

# Optional Practical Training (OPT)

*How to Apply and Maintain Status*

***ISS strongly recommends reviewing this entire tutorial for detailed information about the OPT eligibility criteria, application processes, and requirements for maintaining status during the approved OPT period.***

## Contents:

<b>OPT Eligibility &amp; Types</b>	<b>2-4</b>
<b>Summary of OPT Application Steps</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Choosing a Requested Start Date</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>How to Request an I-20</b>	<b>7-11</b>
<b>List of Documents Needed for I-765</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>How to Complete the I-765</b>	<b>13-22</b>
<b>Maintaining Status on OPT</b>	<b>23-27</b>
<b>Frequently Asked Questions</b>	<b>28</b>

## What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

**Optional Practical Training (OPT)** is a type of **off-campus work authorization** for F-1 students.

- F-1 students may apply for a **total of 12 months of OPT** to be used before completion of studies (pre-completion OPT) and/or after completion of studies (post-completion OPT).
- **OPT is NOT:**
  - Curricular Practical Training (CPT). CPT is authorized by an ISS advisor and can only be used *before graduation*. **OPT is authorized by USCIS** (the U.S. federal government) and can be used before or after graduation.
  - On-campus employment authorization. F-1 students in valid status can work in approved on-campus positions **without CPT or OPT work authorization**.
  - Employer-sponsored visa status. **Approved OPT does not require employer “sponsorship” or filing for a new visa status**, as it is part of F-1 status. However, employers may need to maintain their own documentation for employees on OPT or provide said documentation if USCIS asks for it.

## Am I eligible for OPT?

You are eligible for OPT once you have **maintained F-1 status (full-time enrollment) for a minimum of one academic year**.

- At DePaul University, **one academic year is full-time enrollment for at least three (3) consecutive quarters**.
  - This begins when first entering the U.S. in F-1 status and resets if returning to the U.S. with a new I-20 after being in terminated or completed status.
  - Time spent studying at a non-U.S. institution prior to entry **does not count** toward the enrollment requirement.
  - Enrollment in English language programs **does not count** toward the enrollment requirement.
  - You may count full-time study on F-1 status at another school if your SEVIS record was transferred directly to DePaul.
  - You may count full-time study on another status prior to changing to F status within the U.S.
- F-1 students are eligible for **12 months TOTAL of OPT at each educational/academic level** (i.e. Bachelor's, Master's, PhD) in ascending order. Students who complete two degrees at the same educational/academic level (e.g. two Master's degrees) are not eligible for additional OPT time after completion of the second degree.
- Some students in an eligible STEM (science, technology, engineering or mathematics) degree program may be eligible to **apply for a 24-month extension** of their OPT authorization during the last 3 months of their OPT period. Please review the separate STEM tutorial on the ISS website for details.

## What is the difference between Pre-completion and Post-completion OPT?

### *Pre-completion OPT (BEFORE graduation)*

Earliest you can apply is 90 days before desired start-date. **Very few students pursue pre-completion OPT. In most cases where pre-completion OPT could be used, CPT is the more practical, timely, and affordable option.** If you are considering Pre-completion OPT, please carefully review the chart below and questions to consider on the next page.

### *Post-completion OPT (AFTER graduation)*

USCIS must receive your application no earlier than 90 days prior to your degree program completion date and no later than 60 days following your degree program completion date.

**In most cases, we recommend that you apply as early as possible to avoid unexpected delays.**

When employment occurs	Weekly work hour limits	Comments
Annual vacations or school breaks (Pre-completion)	Authorization can be <b>part-time</b> (20 hours or less per week) or <b>full time</b> (more than 20 hours per week, no maximum)	*Part-time pre-completion OPT (20 hours per week or less) is deducted from post-completion OPT at a <b>half-time rate</b> . For example, 3 months of approved part-time pre-completion deducts 1.5 months from post-completion OPT, leaving 10.5 months of eligible post-completion OPT.
Regular academic year (fall, winter, spring, or final term) (Pre-completion)	Authorization can only be <b>part time</b> (20 hours per week or less)	*Full-time pre-completion OPT (more than 20 hours per week) is deducted from post-completion OPT at a <b>full-time rate</b> . For example, 3 months of approved full-time pre-completion OPT deducts 3 months from post-completion OPT, leaving 9 months of eligible post-completion OPT.  Pre-completion OPT cannot be extended for STEM or H-1B cap gap.
After degree completion (Post-completion)	Authorization can only be full time. Students must work a minimum average of 20 hours per week (no maximum) in order to maintain status.	No more than 90 days of unemployment are allowed during the 12-month post-completion OPT period.  Post-completion OPT can be extended for STEM or H-1B cap gap if the student meets requirements for those extensions.

**\*Even if you do not work during your authorized pre-completion OPT period, the time granted by USCIS will still be subtracted from your available post-completion OPT time.**

## Which OPT option is best for me? Questions to consider:

### Pre-Completion OPT (BEFORE graduation)

- *Have you been in F-1 student status for one academic year?* See page 2.
- **Have you considered using Curricular Practical Training (CPT) instead?** For many students, CPT is a better option. It allows you to get work experience in your field of study **without using any of your 12-month OPT allowance**. And unlike OPT, there is no filing fee. Please see the ISS website for a detailed description of [Curricular Practical Training](#).

**Will your job offer still be valid three months from now?** OPT processing can take 3-5 months, and you cannot begin employment before receiving authorization. **If your employer is unwilling to wait for your authorization approval, OPT may not be the best option for you before graduation.**

- **Will you apply for the 24-month OPT STEM extension or the H-1B cap gap extension in the future?** Only eligible post-completion OPT students may apply for these two extensions. If you plan on applying for either of these extensions in the future, you must have at least part of your original 12-month OPT allowance remaining to use as post-completion OPT.
- **Are you willing to use some of your 12-month OPT allowance?** **You will not have a full year of post-completion OPT after degree program completion if you are authorized for any pre-completion OPT. See chart on previous page.**

### Post-Completion OPT (AFTER graduation)

- *Have you been in F-1 status for one academic year?* See page 2.
- **Will you be completing your program of study at DePaul University within the next 90 days?** Your application for OPT cannot be submitted to USCIS any earlier than 90 days before your degree program completion date.
- **Are you enrolled full-time this quarter or authorized by ISS to have a reduced course load?** Before enrolling less than full-time, you must receive a reduced course load authorization from ISS.

