Salve Regina University

Optional Practical Training: Mailing you application to USCIS and Next Steps

Mailing your OPT application to USCIS

- USCIS must receive your application:
  - Within 30 days of the issue date of the OPT I-20 AND
  - Within 60 days of your program completion date

- Before mailing, double check that all documents on the checklist are included.

- Make a photocopy of the entire packet for your records.

- Retain the tracking number of package.

Mailing the application (cont.)

The application and all of the required documentation must be sent to the USCIS Service Center Lockbox facility. Those with addresses (#3 on your I-765 form) in AL, AR, CT, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MS, NH, NJ, NM, NY, PA, PR, **RI**, VT, VA, US Virgin Islands, WV and DC will send their application to:

By Courier Service (FedEx, DHL, UPS):
USCIS, Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121
Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

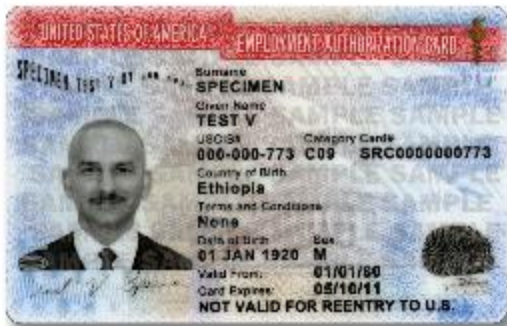By U.S. Postal Service (overnight or certified mail)-return receipt requested:
USCIS
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

Those with addresses in other states can read the I-765 instructions on where to mail their applications.

After mailing your application

- You should receive from USCIS:

    - Text message or email with case number (within a week)

    - Receipt notice in the mail (within 4 weeks)

    - Approval notice (up to 90 days)

    - Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card (within 90 days)

You may not work until you receive your EAD card and you can only work within the dates specified on your EAD card.

I-797 C Notice Of Action

You should receive the notice by mail within 2-4 weeks after mailing the OPT application to USCIS.

- **The I-797C is very important.**
  If you lose the receipt, it may be very difficult to replace it.

- **The I-797C is necessary if you want to**:
  1. inquire about the status of your OPT application.
  2. travel outside the U.S. while your OPT is pending.

Receipt Number
The case number for the OPT application at USCIS. Check the status of the case on the USCIS web site at https://www.uscis.gov

Received Date
Date when USCIS begins processing the application. (It may not be the actual the application was received, but it is when the case was entered into the system.)

Address Information
Verify your name, date of birth, and address on the I-765 receipt notice. If incorrect, contact BIO immediately.

Contacting USCIS
If you have any problems or questions with the OPT application, contact the OIP before calling the USCIS Customer Service.

USCIS Issues & Tracking Your Case

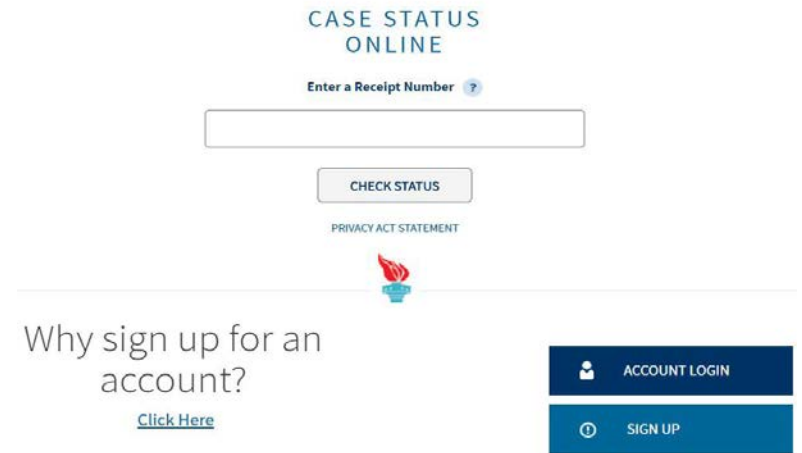**Sign up** up for an account at https://www.uscis.gov. This will allow you to receive automatic updates and monitor your case. Click "Check Your Case Status" and then select "Sign Up."

General Case Tracking:
If you don't sign up for an account, you can still track your case using the "Check Your Case Status" Tool.

Address Changes:
If your address changes, you can update it online through the "Change of Address" tool. Keep in mind that address changes can take 10 business days to process, and could jeopardize your OPT EAD delivery. We recommend keeping the same address for your entire OPT processing, if possible.

Application Problems: RFE and Rejection/Denial

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RFE

If there is a problem with your application, the USCIS may send you a notice by mail called a "Request for Evidence (RFE)." An RFE does not mean that your application has been rejected. It simply means that you need to send in additional documents before your EAD can be issued.

- Getting an RFE will delay the processing of your application.

Rejection/Denial

In some cases, the USCIS will return the entire application to you. If this happens, you must make corrections and send a new application before the end date of your 60-day grace period.

NOTIFY OIP that your OPT has been rejected or denied! You MUST request a NEW OPT I-20 recommendation from OIP before you resubmit your OPT application. USCIS must receive your new, complete OPT re-application no later than 30 days after the OPT I-20 ISSUE DATE on page 1of the I-20.

