

Optional Practical Training: Preparing and Mailing the Application and Beyond

An information session for F-1 students
Presented by the International Services Office



Prepare the Application Packet

(Find all forms, fees and mailing addresses as currently posted on www.uscis.gov/i-765. USCIS tends to change these from time to time.)

- Form I-765 (*typed, printed one-sided, and signed in blue ink. No staples!*)
- Form G-1145 (*typed and printed*)
- Copies of all previous I-20's issued to you from the University of New Haven and any previous institutions
- Color copy of your passport
- Color copy of your visa
- Copy of your I-94 record
- Two standard (2" x 2") color passport photos with last name, first name and I-94 written on back
- Check or Money order made payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (as currently posted at www.uscis.gov/i-765)

Prepare the Application Packet

SUBMIT TO ISO :

- Post-completion Optional Practical Training Request E-Form along with the requested scans [OPT - Post-Completion Optional Practical Training Request Form \(newhaven.edu\)](https://newhaven.edu/iso/opt-form)
- Choose a start date within 60 days of your I-20 program end date. Or ISO will choose one for you. Ultimately USCIS will assign the start date, but they will honor your request if possible.
- You do not need a job to apply for OPT. Instead, apply early whether or not you have yet found a job.
- Please Note: The OPT preparation course in Canvas is required. ISO will not issue the OPT Request I-20 until you have completed all the modules and taken all the quizzes.

Helpful Information

- Photos –need to met U.S. passport requirements specified at [U.S. Passport Photos \(state.gov\)](https://www.state.gov/passport-photos). CVS and Walgreens can often take passport photos. Write your last name and first name in pencil on the back of the photos and your I-94 number.
- Check or money order should contain
 - o Your name
 - o Your address (if it is a personal check, meaning one that you got from your bank)
 - o Your I-94 Number
 - o Pay to the “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”
- We recommend you fill out the I-765 and G-1145 online and then print them out to insure legibility and to avoid misspelled names or erroneous addresses.

Make it Tidy

- Use a single paper clip to attach your photos and check to the G-1145. You do not have to clip everything. Remember to remove all staples! Put all of your items in the following order:
 - Two 2x2 passport photos (name on the back and I-94)
 - A check/money order made out to the Department of Homeland Security
 - G-1145
 - I-765 (signed!)
 - Copies of all the I-20s you have plus the new OPT request I-20
 - Passport and Visa copy
 - I-94

Mailing your OPT application to USCIS

- Once you have submitted the Post-completion OPT request e-form and received your OPT Request I-20, you must mail your application to USCIS.
- Consult the USCIS page: www.uscis.gov/i-765 for instructions on where to file. USCIS will specify the mailing lockbox based on application type and/or geographic location, and may change these addresses occasionally
- **The application must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the issue date of your OPT I-20.**
- If it is received after 30 days, your application will be denied.

Reminders before You Mail to USCIS

- Review your application packet again. Be careful not to make any mistakes or forget anything.
- Scan a copy of your complete packet for your own records prior to mailing the packet.
- Use a shipping method with a tracking number to be sure the packet arrives to the lockbox. You may need to be able to prove an error by USCIS was indeed made by USCIS.

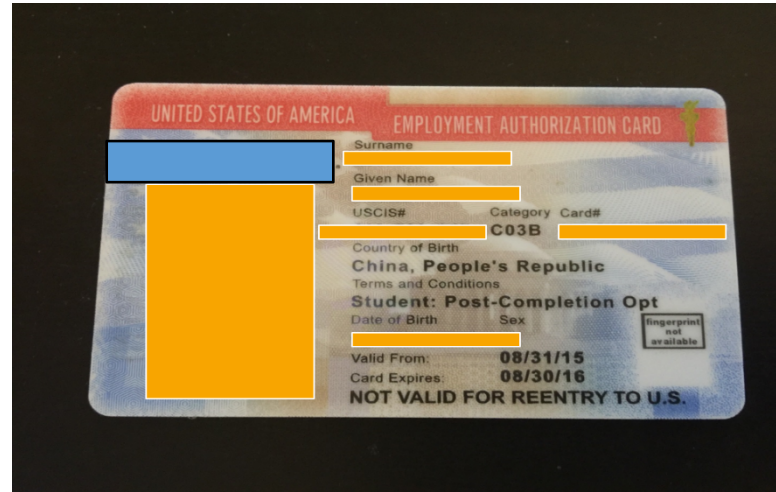
After Mailing your Application to USCIS

- Within 7-10 business days of USCIS receiving your application:
 - USCIS will contact you by e-mail and text message.
 - The message will include your case number (EAC..../YSC....)
 - You can use this number to track the status of your application on the USCIS website.
- **I-797 Receipt notice** in the mail (within 4 weeks)
 - Make sure your name and birthdate are correct on the I-797.
- **I-797 Approval notice** in the mail (typically 90-120 days)
- **Employment Authorization Document/ EAD card** in the mail (typically 90-120 days/ approximately 1 week after I-797 Approval Notice)

