

# Optional Practical Training (OPT)

**SJSU** | INTERNATIONAL STUDENT  
AND SCHOLAR SERVICES

# Topics Covered in Tutorial

What is OPT?

Eligibility Requirements

Application Process Overview

Application Steps

Reporting Responsibilities

Unemployment

Travel

End of OPT

iSpartan Hub

# 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.

Review CPT information or meet with an ISSS Advisor to discuss further.

## Post-Completion

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

**\* This presentation will focus on Post-Completion OPT.**

# Eligibility

1. Must have been a full-time student for at least one consecutive academic year; \*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);

# Eligibility Continued

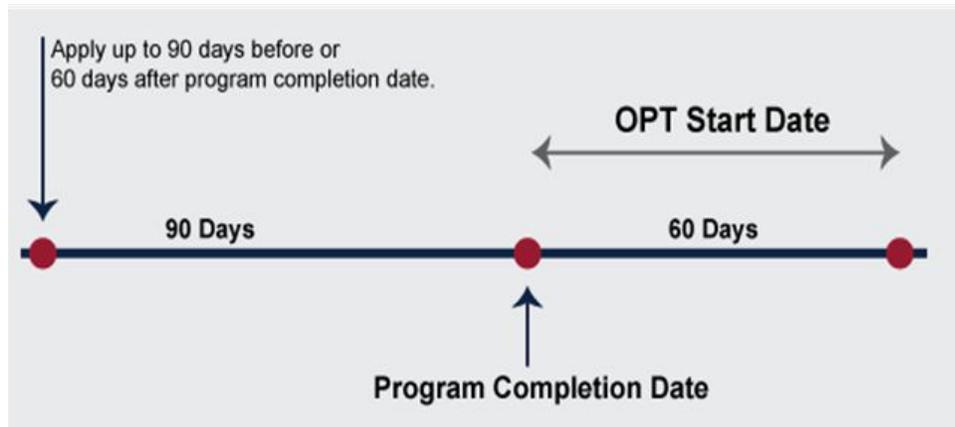
4. Academic Department verification (via the OPT I-20 request e-form) confirming you will be completing your degree OR that you have completed all courses and are only left with project, thesis or comprehensive final exam;

5. Be physically present in the U.S. when requesting the OPT I-20 from ISSS and submitting your application to USCIS;

6. Have not previously been approved for post-completion OPT at the same degree level.

# When to Apply

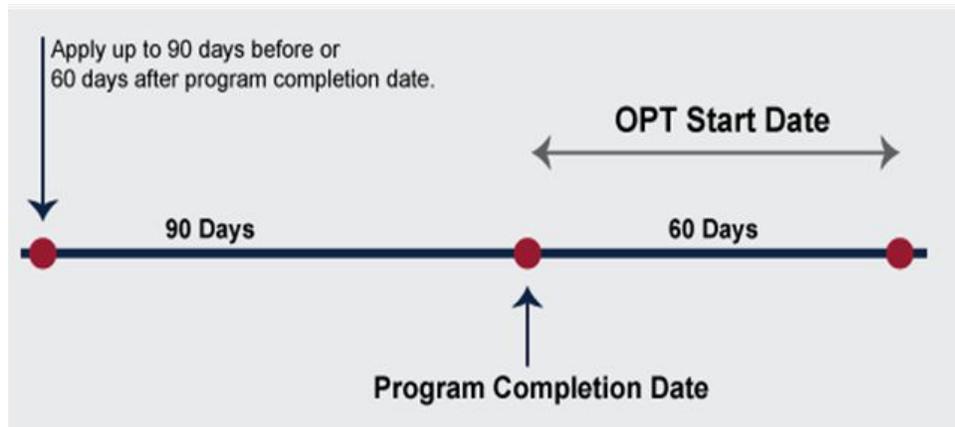
## Post-Completion OPT



- You may submit the post-completion OPT I-20 request to ISSS up to **90 days** BEFORE or within **60 days** AFTER the program completion date, as long as you are in the U.S. and have not left. *We recommend that you apply early.*
- **Please see the ISSS webpage for [Post-Completion OPT](#) to find out the Fall, Spring and Summer Completion Dates to determine when you can submit the request to ISSS and eligible start dates for OPT.**
- OPT applications can take up to 3 months (sometimes longer) to get approved by USCIS. Therefore, we recommend that you apply early. You must get a new I-20 with OPT recommendation BEFORE filing your OPT application with USCIS.