## Steps to Apply for OPT

**Step 1:** Think about your timeline (see next page).

- When are you graduating?
- Have you decided on the OPT start date you will request?
- Which is most important to your situation: getting OPT faster or having more time to apply for jobs?

**Step 2:** Submit **OPT Recommendation I-20 request** to ISS to obtain OPT I-20 form here: [https://intlportal.depaul.edu/\\_portal/](https://intlportal.depaul.edu/_portal/)

- Please be sure to indicate your **academic advisor** (**NOT** your ISS advisor) in the Approver section of this form. If the correct **academic advisor** is not listed as the approver, your request will not be submitted in the system.

Please allow **5-7 business days** for review/processing. If your request is incomplete, it will require more time.

**Step 3:** Receive your I-20 from your ISS advisor **and sign it**. Prepare your OPT application forms and supporting documentation.

**Step 4:** Submit your complete OPT application (I-765) to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) through their online application: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>

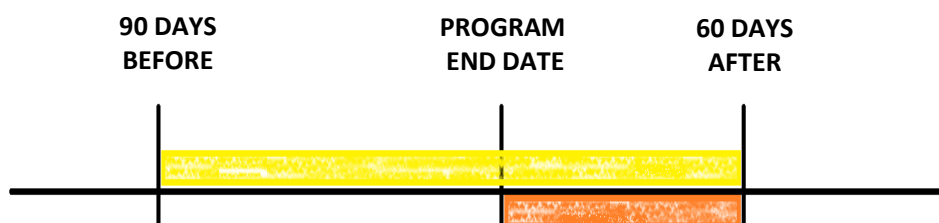
**Be sure to file within 30 days of your OPT I-20 issue date OR before the expiration of your grace period, whichever is sooner.**

***ISS strongly recommends that you carefully review this entire OPT tutorial for detailed instructions and important information about your OPT authorization requirements and responsibilities before, during, and after your OPT application process.***

## Choosing a Requested Start Date

The OPT application timeline relies heavily on your program end date and the date you submit the I-765 to USCIS.

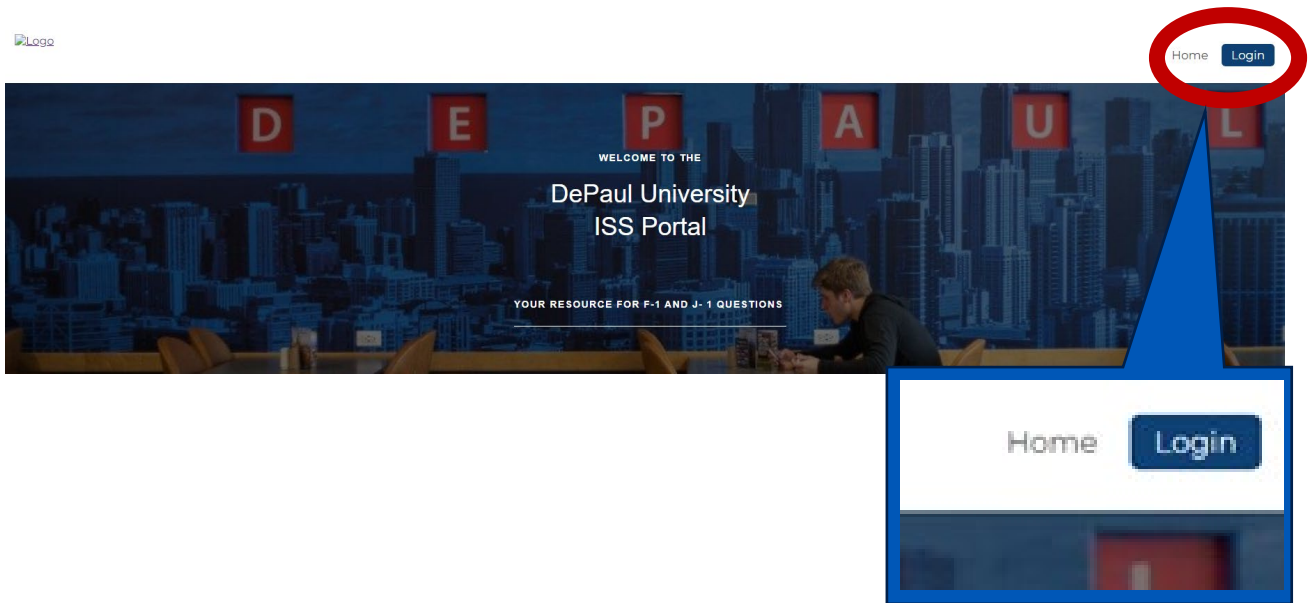
- You are allowed to submit the I-765 **up to 90 days before your program end date and up to 60 days after your program end date** (see yellow line in graphic below).
  - Your program end date is the official end date of the DePaul term that you complete your program requirements in (see [DePaul Academic Calendar](#)).
  - Even though you are *allowed* to submit the I-765 as late as 60 days after your program ends, it is strongly advised you do so BEFORE your program ends to avoid delays from USCIS. **USCIS may choose to give you less than 12 months of OPT if you apply toward the end of your application window.**
- To submit the I-765, you need an OPT Recommendation I-20 from your ISS advisor showing your requested OPT start and end date. **You must choose a start date** within the 60 days after your program end date (see orange line in graphic below).
  - **Early start dates:** good for students who already have an employer who wants them to start immediately after graduation, and in those cases, the student is willing to do premium processing if needed.
  - **Late start dates:** good for students who are worried they will not find a job after graduation and want as much time as possible to find a job. **After your APPROVED OPT start date passes, you have 90 unemployment days within which you must start working.**
  - **Start dates in the middle of the range:** good for students who are unsure whether they want an earlier start date or a late start date. Your ISS advisor will suggest this option if you are unsure; your ISS advisor cannot choose your start date for you.



