for OPT into your SEVIS record, and ;
- May apply up to 90 days before you complete your degree, but no later than 60 days after you complete your degree.

Important: You may begin your OPT only after the USCIS has approved your form I-765 and you received your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card and after the employment start date in your EAD card has been reached.

## HOW TO APPLY?

**STEP 1:** Student must submit the following to the DSO in the Admissions Office:

**SUBMIT ALL DOCUMENTS VIA EMAIL:** [ebthompson@aacc.edu](mailto:ebthompson@aacc.edu) in **ONE PDF FILE.**

- Completed and approved *Unofficial Graduation Audit* form signed by the student and Academic Advisor.
- Completed and signed I-538 form.
- Copy of passport, F-1 visa stamp and I-94
- Copy of Approval notice for change of status to F-1 (if applicable)
- Copy of all I-20's issued.
- Official transcript from AACC.

**STEP 2:** The DSO will review the application and eligibility requirements. If eligible, the DSO will approve your request and issue a new I-20 form with OPT Recommendation on the 3<sup>rd</sup> page. **Your new I-20 form with OPT recommendation will be sent via email.**

**STEP 3:** The student **file online** or **mail** the complete OPT application packet to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Service Center:

USCIS Service Center USCIS Service Center (**For Express Mail**)  
Attn: I-765 C03  
131 South Dearborn – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Chicago, IL 60603-5517

## CHECKLIST

### Documents to be submitted to USCIS for Optional Practical Training:

- I-765 form (it is recommended to fill out the form from the USCIS webpage, print and sign in ink.)
- G-1145 form (required only if filing paper application)
- A check or money order for form I-765 filing fee payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security. *(Always check [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) for current filing fees before mailing).*
- Copy of passport, visa stamp and I-94 (DO NOT SEND ORIGINAL PASSPORT)
- Copy of all I-20's issued
- Original new I-20 form with OPT recommendation (must be signed by student and DSO)
- Official transcripts from AACC and from all other college's or universities you previously attended.
- Two (2) ADIT photos specified as in I-765. Write (lightly) your full name, SEVIS no. and I-94 number on the back. DO NOT TRIM THE PICTURES.
- Copy of previous Employment Authorization Document card (if applicable)

## ONLINE Filing Instructions

### F-1 Students Seeking Optional Practical Training Can Now File Form I-765 Online

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services announced that certain foreign students can now file [Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#), online.

F-1 students seeking optional practical training (OPT) directly related to their major area of study are eligible to apply for employment authorization online if they are filing under one of these categories:

- (c)(3)(A) – Pre-Completion OPT;
- (c)(3)(B) – Post-Completion OPT; and
- (c)(3)(C) – 24-Month Extension for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) students.

Online filing allows applicants to submit forms electronically, check the status of their case online, and receive online notices from USCIS. Until now, all applicants filed a paper Form I-765. By offering F-1 students the option to file the Form I-765 online, USCIS continues to make the process of applying for immigration benefits efficient, secure and convenient for more applicants.

To file the Form I-765 online, eligible F-1 students must first visit [my.uscis.gov](http://my.uscis.gov), to create a USCIS online account. There is no cost to create an account, and the account offers a variety of features, including the ability to communicate with USCIS about your application, through a secure inbox.

We will conduct public engagements and other outreach activities to ensure that eligible F-1 students are familiar with the features of an online account, including how to apply for an employment authorization document online.

The option to file Form I-765 online is only available to F-1 students filing Form I-765 for OPT. All other applicants must continue to file the paper Form I-765. If an applicant submits Form I-765 online to request employment authorization on or after April 15, under categories (c)(3)(A), (c)(3)(B), or (c)(3)(C) when they are eligible for a different employment authorization category, USCIS will deny the application and retain the fee.

Applicants who file the paper Form I-765, or any other USCIS form, can still create an online account to track the status of their form throughout the adjudication process, even if they did not file the form online.

USCIS now has 11 forms available to file online which can all be found on the [Forms Available to File Online](#) page.

To file these forms online, individuals must first create a USCIS online account at [myaccount.uscis.gov](https://myaccount.uscis.gov). This free account allows them to:

- Submit their forms;
- Pay their fees;
- Track the status of their case;
- Communicate with USCIS through a secure inbox; and
- Respond to requests for evidence.

For more information on USCIS and its programs, please visit [uscis.gov](https://uscis.gov) or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

### **PAPER FILING - Mailing Instructions:**

*All documents must be accepted for filing by the USCIS Vermont Service Center within 30 days of I-20 issuance AND before the program end date of your form I-20.*

Attach to the front of the form I-765

- 1) Two passport style photographs in a bag or envelope stapled to the top right side of the form I-765
- 2) Check or Money Order for filing fee \$410.

