

F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Instructions for Mailing an Application for OPT Employment Authorization to the USCIS

Enclosed are two Forms I-20 endorsed for OPT employment authorization. You will file one I-20 with the U.S. government, as instructed below, and use the second I-20 to document your continued eligibility for F-1 status. Please print, sign and date both I-20's.

The next step is for you to file an application for employment authorization with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' Vermont Service Center. You will **not** need to make a personal visit to the USCIS. Please follow the instructions below very carefully.

PREPARE THE FOLLOWING APPLICATION PACKET FOR USCIS:

- 1) Form I-765 **including 2 photographs** (*photograph specifications are on page 2*)
- 2) \$340 application fee paid by personal check or money order made out to:
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- 3) One original new Form I-20 endorsed for OPT (provided to you by the ISO)
- 4) **Photocopies** of the identification page of your passport and any validity pages, Form I-94 (both sides), F-1 visa, ***copies of all previous Forms I-20.*** If you held any other visa status immediately prior to your F-1 status, please enclose evidence of that status as well.
- 5) **Photocopies** of all previous employment authorization cards (if any)
- 6) If applying for STEM extension, proof of your STEM degree as copy of diploma or transcript that names degree of study.

If using a Virginia address, send your complete application by courier (Federal Express, UPS or DHL) to:

**USCIS Vermont Service Center
75 Lower Welden Street
St. Albans, VT 05479-0001**

*****Do NOT send your original passport or Form I-94*****

For your records, you should copy the complete filing package before sending it to the USCIS. *To confirm the filing location and fee, please visit www.uscis.gov and click on the "Forms" tab to find Form I-765.*

The USCIS must receive your application before the end of the 60 day grace period beginning when you complete your studies or the "complete studies no later than" date on Form I-20 (whichever is earlier), and within 30 days of the issuance date on the original OPT-endorsed Form I-20. The application can be filed up to 90 days prior to the completion of studies, if for post-completion OPT. USCIS currently adjudicates most applications in about three months, but processing may take longer. USCIS will send you an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) in the form of an employment authorization card, which carries the validity dates for your optional practical training period.

The EAD will be sent to the address indicated on Form I-765. Note that the USCIS will not forward your card to a different address. If you plan to change addresses while your application is pending you should visit the ISO during office hours immediately.

Following the completion of your program on Form I-20, you cannot work anywhere (including on-grounds) until the valid OPT EAD is in your possession. You can only work pursuant to OPT while the EAD is valid. **Unemployment for an aggregate period of greater than 90 days during the initial period of OPT will result in a loss of status.**

USCIS will normally not refund any approved optional practical training time if you fail to find appropriate training or choose to stop the training early. An aggregate of 12 months of OPT is allowed per degree level. A new 12 month allotment is possible for each higher degree level entered.

As you will retain F-1 visa status during the period of OPT, you will continue to require a signature on page 3 of Form I-20 if you wish to travel outside of the U.S.

You must continue medical insurance coverage throughout your F-1 status including the time that you have OPT and during any grace periods. *For travel abroad during post-completion OPT, be prepared to present your EAD card (if approved) or application receipt notice (if not approved) and a job offer letter.*

If you are a continuing student, please continue to update ISIS within ten days of any change in residential address.

F-1 STUDENT POST-COMPLETION OPT RESPONSIBILITIES

ALL F-1 STUDENTS ON POST-COMPLETION OPT MUST REPORT THE FOLLOWING TO THE ISO AT ISSP@VIRGINIA.EDU WITHIN TEN DAYS OF ANY CHANGE:

- ANY CHANGE IN RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AND EMAIL ADDRESS
- ANY CHANGE IN EMPLOYER
- ANY CHANGE IN EMPLOYER ADDRESS
- ANY INTERRUPTION IN EMPLOYMENT

IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

STUDENTS IN THE 17-MONTH STEM EXTENSION MUST REPORT THE FOLLOWING AT THE TIME OF EXTENSION AND EVERY SIX MONTHS THEREAFTER TO THE ISO AT ISSP@VIRGINIA.EDU:

- CURRENT RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AND EMAIL ADDRESS
- CURRENT EMPLOYER (OR REPORT AN INTERRUPTION IN EMPLOYMENT)
- CURRENT EMPLOYER ADDRESS

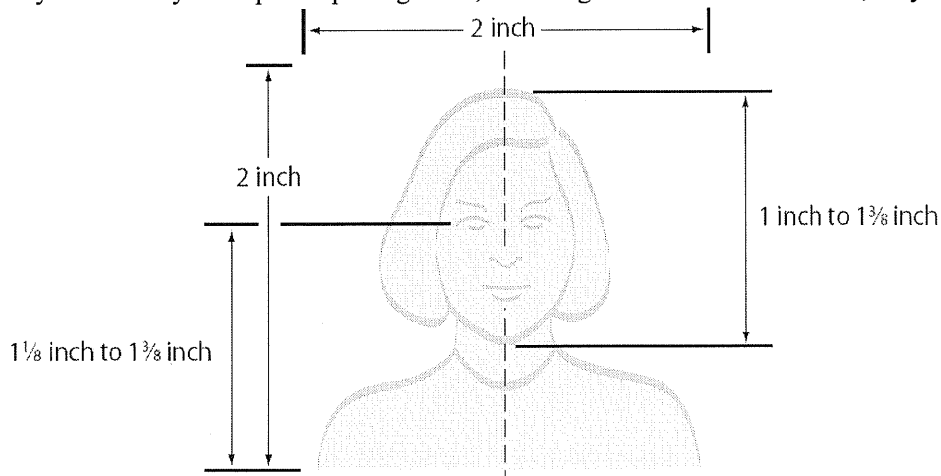
A LOSS OF F-1 STATUS WILL RESULT FROM:

- FAILURE TO PROVIDE THE ISO WITH INFORMATION ABOUT A CHANGE IN ADDRESS OR EMPLOYMENT WITHIN TEN DAYS OF ANY CHANGE
- FAILURE TO REPORT ADDRESS AND EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION TO THE ISO AT THE INITIATION OF ANY STEM EXTENSION AND EVERY SIX MONTHS THEREAFTER
- UNEMPLOYMENT FOR AN AGGREGATE OF 90 DAYS DURING THE INITIAL OPT PERIOD
- UNEMPLOYMENT FOR AN AGGREGATE OF 120 DAYS DURING THE INITIAL OPT PERIOD AND ANY STEM EXTENSION

Photograph Requirements

Your photographs must be:

- 2x2 inches in size
- Identical
- Taken within the past 6 months, showing current appearance
- Color
- Full face, front view with a plain white or off-white consistent background
- Devoid of any shadows
- Between 1 inch and 1 3/8 inches from the bottom of the chin to the top of the head
- Taken in normal street attire
- If you normally wear prescription glasses, a hearing device or a similar item, they should be worn for your picture.



Uniforms should not be worn in photographs except religious attire that is worn daily. Do not wear a hat or headgear unless necessary for religious purposes. Dark glasses or nonprescription glasses with tinted lenses are not acceptable unless you need them for medical reasons. Regarding all instances in this paragraph, the U.S. government may require confirmation from a religious organization or medical professional that your attire is necessary.

Visit <http://travel.state.gov/pdf/Photo%20Guide%2010-01-04.pdf> for complete photograph specifications