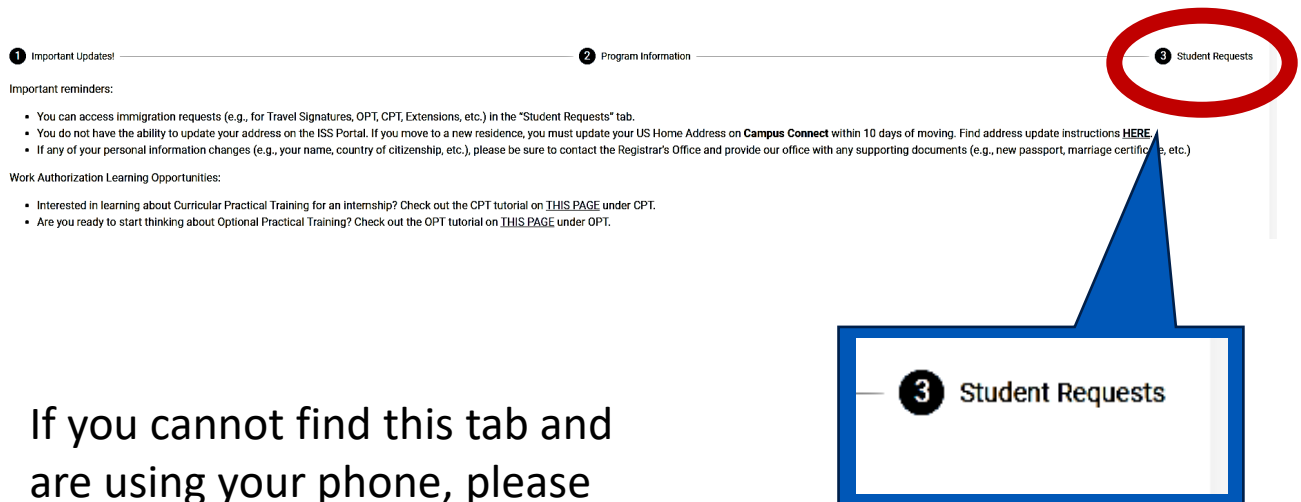
If you are worried about running out of unemployment days, do not delay your OPT process on purpose. You can choose a late start date ahead of time; ask your ISS advisor about your options several months beforehand.

# Submitting an OPT Recommendation I-20 Request

After choosing your requested start date, go to <https://intlportal.depaul.edu/> and log in with your DePaul credentials.



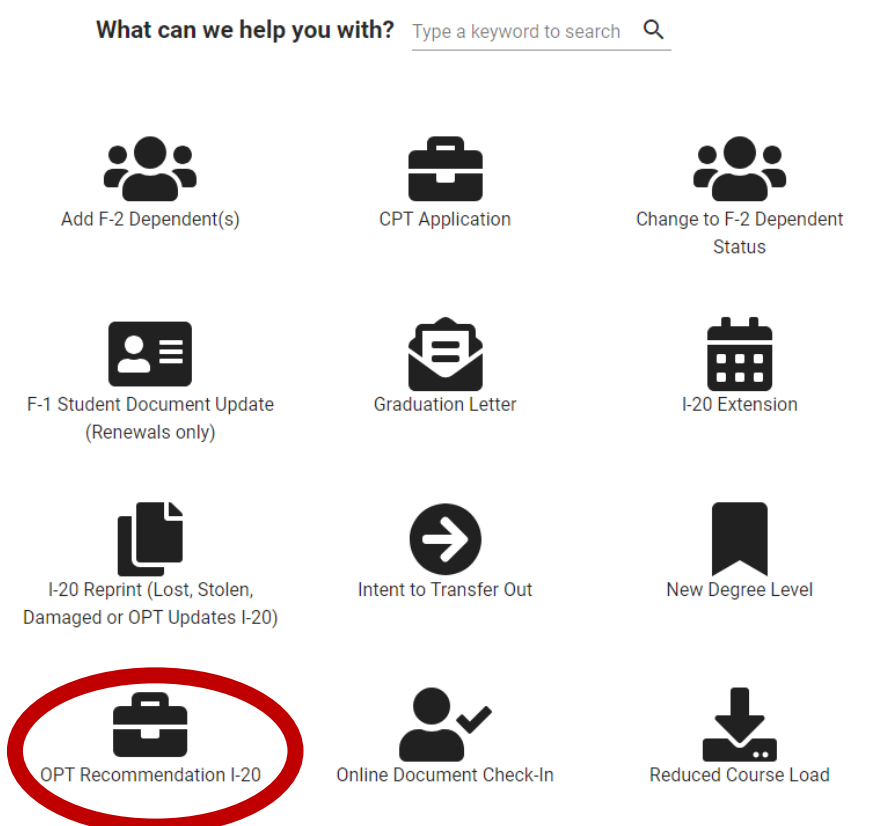
On the main page, select **3: Student Requests**



If you cannot find this tab and are using your phone, please rotate your phone horizontally or switch to using a computer.

## Submitting an OPT Recommendation I-20 Request

On the Student Requests page, find the OPT Recommendation I-20 option on the left side and click on the icon.



### Maintenance of Status Fee (Effective October 15, 2025)

Beginning October 15, 2025, DePaul University will implement a Maintenance of Status Fee for each year a DePaul F-1 student remains in F-1 status after graduation.

- First Year (OPT): A \$125 fee will be collected when you submit your Optional Practical Training (OPT) application.
- This fee is mandatory and nonrefundable.
- **The fee payment is included in the OPT recommendation I-20 request. This means you must complete the payment BEFORE advancing through the rest of the I-20 request.**



# Submitting an OPT Recommendation I-20 Request

## How to make the Maintenance Fee payment:

**1 Payment (Payment)**  
Required \*

Beginning October 15, 2025, DePaul University will implement a Maintenance of Status Fee for each year a DePaul F-1 student remains in F-1 status following graduation.

