Optional Practical Training

Part 3: Obtaining OPT Authorization

University of Michigan
How do I obtain OPT authorization?

In this section, you will learn:

- The entire OPT application process
- How to request an “OPT I-20”
- How to complete an “I-765 Application for Employment Authorization”
- How to submit your OPT application to USCIS
1. Determine a reasonable completion date with your Academic Advisor
2. Request an “OPT recommendation I-20” from the International Center
   - This is only a recommendation, NOT an authorization
   - Processing time for OPT I-20 is 1-2 weeks
3. Apply to USCIS for OPT authorization (I-765)
   - USCIS = US Citizenship & Immigration Services
   - REMINDER: approximately 90 days to process application
   - Will get EAD card approximately 2 weeks after approval
   - Check your case status online at www.uscis.gov
1. Must have OPT online course certificate of completion dated within 4 months of requesting your OPT I-20.

2. Bring OPT certificate and required documentation to the International Center.

3. Please allow 2 weeks for processing (you will get an email)

4. USCIS must receive your OPT application no later than 30 days from the date the advisor signed your OPT I-20
Required Documentation to Request OPT I-20

- OPT online certificate of completion
- Letter from academic advisor confirming completion date (graduation date may be different)
- Copies of pages 1 & 3 of all I-20s from your current degree level
- Copy of I-94 card (front only)
- Copy of any previous EAD cards (front only)
- Unofficial transcript from wolverine access
OPT I-20 Employment Recommendation

Sample I-20

IF YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION CONCERNING YOUR F-1 NONIMMIGRANT STUDENT STATUS AND THE RELATING IMMIGRATION PROCEDURES, PLEASE CONTACT EITHER YOUR FOREIGN STUDENT ADVISOR ON GRASS AS A REFERENCE FOR IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE OFFICE.

FAMILYNAME: [Redacted] FIRST NAME: [Redacted]
Primary Major: 26.0204 Molecular Biology
Student Employment Authorization:
Employment Status: FULL TIME Type: OPT
Duration of Employment - From (Date): 01/01/2010 To (Date): 12/31/2010
Employer Name:
Employer Location:

The Student has met the full academic year requirement.

Comments: Recommending full 12-month POST Completion OPT beginning either from the start date or from the adjudication date, whichever is later. Directly related to the field of studies.
Filing your I-765 with USCIS

- Application Requirements:

  - Application fee
    - check/money order payable to: Department of Homeland Security
    - I-94# written in memo
  - 2 Passport photos *(name, I-94# written in pencil on back)*
  - Copy of OPT I-20
  - Copy of all previous I-20s for current degree level
  - Copy of Passport *(photo & expiration page if different)*
  - Copy of I-94 *(front & back)*
  - Copy of most recent F-1 visa stamp
  - Copy any previous EAD cards *(write degree level on copy)*
Filing your I-765 with USCIS
Most Common Errors on Form I-765:

- “Permission to Accept Employment” box not checked
- Undeliverable Address
- Failure to sign p.1 of I-20
- Signature on I-765 outside lines
- Application received by USCIS >30 days after OPT I-20 printed (p.1; date next to advisor’s signature)
Mailing your application to USCIS:

- **MUST** be mailed from inside the United States
- Use trackable method
  - Delivery confirmation & tracking number
- 2 possible addresses for USCIS *(refer to I-765 instructions)*
  - P.O. box = only US Postal Service, and NO signature upon delivery
  - Physical address = signature upon delivery *(FedEx, UPS, certified)*
- **DO NOT** e-file your application
- **NO EXPEDITES!**

Filing your I-765 with USCIS
While your OPT is pending

- You will receive a receipt notice in 4-6 weeks

No receipt in 4-6 weeks?
Email:
lockboxsupport@dhs.gov
While your OPT is pending

- You will receive a receipt notice in 4-6 weeks
- Check your case status online at: www.uscis.gov (can sign up for automatic email notifications)
- For additional tips: http://www.internationalcenter.umich.edu/immig/fvisa/f_optafter.html
- Once your OPT is received by USCIS, you continue to maintain F-1 status
- Travel is OK while OPT is pending
  - carry receipt notice with your I-20
Example EAD card

• You will receive your EAD card approximately **2 weeks** after your case has been approved.

• You **CANNOT** begin working until your EAD card is received and start date has arrived!

• Scan & email or fax a copy of your EAD card to the IC (w/UMID written on it)
  - icenter@umich.edu
  - Fax: 734-647-2181
At this point, you should know:

- How to request your OPT I-20
- How and when to file your I-765 Application for Employment Authorization with USCIS
- When you will receive your receipt notice
- How you will know when your OPT authorization begins and ends