Place the documents in the following order:

- a) I-765 (with photographs and check)
- b) G-1145
- c) Copy of I-94 (printed from [www.cbp.gov](https://www.cbp.gov))
- d) Copy of any previous EAD cards, if applicable
- e) Original Copy of all three pages of the I-20 issued with OPT recommendation (must be signed by the student/applicant and the DSO).
- f) Copy of all previously issued I-20's
- g) Copy of passport pages (picture page, validity/expiration page, visa page). **DO NOT SEND ORIGINAL PASSPORT**
- h) Copy of all other previously issued and received documents pertain to your F-1 status (e.g. approval notice for change of status)
- i) Official transcripts.

It is recommended to mail your application by Priority Mail or Express Mail through the US Post Office, so that you will have a tracking number. Be sure to waive the signature if you use Priority Mail, US postal Express Mail or Certified Mail. You may send your application by 1<sup>st</sup> class mail; however, you will not have proof that USCIS received your application. You may only use the US Post Office.

***Write "I-765" either in the left-hand corner of your envelope, or in the Eagle's head if using Express Mail. Include your return address in the top left corner of the envelope.***

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Mail your complete application and documents via For FedEx, UPS, or DHL deliveries:

NOTE: Use one of the following categories in your I-765 form.

- (c)(3)(A), Pre-completion OPT
- (c)(3)(B), Post-completion OPT
- (c)(3)(C), 24-month extension for an F-1 student who has received a degree in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) that appears on the STEM designated Degree Program List published on the [SEVP website](#)

USCIS Chicago Lockbox

U.S. Postal Service (USPS):

USCIS  
PO Box 805373  
Chicago, IL 60680

FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:

USCIS  
Attn: I-765 C03  
131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor  
Chicago, IL 60603-5517

### Check the status of your OPT application

You need to have a receipt notice (Form I-797) from USCIS with your case number on the top left column starting with the letter EAC and series of numbers. You can check your case status online by visiting the following website:

<https://egov.immigration.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp>

You should receive a Receipt Notice from USCIS within 4-6 weeks of filing. This receipt will have your Notice Date and Receipt Number. You can also check you status online at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).

## How to Track Delivery of Your Employment Authorization Document (EAD)

1. Sign up for a [Case Status Online account](#) to get automatic case updates, including your U.S. Postal Service (USPS) tracking number when we mail your card or travel document.
2. Register for [Informed Delivery](#) through USPS to get daily images of mail being sent to you. With Informed Delivery, you can:
  - Automatically track the packages you're expecting
  - Set up email and text alerts
  - Enter USPS Delivery Instructions™ for your mail carrier

If your USPS tracking information shows your package was delivered but you have not received it, contact your local post office immediately. Remember, we will mail

your card or travel document to the address you provided on your application (unless you told us to mail it your representative on [Form G-28, Notice of Entry or Appearance as Attorney or Accredited Representative](#)).

If your mailing address changes after you file your application, you must [update your address with USCIS](#) and [USPS](#) as soon as possible. We recommend you use the [USPS Look Up a ZIP Code](#) tool to ensure that you give USCIS your full address using the standard abbreviations and formatting recognized by USPS.

If you don't update your address promptly, your case could be delayed, your document(s) could get lost, and you may need to reapply and pay the fee again.

**If the card is not issued within 90 days after the receipt date, you should contact the DSO immediately!!!**

## **APPROVAL PROCESS**

***If the OPT application is approved, you will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card. You may then request a Social Security Number (SSN), must be working within your program of study during OPT. An aggregate of 90 days unemployed during post-OPT period could make you out of status.***

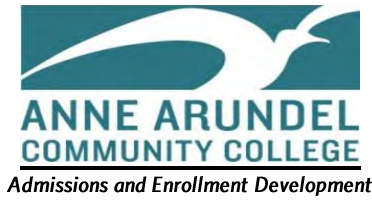
EAD Card - Employment Authorization Document is the employment card you will receive from USCIS if your OPT is approved. The card will have a notation of Optional Practical Training Part-time or full-time. Once you received your EAD card, you must submit a legible photocopy to the admissions office for our record. This is your proof of employment.

Change of Address while on OPT - If you receive your receipt notice from USCIS, you must notify USCIS of your new address. The instructions are available on your receipt notice. You will also need to notify the DSO or international student advisor at your school. It is recommended NOT to change your address while your EAD is pending.