First year: A \$125 fee will be collected when you submit your application for Optional Practical Training (OPT).

Second and third years: If you qualify for the STEM OPT Extension, a fee of \$250 will be collected at the time of your STEM OPT application.

This fee is mandatory and nonrefundable.

After your payment is successfully processed, please save a screenshot or download a copy of the receipt for your records. Please save a copy in case we need to help you retrieve your payment record later. Once the payment is complete, return to the ISS portal, locate your draft OPT Recommendation I-20 request, and continue the submission process.

If you have any questions about this fee or encounter technical issues, please contact [iss@depaul.edu](mailto:iss@depaul.edu)

**PAY TODAY - \$125**

Next ↓


Select “Pay Today” to be redirected to the secure payment page.

Click Checkout to make the payment.

**Order Section**

Amount	125.00 USD
--------	------------

**Checkout**

 **Secure Payment**

Enter your credit card information, billing address, and shipping address. You can simply check “Same as billing” to copy the billing details. No items will be mailed to you; this information is only required by the payment system to process the transaction.

**Shipping Address**

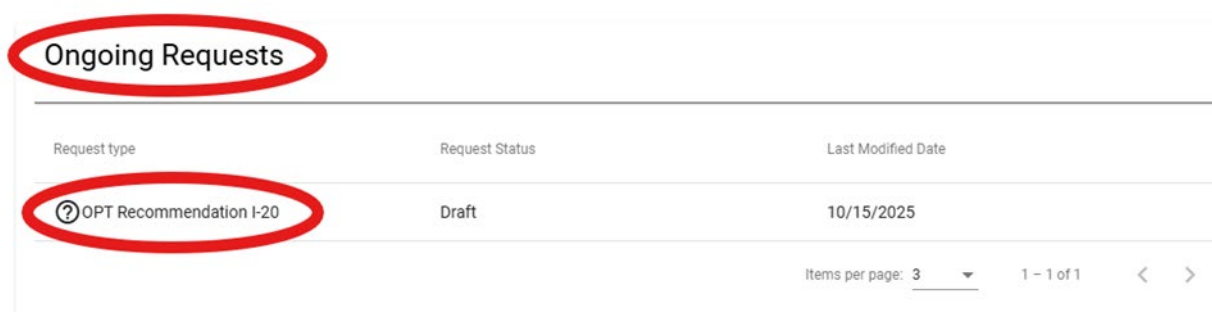
☒ Same as billing

## Submitting an OPT Recommendation I-20 Request

Once your Maintenance Fee payment is successfully processed, you'll see a confirmation page. Please save a screenshot or download a copy of your payment receipt for your records. You may need it later if ISS staff assist in retrieving your payment record.

- For questions about the fee, review [OPT and STEM OPT Maintenance of Status Fee FAQs.pdf](#)
- For technical issues during payment, email [iss@depaul.edu](mailto:iss@depaul.edu).

Return to your OPT request in the ISS Portal. You will find your draft OPT Recommendation I-20 request under Ongoing Requests.



Request type	Request Status	Last Modified Date
OPT Recommendation I-20	Draft	10/15/2025

Items per page: 3 1 - 1 of 1

Click on the Draft request and advance through the rest of the sections, uploading your I-983 where prompted. Once complete, click Submit.

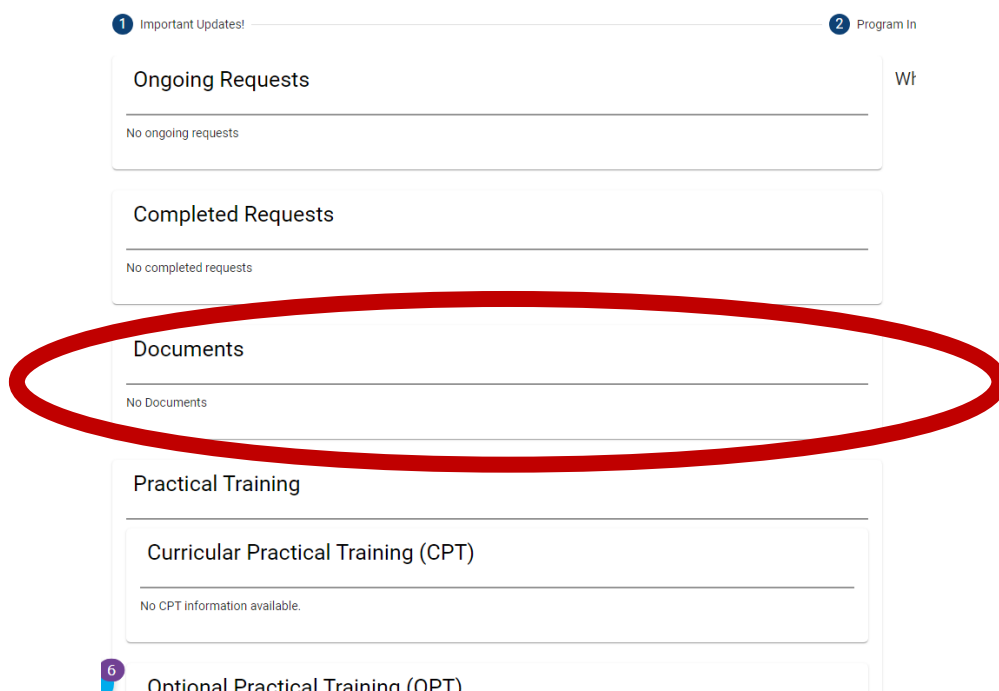
*The most common clarifications ISS advisors need to provide about the OPT Recommendation I-20 are:*

- Answer the questions about previous CPT and OPT **honestly based on your understanding of your history**. If you are unsure, consider whether you worked off-campus in the U.S. previously. What work authorization did you have at the time, and for what dates?
- Students must choose a **requested start date** to complete the request. Select a start date within the 60 days after your program end date. See “Choosing a Requested Start Date” page of this tutorial for tips on selecting a start date.
- The **end date** for post-completion OPT is 364 days after the start date (i.e., for a start date of 07/01/2025, the end date is 06/30/2026).
- If you are applying for OPT that will occur **after you graduate**, select **Post-Completion** and **Full Time**.
- The Approver must be the student's **academic advisor** (different from ISS advisor or faculty advisor).