Contact OIP IMMEDIATELY if you receive an RFE, rejection, or denial.

To avoid delays, review your application materials for completeness and sign all the forms before mailing them to the USCIS.

Driver License Applications & Renewal

- If your [driver's license](#) has expired, you can only renew the license *after* your OPT EAD has been approved.

- This is because your I-20 has expired, and without proof of the OPT approval (and continuing F-1 status) you won't qualify to renew the license.

Your Responsibilities during OPT

1. **Reporting Requirements**

2. **Employment Requirements**

3. **Travel Documents for Re-entry**

4. **Applying for an F-1 Visa on OPT**

MANDATORY

- ALL STUDENTS ON OPT/STEM ARE REQUIRED TO USE THE OPT Employment Information Form To SUBMIT OPT UPDATES.

SEVP Portal—OPTIONAL

- The Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has its own "SEVP Portal" for students on OPT/STEM. On Day 1of your Approved OPT, you will receive an email from SEVP with instructions on how to create an account. This email will come from do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov.

- Be aware of scams—SEVP will NEVER ask you for a payment to register to register for the optional SEVP Portal.

- Registration for SEVP Portal is OPTIONAL. OIP WILL NOT USE the SEVP Portal for OPT reporting purposes. We recommend that you use the SEVP Portal as *view only and continue to use* OPT Employment Information Form *to update your information.*

2. Employment Requirements

- You must work a minimum of 20 hours per week in a position related to your field of study.

- You cannot exceed more than 90 days of unemployment while on OPT. Days of unemployment prior to your EAD start date do not count towards the 90 days. It is your responsibility to keep records of your employment and any periods of unemployment.

3. Travel Documents for Re-entry

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Documents	Before Completing Program & <u>Before</u> EAD issuance	After Completing Program & <u>Before</u> EAD issuance	After Completing Program & <u>After</u> EAD issuance
Valid passport	✓	✓	✓
Valid F-1 visa stamp (if applicable)	✓	✓	✓
OPT I-20 with a valid travel endorsement signed within 6 months by OIP Advisor (page 2)	✓	✓	✓
Evidence of continued enrollment (e.g. Enrollment Verification from MySalve)	✓		
Evidence of financial support	Strongly recommended	Strongly recommended	Strongly recommended
OPT receipt: I-797 Notice of Action		✓	
Job offer letter from employer		Strongly recommended	✓
EAD (Employment Authorization Document)			✓

Your admission to the U.S. is always at the discretion of the Customs and Border Protection Officers. To avoid problems, you must have the required documents outlined above.

Important Information on Travel

- Avoid long absences from the U.S. during the OPT period. Time spent outside of the U.S. while unemployed by a U.S. employer counts toward your 90 days of unemployment.

- Attempting to re-enter the U.S. close to the expiration date of your OPT can be risky.

- You must not enter the U.S. in a status other than F-1. This may result in the loss of your OPT eligibility.

Travel after Program Completion, but Before OPT Card is received

- There is a higher risk associated with travel and return while your OPT is pending <u>after</u> the program completion date. If there are any problems with your application, you may not be able to respond to USCIS in a timely manner, which could delay processing of your EAD.

- If your OPT application is denied while outside the U.S., you will not be able to re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status and will not be able to reapply.

4. Applying for an F-1 Visa on OPT ↗

If you are traveling abroad and your F-1 visa has expired, you must obtain a new F-1 visa before returning to the U.S. When going to your visa interview, bring the documents below. For more information, visit: http://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/visa_application

1. Valid passport

2. Valid I-20 with travel endorsement from OIP within the past 6 months

3. Unexpired EAD Card

4. Job offer letter or proof of current employment directly related to your field of study

5. Evidence of sufficient funds (e.g. a bank statement, a letter from a sponsor or a job offer letter)

Check the U.S. Department of State web site for more information about getting a visa and specific requirements at the local embassy or consulate at www.travel.state.gov

5. Completing OPT & Grace Period

- You have a 60 day grace period following the end of the OPT EAD.
- Failure to exit, continue your F-1 status, or timely file an Extension or USCIS Change of Status will result in accrual of days of <u>unlawful presence</u>.
- If you intend to apply for an <u>OPT STEM Extension</u>, you must do so before the expiration of your 12 month OPT.
- The only additional extension of OPT available is the <u>OPT Cap Gap Extension</u>, for students who have an accepted cap-subject H1-B application.
- If you receive an Extension of your OPT, the grace period will begin after the end of the Extension period.

5. Completing OPT & Grace Period

If you do not extend your OPT, and your EAD expires, you have the following options before the end of the 60 days grace period:

- Exit the US within 60 days
- Continue your F-1 Status & Studies: Transfer your I-20 to continue studies at another school OR request a Change of Educational Level to begin new studies at Salve egina
- Work with immigration legal counsel regarding a Change of Status application to a new visa category. *You will need to check with your legal counsel regarding your allowed period of stay or required exit date if you have a pending change of status when your grace period ends*.