# Requested Start Dates

## Post-Completion OPT



- **First possible OPT start date:** day after program end date.
- **Last possible OPT start date:** 60 days after the program end date.
- **Last possible OPT end date:** 12 months (minus a day) after requested start date.
  - If you previously had pre-completion OPT, then this time will be subtracted from the 12 months.
- Enter your requested start/end date on OPT I-20 request e-form.
  - Think about the following when selecting your OPT start date:
    - Do you have a job offer?
    - You cannot exceed 90 days of unemployment during your OPT period.
    - You cannot change your requested OPT dates once you have mailed/filed your application with USCIS.

**\*Please see the ISSS webpage for [Post-Completion OPT](#) to find out the Fall, Spring and Summer Completion Dates to determine when you can submit the request to ISSS and eligible start dates for OPT.**

# OPT Process

## 1. Pay the one time \$150 administrative post-completion OPT fee to ISSS.

- a. A payment link is on the ISSS OPT webpage.

## 2. Student requests a Post-Completion OPT I-20 from ISSS. *You will need this I-20 with Post-Completion OPT recommendation from ISSS to file your Post-Completion OPT application with USCIS.*

- a. Log into iSpartan - <https://globalspartans.sjsu.edu>, using your SJSU credentials.
- b. Click on the 'F-1 Practical Training' link. Select Post Completion Optional Practical Training I-20 Request'.
- c. Complete the e-form.
- d. Select the requested OPT start and end dates. It will be in the form of a year minus a day from the start date.
  - i. Example: Start Date: 01/15/2023. End Date: 01/14/2024.
  - ii. You are not required to have a job to request post-completion OPT.
- e. 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.

## 3. ISSS Receives Post-Completion OPT I-20 Request

- a. Once submitted to ISSS, processing time is 5-7 business days.
- b. DSO will review your eligibility for OPT.
  - ii. May shorten your I-20 end date for the current semester, if this has not already been done.
- c. DSO will recommend post-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 OPT recommendation.
  - iii. **You will need this I-20 to file your OPT application with USCIS.**

# 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 Post-Completion OPT recommendation from ISSS.**
  - b. USCIS must receive your post-completion OPT application within 30 days of the date your post-completion OPT was recommended by ISSS, or your post-completion OPT application will be denied.
    - i. DSO will tell you when your post-completion OPT recommendation was done, when they email you the I-20.
    - ii. 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.
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As of April 2021, 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 (Post OPT) with USCIS

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

As of April 2021, USCIS offers 2 different ways to file an I-765 (Post 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 [Post-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

# 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 OPT application on your computer.
- Create online account with USCIS.
- File I-765 for OPT.
- Upload supporting documents in online application.
- Receive same day notification, receipt number, that application has been filed with USCIS.

*\*Review slides 12-15\**

## Mailing Application to USCIS

- Gather all required documents for 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 16-17\**

# 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](#).
- **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.
- **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.

***\*Filing code is (c) (3) (B) for Post-Completion OPT***

# Additional Information if Filing Online

For filing the online I-765 Post-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, STEM OPT 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 Post-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 Post-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 Post-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.
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](#).
5. Photocopy of I-20 with Post-Completion OPT recommendation.
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) [front and back sides], 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.

# Review and Mail to USCIS

## For mailing the I-765 Post-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.
  - 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.

# OPT Process

## 5. USCIS processes OPT application.

- a. Within 2-3 weeks of USCIS receiving your 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. 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. There is no option to expedite your application.
  - ii. You cannot change your requested OPT dates, once you have filed/mailed your OPT application with USCIS.
  - iii. 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.

# While I-765 is Pending

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

1. Use [USCIS Case Status Online](#) to check the status of your application.
2. Look for a position directly related to your major field of study.
3. Practice being patient.
  - a. OPT applications can take 2-3 months, sometime longer for USCIS processing.
    - i. There is not an option to expedite your application.
4. If you receive an RFE 'Request for Evidence' or RFI 'Request for Information', please contact ISSS.



# Maintaining Status on Post-Completion OPT

- Report employment and any changes in employment within 10 days of the change directly in your SEVP Portal Account.
- All employment must be directly related to your major field of study.
  - Employment can be paid or unpaid, but needs to be more than 20 hours per week (full-time) to stop the unemployment clock.
- Report living address and any change in living address within 10 days of the change directly in your SEVP Portal Account.
- Do not exceed 90 days of unemployment.
- Maintain a valid travel signature (endorsement) on your I-20.
  - Validity of 6 months, when on post-completion OPT.

# Reporting Responsibilities

## During Post-Completion OPT

**7. Student uses SEVP portal for employment reporting. Employment must meet ALL of the following requirements.**

- I. Employment must be directly related to your major field of study from SJSU. *ISSS is not in a position to determine employment relevance to your major. You are responsible for this.*
- II. Employment may be paid or unpaid;
- III. Employment will need to be more than 20 hours a week in a qualifying position.
  - A. This will prevent unemployment days from accruing.