## Submitting an OPT Recommendation I-20 Request

After you submit the request and both your academic advisor and ISS advisor have approved, you will receive an email that your OPT Recommendation I-20 is ready.

To download the I-20, repeat the steps on page 7 of this tutorial; on the Student Requests page, find the Documents section on the left side and click on the document link to download the I-20.



The screenshot shows a web interface with a progress bar at the top containing two steps: '1 Important Updates!' and '2 Program In'. Below the progress bar are several sections: 'Ongoing Requests' (with 'No ongoing requests'), 'Completed Requests' (with 'No completed requests'), 'Documents' (with 'No Documents'), 'Practical Training' (with 'Curricular Practical Training (CPT)' and 'No CPT information available.'), and 'Optional Practical Training (OPT)'. A red oval is drawn around the 'Documents' section, highlighting it as the area of interest for downloading the I-20.

Immediately after downloading the I-20, **SIGN IT.**

- Check that your information on the first page is correct.
- Check that your ISS advisor signed the I-20 on page 1 under SCHOOL ATTESTATION.
- The date listed under DATE ISSUED of that section is the day your OPT request was made in SEVIS by your ISS advisor. Your I-765 application will be denied if you submit it more than 30 days after this issuing date.
- Check that on page 2, the proper type of OPT is listed, and the dates match what you requested.

## Prepare Your Application Documents

### **Required for every student:**

- Passport-style photograph – see U.S. Department of State Passport Photos page for full guidance:  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/how-apply/photos.html>
- Your most recent Electronic I-94: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/recent-search>
- Copy of information page in passport
- I-20 showing OPT Request **that is less than 30 days old, signed by you and your ISS advisor**
  - If your I-20 is older than 30 days old when you submit the I-765, your I-765 will be denied.
  - If your I-20 is not signed by you and/or your ISS advisor, your I-765 will be denied.
- Payment method for the filing fee – see <https://www.uscis.gov/forms/filing-fees> for full guidance

### **Documents that may not be required for every student:**

- *Proof of enrollment at SEVP-Certified school (transcript)*
  - *Not needed for the online application, but recommended to have in case you receive a request for evidence (RFE) from USCIS. If you receive an RFE after submitting the I-765, notify your ISS advisor immediately.*
- *All previously used SEVIS numbers to be submitted in 'additional information' section of application (only provide if you previously had a different SEVIS ID)*
- *Evidence (I-20s) of any previously issued CPT or OPT and the academic level for which each was authorized (only provide if you have previous CPT or OPT)*
- *Most recent EAD (only provide if you CURRENTLY have an EAD)*

## Submit the I-765 Online

### Instructions for the USCIS Online System

1. Go to <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
2. Click “File Online”
3. Choose the “File Online” button again on the next page **for the I-765**
4. Tips for filing online can be found [here!](#) **We do not recommend applying via mail!**



### Online Filing Benefits



Case status alerts and secure messages



See all case correspondence



Check your case status and update personal information



Upload evidence

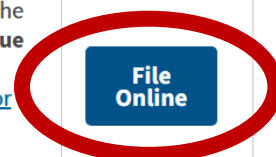


#### [I-765 | Application for Employment Authorization](#)

Online PDF filing option available for these categories:

- (a)(12) – Temporary Protected Status granted;
- (c)(8) – Application for employment authorization based on pending Form I-589, Application for Asylum or for Withholding of Removal, and applicants for pending asylum under the ABC Settlement Agreement;
- (c)(9) – Certain family-based and employment-based applicants pending adjustment of status under Section 245 of the Immigration and Nationality Act;
- (c)(11) – Paroled for urgent humanitarian or significant public benefit purposes; or
- (c)(19) – Certain pending TPS applicants whom USCIS has determined are prima facie eligible for TPS and who may then receive an EAD as a “temporary treatment benefit” under 8 C.F.R. 244.10(a).

**Note:** If you are applying for a (c)(9) Pending Adjustment of Status category of Form I-765 that is [fee exempted](#), do not submit your application through the PDF filing option at this time. **If you file Form I-765 for the (c)(9) category, you will be required to pay a fee or submit a fee waiver request.** If you are fee-exempt and proceed with paying the fee and submitting your application through the PDF filing option, **USCIS will not issue you a refund.** If you are filing under a fee exempt category, you should mail a paper Form I-765 to the address on the [Direct Filing Addresses for Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#) website to receive the fee exemption.



## Submit the I-765 Online

If you do not yet have an account, select **"Create an Account"** on the **Sign In** page and follow the steps to create a USCIS account.

At the welcome screen, select **"My USCIS"** and select **"I am an applicant, petitioner, or requestor"** as your account type. Finally, select **"File a form online"** and use the drop-down menu to select the I-765 as the form; click **"Start form."**

**Welcome to your USCIS Account**

Select what you want to do

**Edit My Account Profile** Editing your profile includes making changes to your email, password, phone number, security questions, or the two-step verification method and backup code.

**Login to a USCIS Service**

**USCIS** Apply for immigration benefits, find tools and resources to assist in preparation for naturalization, and search for doctors in your local community.

**FIRST** Submit, manage, and receive Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

**myE-Verify** Confirm your records for employment eligibility, track E-Verify or Self-Check case status, and protect your identity by locking your Social Security Number (SSN).

Not sure what service you need? Start at [USCIS.gov](https://uscis.gov)

**Account Type**

Select an account type:

☒ **I am an applicant, petitioner, or requestor.**

- USCIS only offers certain benefit types for online filing. Please refer to [uscis.gov](https://uscis.gov) for further guidance.
- You may use this account type to file an online Form I-134A as an individual agreeing to financially support a beneficiary. You may also use this account type if you are a beneficiary of a confirmed online Form I-134 or I-134A.
- You cannot file an H-1B Registration with this account type.