Additional Concerns

- If you have additional concerns, please email ISO@Newhaven.edu. The OPT packet typically isn't rejected unless you haven't signed something, or you've waited too long to mail it.
- It is imperative you ship your OPT packet once you receive your OPT request I-20. If you aren't able to do this, let us know and we will cancel your OPT request and generate a new one.
- There is no premium processing, and the ISO cannot contact the USCIS about your case to speed it up. As long as you get a case number, it will be processed, but be aware that the government may take longer, and they may not give you the date that you requested.
- You cannot start working until you receive your EAD Card.
- Regarding STEM OPT, you can find out information about STEM OPT by visiting our website or Googling "STEM OPT University of New Haven."

Your EAD card will look like this...



- Make sure all information on the EAD card is correct as soon as you receive the card.
- If there are any errors, you must have them corrected by USCIS as soon as possible. The mailer with the EAD card will contain instructions.

You may not begin work until...

- You have your physical EAD card in your hands.

AND

- The start date listed on your OPT card is reached
(eg. If you receive your card on June 1 and your EAD start date is July 1, you must wait until July 1 to begin work.)

Travel

- **DO NOT TRAVEL** outside of the U.S. while your application is processing
 - If you leave while your application is processing it can be considered “abandoning” your application.
- Once you have received your EAD card, you can travel with these documents:
 - Your EAD card
 - Your I-20 **signed within the last 6 months**
 - A valid passport and Visa
 - Evidence of employment, like a job offer letter

Maintaining your F-1 Status

- When you receive your first job, update it on the SEVP Portal.
- AND submit the OPT/STEM Employment Information e-form to the ISO along with and copy of your EAD card and the job offer letter which states
 - Whether you are a full or part time employee
 - Your start date
 - The company address
- Also provide a brief, 3-4 sentence, explanation of how your job relates to your degree of study.
- If you change jobs, you are responsible for providing the ISO with this information for your new employer, as well as the final date at your previous employer.

Maintaining your F-1 Status

- You must work at least **20 hours per week** on OPT.
 - You can work multiple jobs to reach this total. If you work more than one job, you must provide a job offer letter and a brief description of how the job relates to your degree of study for each job.
- Your work may be volunteer, internship, paid, unpaid, research with a professor, etc.
- The job you take must be related to your degree that you earn from the University of New Haven.
 - If you have a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Washington State University, but your UNH Master's degree is Business, you cannot have an Engineering job on OPT.
 - Additionally, if you took one Computer Science course while at UNH but did not major in Computer Science you cannot work for a Computer Science company.

Finding a Job

- You are allowed 90 days of unemployment. This is the aggregate total out of your 1 year of post-completion OPT.
 - The 90 days starts from the start date on your EAD card.
 - You must keep track of start and end dates for each employer.
 - SEVIS may auto-terminate your OPT authorization if you exceed the 90 day limit.
- If you are approaching the 90 day limit, you can...
 - Volunteer for a position in your field of study
 - Do research with a professor in your field of study
 - Take an unpaid internship in your field of study

Note: All the same rules about minimum hours still apply.

While on OPT...

- **DO NOT email everyone at the ISO.** For all inquiries email ISO@Newhaven.edu
- 3-5 Business days means 3-5 **weekdays**.
- Do not be late to appointments and interviews. This is a surefire way to not get the job.
- Tell us within 10 days of changing a job, address or contact info. Do not wait several months.
- Do not falsify documents.
- Do not work while your OPT is processing or before your EAD start date. This is illegal.
- Do not travel while your OPT or STEM OPT is processing. You may be denied reentry.
- Do not make F-1 immigration decisions without contacting us.
- The ISO cannot negotiate with USCIS. We can't intervene or overrule in the adjudication process. You are fully responsible for your application.

Maintaining your F-1 Status

- You must update the ISO if...
 - You change addresses
 - You change phone numbers
 - You change e-mails
 - Change jobs
 - Change marital status

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