Travel while OPT application is pending or while on OPT- Contact the DSO at to get the detailed information you need before you travel outside United States.

Applying for Social Security Number (SSN) - Go to Social Security Administration Office and present your EAD card, I-20 and I-94 with complete SS-5 Application form. To apply for SSN. You are eligible to apply for an SSN on or after the effective date of authorized employment indicated on the EAD card.

Grace Period after OPT -You will have 60 days grace period after finishing OPT. Contact your DSO if you plan to stay or transfer to another school after your OPT, however, this must be done before the end of your 60 days grace period. If you fail to notify your DSO of your plan to begin or transfer before the end date of your 60day period, your SEVIS record is likely to become invalid and could make you go out of status.



## Unofficial Graduation Audit Form for F-1 Student

**Explanation to Academic Advisor:** This student is applying for permission to engage in employment for Optional Practical Training as provided in regulations of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for F-1 students. (OPT) Optional Practical Training is employment or internship in a job related to the student's field of study and intended to enhance and supplement the formal, classroom education.

Before the authorization can be granted, the Designated School Official (DSO) in Admissions Office must have a statement from the student's academic advisor indicating the date the student is expected to complete all degree requirements or the expected date of completion. The date of completion must be the date all requirements for the degree are or will be fulfilled.

Please complete the form below and return it to Emma B. Thompson [ebthompson@aacc.edu](mailto:ebthompson@aacc.edu) so that we may process this request. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

### SECTION A: Student Information

AACC Student # \_\_\_\_\_ SEVIS NO: \_\_\_\_\_  
Family Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**I am requesting the following:**

- Pre-completion OPT – part time OPT maximum of 20 hours per week while completing the degree. Please indicate (C)(3)(A) on the I-765 form.**
- Post-completion OPT – full-time or part time work after completion of the degree. Please indicate (C)(3)(B) on the I-765 form.**

**Student Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION B: Academic Advisor

The student is currently enrolled in the degree of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Major or Field of Study)

All requirements for the degree will be completed by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Term/Year)

Additional comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Academic Advisor's Name/Extension**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Academic Advisor's Signature/Date**

### P/DSO Decision

**Approved**                       **Denied**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of P/DSO \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of P/DSO/Date \_\_\_\_\_



## ***When the EAD card is received – Student Responsibilities:***

1. Do not start work until the date on the EAD card is reached.
2. Employment must be directly related to your major or course of study.
3. Do not enroll in another degree program. Consult the DSO if you have to take classes during OPT.
4. Copy your EAD card and send it to the DSO in the Admissions office for file.
5. Report your employment information to SEVP Portal or Notify the Admissions office or DSO when you get a job – send the name and address of the employer along with the start date and end dates of your employment (if known). **An aggregate of 90 days total unemployment during the period of your OPT. More than 90 days unemployed could make you go out of status, this means DHS will terminate your OPT and F-1 status.**
6. Notify the DSO of intent to transfer to another institution.
7. Report to SEVP Portal and Notify the DSO if you had a change of address within 10 days of the change.
8. Notify the DSO of your plans before the EAD card expires.
9. Notify the DSO if you plan to travel outside United States.
10. Keep a record of employment information. Students must maintain evidence for each job documenting the position held, proof of the duration of that position, the job title, contact information for the student's supervisor or manager, and a description of the work.

***\*\*\*If it is not clear from the job description that the work is related to your degree, we recommend that you obtain a signed letter from the hiring official, supervisor, or manager stating how your degree is related to the work performed.***

Submit this form to the DSO only if you cannot access the SEVP Portal.



**Employment Information Form For F-1 Students  
with  
Post-Completion OPT**

After you have been approved for Post-OPT and received your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card or work authorization card, you are responsible for informing the DSO and SEVIS of the name and address of your employer, any periods of unemployment while on OPT, and; any change in your address. To report, log in to your SEVP Portal at <https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/#/login>. Failure to do this could make you go out of status. The new regulations limit unemployment on OPT for up to **90 days**.

Please notify the DSO in the Admissions Office of any changes during your employment on F1-OPT. **Please fax the completed form to the Admissions office at 410-777-4022 or Email form to: [ebthompson@aacc.edu](mailto:ebthompson@aacc.edu)**

**STUDENT INFORMATION**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ AACC Student ID No \_\_\_\_\_

SEVIS Number: \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_

U.S. Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**EMPLOYER INFORMATION**

Name and Address of Employer (Company):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Employer EIN Number \_\_\_\_\_ (recommended)

**Supervisor Information:**

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Start Date of Employment: \_\_\_\_\_ End Date of Employment: \_\_\_\_\_

Position Held \_\_\_\_\_

Brief summary of job description \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Is the position **Full-time** or **Part-time** (please circle)

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## SEVP Portal FAQ

### *Who can use the SEVP Portal?*

Students who are on active post-completion OPT or STEM OPT extension may access the portal. This means your EAD has been approved and your OPT start date has been reached.