☐ **I am a Legal Representative.**

- I am an attorney eligible to practice law in the United States.
- I am an accredited representative of a qualified organization that is recognized by the Department of Justice in accordance with 8 CFR part 1292.

☐ **I am an H-1B registrant.**

- I am an authorized signatory submitting an H-1B Registration or signing an H-1B Registration to be submitted by a legal representative.
- A registrant account can be used only to submit H-1B Registrations.
- If you are an attorney or accredited representative that requires the submission of a Form G-28 and are submitting H-1B Registrations on behalf of an H-1B employer or agent, you must use a Legal Representative account.

**Submit**

**File a form online**

Start a new form, upload evidence, and pay and submit online



## How to Apply for OPT: *Submit the I-765 Online*

**Start the form: Select the I-765 form.** For eligibility category, **(c)(3)(B) Post-Completion** is the appropriate option if you will use your OPT AFTER you graduate. 99% of OPT students at DePaul select this option. If you are unsure of your reason for applying, contact your ISS Advisor!

Select the form you want to file online.

I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

What is your eligibility category?

If your eligibility category is not listed in the drop down menu, you can submit a paper form by mail.


(c)(3)(B) Student Post-Completion OPT

Select Start Form to open the I-765.

### Getting Started Section

Select **(c)(3)(B) Post-Completion** as the basis of eligibility if you will use your OPT **AFTER** you graduate.

What is your eligibility category? \*



You can file your request online only for certain eligibility categories

If your eligibility category does not appear on the drop-down list, you must file a paper [Form I-765](#). If you submit online and are not eligible for one of the listed categories, your application may be denied.

(c)(3)(B) Student Post-Completion OPT

If you are sure you want premium processing, you can select it. If you are unsure what premium processing is or whether you want to do it, discuss it with your ISS Advisor first.

## How to Apply for OPT: *Submit the I-765 Online*

Reason for applying: Select “Initial permission to accept employment.”

Answer “No” if you have never filed the I-765 before.

Answer “No” for Preparer and Interpreter Information.

What is your reason for applying? \*

- ☒ Initial permission to accept employment
- ☐ Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document or correction of my employment authorization document NOT DUE to US Citizenship and Immigration Services error
- ☐ Renewal of permission to accept employment

Have you previously filed Form I-765?

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No

Is someone assisting you with completing this application?

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No

### About You Section

**Your Name:** Please list your full legal name as it appears on your passport (the spelling and order should match). It’s best to list your family (last) name in ALL CAPS. If you have several given names and do not have space to list all of them, that is okay.

**Other Names Used:** You only need to complete this item if you have had a legal name change while studying in the U.S.



## How to Apply for OPT: *Submit the I-765 Online*

### Your Contact Information

Phone Number and Email: Enter a U.S. phone number and email address that you check often. If the email you use here is different from the email(s) listed in Campus Connect, please add it to your Campus Connect profile.

Mailing address: where your new EAD card will be mailed. This address must be valid for at least the next 3 months. If you will move in the months after you submit the I-765, use a reliable friend or family member's address to receive your EAD. You may also rent and use a P.O. Box (see [usps.com](https://usps.com) for more information). Do not use the ISS address. If you are using an address other than your own, use "c/o" to indicate that your mail is being delivered "in care of" the resident of that address. For example, c/o Friend's Street Name, Apt #, Chicago, IL, 60604. Otherwise, USCIS will think that is your new address, and it will conflict with the address showing in SEVIS (database).

USCIS does not forward mail when applicants move. USPS will return your mail to USCIS as undeliverable. If your name does not appear on the c/o address you list, USPS may also return your mail to USCIS as undeliverable. USCIS destroys EAD cards returned by USPS after 60 business days if USCIS is not contacted by the document's intended recipient to provide the correct address.

U.S. Physical Address: If your mailing address is different from your physical address (the address where you currently reside/sleep), select "no" and list your physical address. This address should also match your U.S. home address in Campus Connect (so ISS can link it to your SEVIS record). If the U.S. mailing address you listed is the same as your U.S. physical address, then answer "yes."

**In the "Describe Yourself" and "When and where you were born" sections, answer to the best of your ability based on your understanding.**

## How to Apply for OPT: *Submit the I-765 Online*

### Your Immigration Information

Provide the country or countries you are a citizen of:

What is your country of citizenship or nationality?

List all countries where you are currently a citizen or national.

Look up your I-94  
(<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/search/recent-search>). The  
“Admission (I-94) Record  
Number” on your most  
recent I-94 should be  
provided on the I-765:

What is your Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record  
Number (if any)?

Provide an 11 character I-94 Number.

Provide the information for your last arrival in the United States:

When did you last arrive in the United States?

List your arrival date, place of arrival, and status at arrival.

**Date of arrival (on or about)**

MM/DD/YYYY

**Place of arrival**

**Status at last arrival**

## How to Apply for OPT: *Submit the I-765 Online*

### Your Immigration Information

Provide your current, valid passport information. If you recently renewed your passport, do not provide the old passport information.

What is the passport number of your most recently issued passport?

Skip the travel document question:

Provide the expiration date on your current, valid passport:

What is your travel document number (if any)?

What is the expiration date of your passport or travel document?

MM/DD/YYYY

List F-1 as your current immigration status or category. **If you do not have F-1 status, ask your ISS advisor for assistance.**

List the SEVIS ID number at the top of your I-20.

What is your current immigration status or category?

F1 - Student, Academic Or Language Program. ▼

What is your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Number (if any)?

Use the "Additional Information" section to include all previously used SEVIS numbers.

N-

Provide a 10, 11, or 12-digit SEVIS number.

## How to Apply for OPT: *Submit the I-765 Online*

### Other Information

Select the “I do not” checkbox for the A-Number and USCIS Online Account Number questions if this is your first time applying for an EAD and your first time completing a USCIS application using an online account.

If you have had an EAD before, the A-number is the USCIS number on the front of your EAD; provide it for the A-Number question.

