Transcript for OPT Video 2: How to Apply for OPT

In this section, we'll look at all of the materials that you need to assemble in order to submit your Post-Completion OPT application to USCIS.

First, you will need to submit the OPT Request Form and Quiz. Wait until after you have viewed all three post-completion OPT online videos to submit this form.

As part of this form, you will need to pick start and end dates for your OPT request. Once you submit your application to USCIS, the start and end dates cannot be changed! This form is located on our website.

Next, you will need to email your current I-94 record and your unofficial transcript to lawcentervisa@georgetown.edu. Your I-94 record can be accessed by clicking this link on our website: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/recent-search.

Your I-94 record is used to show that you are currently in the U.S. in F-1 status. Only students currently in the U.S. in F-1 status are eligible to apply for OPT.

Your unofficial transcript can be accessed through MyAccess. Your unofficial transcript is used to ensure that your current GPA is above a 2.0.

Within 3 to 5 business days of receiving the Request Form and Quiz, I-94 record, and unofficial transcript, we will issue a new Form I-20 which contains the OPT recommendation on Page 2. Once you receive your new Form I-20, carefully review the OPT dates listed on page 2 under Employment Authorizations. Inform your advisor right away if you need to change the dates listed on the I-20. You must sign and date the I-20 on page one and then send your complete application by mail to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, also known as USCIS. If you travel abroad, this is the I-20 and travel signature you will use to re-enter the United States.

Let's review the documentation that you need to include in your application. It is important that you always refer to our website when assembling your OPT application as the documentation should be assembled in the correct order listed in Step 3.

Pay the filing fee using a personal check, money order, or cashier's check. Here is an example of how to fill out the check.

You can also pay by credit card, which requires submission of an additional form. OPT applications will be rejected if your bank account has insufficient funds when USICS receives your application. Applications can also be rejected if your credit card is declined or if there is an error on the form.

Two U.S. passport size photos taken within the past 30 days. Requirements for photos are strict and examples are linked on our website. Your name and SEVIS Number should be written lightly on the back so as not to mark the front of the photo.

Form G-1145, which allows USCIS to communicate with you via email or text regarding the status of your application.

The Form I-765 is available at uscis.gov. Do not download the I-765 from any other website as it may be out of date. When you are ready to fill out the Form I-765 download the sample template and further instructions as guidance and assistance if you have questions. The I-765 has multiple pages and you must include every page even if the questions do not apply to your situation. Please carefully read the I-765 instructions available on the USCIS website as they contain important information you need to keep in mind when filling out the I-765.

Sign and date at the bottom of the form and then make a copy of your new Form I-20 with the OPT recommendation on it. Do not send the original Form I-20 as that must remain in your possession.

Copies of all your previous Form I-20s: this includes Form I-20s from previous institutions! Do not send the originals. If you are missing any Form I-20 please include the missing Form I-20 sample letter found on our website.

Copies of previously issued EAD cards (if any).

Copy of your passport biographic page. It must be valid and unexpired at the time of application.

Your most recent I-94 Record, which you can print out online. Include only the I-94 number not the travel history.

Copy of your F-1 Visa stamp.

Mail the OPT application to USCIS right away. (DO NOT use the online software). USCIS must receive your application within 30 days of the issuance date on page one of your new Form I-20. We can reissue your I-20 if you are not able to mail your application packet right away. Don't risk a denial!

Processing your application will take USCIS on average 3 months. It's a long process, and there is no way to expedite your application.

Here are important reminders when submitting your application for OPT.

We highly recommend you make a copy of your application before mailing in case as this will allow you to best respond to any questions about your application.

Make a copy of the check and photos as well.

Carefully consider sending it by priority mail so you receive a tracking number to have confirmation of receipt!

Once you request your new Form I-20, you will need to make sure your application is received by USCIS within 30 days of the IS Advisor signature.

To be eligible for OPT work benefits, your application must be received and receipted by the 60th day after your program end date.

We highly recommend signing up for USPS Informed Delivery in order to get advanced notification of when mail from USCIS should be arriving.

Generally within two weeks of submission, you'll receive a USCIS receipt notice at the address written on your Form I-765. If you do not receive a receipt notice within 4 weeks of mailing, contact your IS Advisor.

When you get the receipt notice, immediately check the spelling of your name and your date of birth. If you find any mistakes, call the National Customer Service Number.

We discourage any change of address while the OPT application is pending. This address is critical since the post office will NOT forward mail from the Department of Homeland Security. If you move, make sure you notify USCIS directly using Form AR-11, which can be found at uscis.gov.

Please contact your international student advisor if your application is returned or you receive an RFE. Your advisor remains ready to assist you throughout the OPT period.

After the end date on your Form I-20 and while your application is still pending, our office advises against international travel.

In the next section, we'll discuss how to maintain your F-1 status once you are no longer studying at Georgetown and are working using Post-Completion OPT.