### SEVP Portal

- Closer to your OPT start date, SEVP will send you a link to create a SEVP Student Portal Account. \*
- We recommend creating the account using a non-SJSU email.

### SEVP Portal

- Report any employment, change in employment or personal information (living address) within 10 days.
- Visit Study in the States SEVP Portal Help for more information.

\*If you do not receive the email from SEVP to create your student portal account within week after your Post-Completion OPT start date, then submit the [SEVP Portal Access Form](#).

# SEVP Portal Information

 An official website of the United States government [Here's how you know](#) ▾

## STUDY in the STATES

[Translate this page](#)



STUDENTS ▾

SCHOOLS ▾

BLOG ▾

TOOLS ▾

HELP HUBS ▾

## SEVP PORTAL HELP

Students on post-completion practical training should use the SEVP Portal Help section to learn how to use the SEVP Portal and comply with reporting requirements. Eligible students can access the SEVP Portal from ICE.gov.



### Purpose

Important tool to let F-1 students on Post-Completion OPT to update their physical home address, mailing address, telephone number, employer information and monitor their employment authorization.

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevp-portal-help>

### Additional SEVP Portal Resources

- Create SEVP Portal Account
- SEVP Portal User Guide
- SEVP Portal Videos

# Unemployment on OPT

## Important

If you accrue more than 90 days of unemployment or you forget to report your employment information into the SEVP portal, then you are considered not to be maintaining status. A SEVP official may terminate your SEVIS record.

## Post-Completion OPT

- Based on the start date listed on EAD.
- May accrue up to 90 days of unemployment.
- Unemployment is cumulative.
- **It is your responsibility to keep track of number of unemployment days you have accrued, so you do not exceed 90.**

## SEVIS employment counter

- Based off employment data submitted by you.
- Report information to SEVP portal within 10 days.
- Report paid or unpaid work, multiple jobs, etc.

# Travel While on OPT

To return to the U.S. you will need:

## Approved Post-Completion OPT

- Valid passport;
- Valid F-1 visa;
- I-20 with travel signature dated w/in 6 months;
- Unexpired EAD card;
- Employment verification or offer letter.

Risky to travel with a PENDING OPT application

1. If your OPT is denied after your program end date and you are not in the U.S., then you do not have an option to re-enter the U.S. and reapply for OPT.
2. Renewing your F-1 visa, can be risky during this time.

***Inform ISSS if you are leaving the U.S. prior to your OPT end date with no plans to return and resume OPT.***

# Requesting an Updated I-20

We recommend that you request an updated I-20, once the following has occurred:

1. OPT has been approved.

[Replacement/Updated I-20](#)

2. Reported employment or changes in employment in SEVP Portal.

[Replacement/Updated I-20](#)

Traveling overseas?

- Request a travel signature I-20.
  - Travel signatures on page 2 of the form I-20 are valid for 6 months when on Post-Completion OPT.

[Travel Signature/I-20 Request](#)

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Unable to access iSpartan to submit e-form? Please go [here](#) for further instructions.

# End of OPT

At the end of your OPT, you have a 60 day grace period after your OPT ends to do one of the following:

1. Get a new I-20 from SJSU to pursue a new degree program;
2. Transfer I-20 to another school to pursue a new degree program;
3. Leave the U.S.

**\*If you are eligible for the 24 month STEM OPT extension, you must get an I-20 with STEM recommendation from ISSS and file your application to USCIS prior to your post-completion OPT end date. Review ISSS webpage on [STEM OPT](#) for more information.**

If you have any questions about these options, please [schedule an appointment](#) with an ISSS Advisor.

# iSpartan (ISSS Student Portal)

iSpartan - You will use this portal to submit requests to ISSS. *(Recommend using Google Chrome or Firefox as your web browser).*

## E-forms

### Post-Completion OPT I-20 Request

- Need this I-20 from SJSU with Post-Completion OPT recommendation, **before** you can file your OPT application with USCIS.

### SEVP Portal Access Form

- Submit this form only if you do not receive an email from SEVP to create your SEVP portal account, within a week after your OPT start date.

### Replacement/Updated I-20 Request

- To request an updated I-20 after your Post-Completion OPT has been approved.
- To request an updated I-20 after you have reported your employment via your SEVP Portal.

### Travel Signature/I-20 Request

- To request an updated travel signature from ISSS.

**Unable to access iSpartan to submit e-form? Please go [here](#) for further instructions.**

# THANK YOU!

Email: [international-office@sjsu.edu](mailto:international-office@sjsu.edu)

[Check ISSS homepage](#) for more information as well as [Calendar of Events](#) for F-1 Employment Workshops, for Post-Completion OPT and Post-Completion OPT Application Packet (I-765) Prep Workshops.