### *How will I access the SEVP Portal?*

Once your OPT has been approved and your employment date has been reached, you will receive an email from [do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov). If you have applied for OPT, but it has not yet been approved, you are not able to access the portal. Your portal account invitation will come when your OPT is approved, and the requested start date has been reached. You must still submit any information updates to the DSO in Admissions Office, SSVS 100 to meet your OPT reporting requirement.

### *Am I still required to report my information on the OPT Information Form to Admissions Office?*

Yes. All students on OPT are still required to report any changes in name, address, contact information and employer/employment information to Admissions. You must do this even if you have also reported your information directly through the Portal.

### *Who can use the portal?*

F-1 students with active, approved post-completion OPT may use the portal to view and update certain biographical and employment information from your SEVIS record. Your SEVIS record is your electronic immigration record which contains information about you, your program of study, and your OPT employment information. It is required to keep your record accurate and up to date. The government has access to the information in your SEVIS record, and the DSO can make changes to your SEVIS record. Students can update certain information directly in SEVIS record using the SEVP Portal.

### *What can I see in the portal? What can I update in the portal?*

You can view in the SEVP Portal your name and date of birth, address, telephone number, terms of your OPT authorization, and your employer information. Students on post-completion OPT may update your physical address, telephone number, and you can add/remove employer and employment information.

### *Am I required to use the portal?*

We recommend that you use the portal to view your SEVIS information, and report your employment information. Contact the DSO if you need assistance or to reset your password.

### *Where can I learn more about the SEVP Portal?*

Learn more on the DHS Study in the States <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2018/02/sevp-announces-the-sevp-portal>

### *Who do I contact if I have problems using the portal?*

If you did not receive an email from SEVP inviting you to create your account, or if you are locked out of your account, you may contact the DSO via email [ebthompson@aacc.edu](mailto:ebthompson@aacc.edu) for assistance. If you are having technical difficulties using the portal, you may contact the SEVIS Response Center at 703-603-3400.

## HOW TO ACTIVATE OR RESET YOUR SEVP PORTAL ACCOUNT

The SEVP Portal is an online account where F-1 students on OPT can report changes in address and employment information in order to meet legal requirements for maintaining F-1 status. When students submit information through the SEVP Portal, the information is updated to the SEVIS system.

The SEVP Portal does not grant access to SEVIS. On the start date of OPT, the student will receive an email from [do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov). The email will contain a link and instructions on how to create an SEVP Portal Account. If a student does not receive the email, be sure to check all "Junk" inboxes. If the student is unable to find the email or needs to reset their SEVP Portal Account, a request must be made to a DSO. The DSO will need to access the student's SEVIS account to submit a request to reset the SEVP Portal Account. The student will then receive a new email containing a new link to activate or reset the SEVIS Portal Account. Please note that the link in the email expires after 31 days from the date the email is sent. To submit a Request to Activate or Reset the SEVP Portal Account, please submit a request form to the DSO.

If you have set up your account, go to the [SEVP Portal](#). If you forgot your password, it can be reset through the page by the following steps:

1. Click on "Reset password," then enter your Personal Email address (as listed on your My SEVIS Profile) and your SEVIS ID (It starts with N00 and can be listed on your Form I-20) and click on "Update Password."
2. Next, check your personal email to see if you have received a temporary password and a link from the SEVP Portal. If not, check your Spam folder.
3. After following the link, enter the temporary password as the "current password," and set a new password.

Please note:

- If you have not logged into your SEVP Portal account for 45 days or more, the account will be locked automatically.
- If your SEVP Portal account is locked, please submit the "Reset Your SEVP Portal Password" request to DSO.

### Locked Account

If your password is entered incorrectly 3 consecutive times or if you have not logged into your SEVP Portal account for 45 days or more, the account will be locked automatically.

If your SEVP Portal account is locked, please submit a request to "Reset Password" to SEVP.

Please note:

- If you forgot your password, it can be reset through the SEVP Portal. For reset password instructions, go to <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/media/the-sevp-portal-changing-and-resetting-passwords-and-unlocking-an-account>