Answer the Social Security questions based on whether you need a social security number. If you already have one, do not request another one. This does not always result in the SSN being issued automatically; you may need to apply separately with the Social Security Administration later.

What is your A-Number?

☐ I do not have or know my A-Number.

A-

Provide a 7, 8, or 9-digit number. If the A-Number is fewer than 9 digits, the system will automatically add zero(s) after the "A" and before the first digit so there is a total of 9 digits, for example: A-001234567.

What is your USCIS Online Account Number?

Providing your unique USCIS Online Account Number (OAN) helps us manage your account. You may already have an OAN if you previously filed certain paper forms and received an Account Access Notice in the mail. You can find the OAN at the top of the notice; it is not the same as an A-Number.

☐ I do not have or know my USCIS Online Account Number.

Provide a 12-digit Online Account Number.



Has the Social Security Administration (SSA) ever officially issued a Social Security card to you?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

Do you want the SSA to issue you a Social Security card?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

## How to Apply for OPT: *Submit the I-765 Online*

### Evidence

**2 x 2 photo of you:** Carefully read the detailed instructions provided on this page before uploading your photo. Be sure to follow the link provided to the Department of State's photo composition tools if you need to edit the photo in any way (i.e. cropping, rotating, resizing, etc.). **Do not skip this section.**

**Form I-94 or Passport:** Carefully follow the detailed instructions provided on this page. If there is an error on your I-94 or passport you are concerned about, ask your ISS advisor what action they recommend.

**Employment Authorization Document and Government ID:** If you already have an employment authorization document (also called an EAD card), upload it AND your passport on this page. If this is your first time applying for an EAD, simply upload your passport information page. As stated on this page, your picture, name, and date of birth must be clearly visible.

**Previously authorized CPT or OPT:** if you have been authorized for CPT or OPT before in your lifetime (even at another school or academic level), upload the I-20s for those CPT and OPT authorizations. If you have never had CPT or OPT before, skip this section.

**Form I-20:** Carefully follow the detailed instructions on this page to properly upload your OPT Recommendation I-20. **The I-20 MUST be signed by you and your ISS advisor on the first page, have an OPT endorsement on the second page, and be less than 30 days old.** If you are missing one of these components on your I-20, contact your ISS advisor immediately.

### Additional Information

You only need to complete this section if there is a discrepancy in your documents that you know of ahead of time or you have had other SEVIS ID numbers before. If this applies to you, click "add a response" and select the drop-down options.

## How to Apply for OPT: *Submit the I-765 Online*

### **REMINDERS**

Application must be **received** by USCIS by **12:00 pm Coordinated Universal Time (around 6 hours ahead of Chicago Time)** on last day of grace period or it will be denied.

If you receive a “Request for Evidence” (RFE), **contact your ISS advisor immediately to assist you. Do not respond to the RFE without assistance from your ISS advisor.**

**Do not travel during your OPT process. If you plan to travel during any point of the OPT process, discuss it with your ISS advisor prior to finalizing your travel plan or applying for OPT.**

**Do not begin working until your I-765 is approved and the start date has arrived.**

## How to Maintain F-1 Status on Post-Completion OPT

During an approved period of OPT, F-1 visa holders are required to do the following:

1. Do not work without authorization. Pay attention to OPT status and dates.
2. Maintain valid employment. Do not exceed 90 unemployment days.
3. Report employment changes on the SEVP Portal within 10 days of each change.
4. Report personal information changes on the SEVP Portal and Campus Connect within 10 days of each change.
5. Stay in contact with your ISS advisor regarding changes in your status, such as STEM extension, switching to another legal status other than F-1, starting a new academic program, or leaving the United States long term.





## Do Not Work without Authorization

F-1 visa holders can start doing work after graduation **when their OPT is approved** and their **approved start date has arrived**.

- When the adjudicating officer at USCIS approves the I-765, an approval notice is created and made available in myUSCIS through the I-765 application.
- Check the “valid from” dates on your approval notice to find your approved OPT start and end dates. The dates may differ from the dates you requested; USCIS approves dates at their discretion, so the approved dates may vary from what you expected.
- **Do not do any work before receiving OPT approval and checking your approved dates.** If you start work based on your REQUESTED dates and you have not been approved yet, any work occurring outside of the approved dates would be unauthorized.
- After approval, it takes approximately 2 weeks for the EAD card to be mailed by USPS. If your EAD card has validity dates that are different from the ones on your approval notice, notify your ISS advisor immediately.

Receipt Number IOE [REDACTED]	USCIS Account Number [REDACTED]	Case Type I765 - APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION
Received Date [REDACTED]	Priority Date [REDACTED]	Applicant [REDACTED] A-NUMBER/USCIS NUMBER [REDACTED] FULL NAME OF STUDENT
Notice Date [REDACTED]	Page 1 of 1	

[REDACTED] FULL NAME OF STUDENT [REDACTED] ADDRESS OF STUDENT	<b>Notice Type:</b> Approval Notice Class: C03B Valid from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] APPROVED OPT START DATE   APPROVED OPT END DATE
--	--

We have approved your application for employment authorization. We will send your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) (also known as an EAD card or Form I-766) to you separately. Your EAD card should be produced within one to two weeks. Your EAD card will be mailed via U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Priority Mail with Delivery Confirmation to the address you designated. The time frame in which you will receive your EAD card may

## Maintaining Valid Employment

During the approved period of post-completion OPT, F-1 visa holders must maintain employment.

- Between the approved OPT start date and the approved OPT end date, **all gaps in employment cannot exceed a total of 90 days.**
- The employment must be **related to the student's DePaul degree** and **total at least 20 hours per week.**
- If the student cannot find employment within the allotted 90 unemployment days, USCIS has the discretion to terminate their status at any time.
- The 90 days are paused during the days of active employment the student reports on the SEVP Portal.



## Maintaining Valid Employment

*What kinds of employment scenarios are allowed on OPT?*

- **Full-time, salaried positions and part-time, hourly positions are allowed. Other types of employment are:**
  - Short-term multiple employers (performing artists): multiple full-time employers (gigs). The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration.
  - Work for hire (aka 1099 employment): performing a service based on a contract. If requested by DHS, the student must provide evidence showing the duration of the contract period and the name and address of the contracting company.
  - Self-employed business owner: if a student starts a business and is self-employed, they must prove that they have the proper business licenses and are actively engaged in a business related to their degree program if asked by DHS. **DePaul ISS cannot provide instruction on how to obtain business licenses.** Please consult a business attorney if unsure how to obtain a business license. **Self-employment is not allowed during the STEM extension period.**
  - Employment through an agency or consulting firm: if working through an agency, a student must maintain evidence showing they worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.
- **Multiple jobs are allowed** simultaneously if the total number of hours worked per week (between all jobs) is **at least 20 hours per week** AND the work is **related to the student's degree program**.
  - This means multiple part time jobs are allowed, multiple full-time jobs are allowed, and a combination of multiple part time and full-time jobs are allowed.
- **On post-completion OPT, employment can be paid or unpaid.**
  - During the STEM extension period (after the initial post-completion OPT), employment must be paid. If a student does unpaid work during post-completion OPT and is eligible for STEM extension, they should prepare to find a paying employer that is enrolled in the E-Verify Program prior to filing for their STEM extension.

## ***Reporting Employment Changes on OPT***

### **STEP 1: Set up your SEVP Portal account.**

- F-1 visa holders receive an email on their **approved** OPT start date inviting them to create an SEVP Portal account.
- When you receive this email, create your account right away. If you attempt to do this late and are locked out, contact your ISS advisor.
- **Even if you have not found a job yet, you should create your SEVP Portal account on your approved OPT start date.** If you do not create your account at that time, your account creation link will expire, and it will take longer for you to report your employment once you have it.

### **STEP 2: Update your employment information on the SEVP Portal within 10 days of any changes.** You can only do this once you have an OPT employer.

- The system will ask for a description of how the work is related to the DePaul degree program. Examples of this description can be found here: [Explanations of Direct Relationship](#)
- Make sure that your OPT work is **at least 20 hours per week** and is related to your degree. If it does not meet those requirements, you must find a different work opportunity or combine it with additional work to meet the 20-hour requirement.
  - On the SEVP Portal, any employer that you work **at least 20 hours per week for should be reported as FULL TIME**. Employers that you work less than 20 hours per week for should be listed as PART TIME.
- **If you will work remotely from your personal US address, the address you list for your employment must be your personal US address.** Remote work is acceptable on OPT, but the address reported for your employment information must be where you physically perform work.
- OPT students are **not required to upload offer letters** on the SEVP Portal or send them to DePaul University. It is recommended you keep accurate offer letters for your personal records, but you do not need to report them to maintain your status.
- OPT students are **not required to get an I-20 with updated employment information** in order to maintain their status. If you would like to get an I-20 showing employment updates, update the SEVP Portal with the employment changes, then submit an I-20 Reprint request on the ISS Portal.

## Reporting Personal Information Changes on OPT

If your personal address changes, report it within 10 days by:

1. Updating your personal address on Campus Connect.
2. Updating your personal address on the SEVP Portal.
3. (If you are working remotely and have your personal address listed for your employment in the SEVP Portal) update your employer address.

If any of your biographical information changes, contact your ISS advisor to ensure it is updated properly in the DePaul University and SEVIS systems.

## Getting Help with Status Changes

If you anticipate a status change while on OPT, contact your ISS advisor well ahead of time to ensure any necessary steps are completed on time.

Examples of common status changes on OPT include:

- STEM extension
- Switching to another legal status other than F-1
- Starting a new academic program
- Leaving the United States long term

## International Travel on Post-completion OPT

**Always stay in contact with your ISS advisor regarding international travel plans.**

On OPT, the following documentation is required upon re-entry to the United States:

- Valid passport
- Valid visa
- Travel-signed I-20 no more than 6 months old
- Employment Authorization Document (EAD card)
- *Optional: proof of employment (i.e., paystubs, offer letters, etc.)*

OPT students should prepare to be asked questions at the border about their employment and how they are maintaining status. If traveling on approved OPT using unemployment days, the student should prepare to explain how they are maintaining their status despite being unemployed.

## Frequently Asked Questions

✓ Do I need a job offer to apply for OPT?

*No. A job offer is not required to apply for OPT, but having a job offer in hand or being in the final stages of an interview process can help you make more informed choices about your requested OPT start date. Deliberately delaying your OPT process until you find a job is not recommended. See page 6 for more information about OPT timeline.*

✓ I heard that my DePaul degree program is a STEM program, so I get 3 years of OPT. Is that correct?

*Yes and no. Eligible STEM students can apply for a 2-year extension of their post completion OPT AFTER their post-completion OPT is approved and it is within 90 days of the OPT end date. The 3 years of OPT are not granted in a single application, nor is the 2-year STEM extension automatic.*

✓ I know it's my choice when my requested OPT start date is, but what does my ISS advisor recommend?

*ISS advisors do not have one single day they recommend as a best fit for all students. The requested OPT start date is dependent on the **student's** understanding of their career search, time management, and even finances. Your ISS advisor can discuss the pros and cons of different start dates with you, but they cannot recommend a start date without understanding your goals first.*

✓ If my passport has been renewed, do I upload my old passport on the I-765, or the new one?

*Upload your new, valid passport in the I-765 application. If you would like, you can explain in the Additional Information section that you recently got your passport renewed, providing your old (expired) passport number.*

✓ What if I find out I failed a class and need to retake that class, after I already submitted my I-765?

*Contact your ISS Advisor immediately.*

✓ I'm considering traveling around the same time as my OPT process, is that okay?

*Contact your ISS Advisor to discuss your OPT and travel plans **prior to finalizing your travel plan or applying for OPT.***

✓ Should I do premium processing?

*If you want to and feel comfortable with the cost. If you are considering premium processing, discuss the pros and cons of doing so with your ISS advisor. While your ISS advisor cannot decide for you, they can help you develop a strategy for when to utilize premium processing.*