SIUe
OPT Application
Assembly & Shipping
F-1 Employment Authorization

International Student Services Office ~ P.O. Box 1616 ~ Edwardsville ~ IL ~ 62026-1616
Phone: (618) 650-3785 ~ Fax: (618) 650-5099 ~ Email: iss@siue.edu ~ Web: http://www.siue.edu/iss

STEP 1: *Assemble your documents in the following order.*

☐ **$410 Application Fee:** You have the following options:
- *Credit card payment- Use Form G-1450 Authorization for Credit Card Transactions.*
  https://www.uscis.gov/system/files_force/files/form/g-1450.pdf
- *Personal check- Make it payable to: U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security. DO NOT sign the back of the check.*
- *Money order- Can be purchased at the post office or a bank for a small fee.*

☐ **Two NEW passport-style photos:**
Photos used for previous passport or visa applications cannot be used. To see an example,
go to https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/photos/photo-composition-template.html
Use a ballpoint pen (not a gel pen) to print your name and I-94 number on the back of each picture and place them
in a small envelope marked PICTURES.

☐ **Form G-1145: Request for e-Notification**
Use the fillable form that is available online at:
https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/g-1145.pdf

☐ **Form I-765: Application for Employment**

PHOTOCOPIES OF THE FOLLOWING:

☐ **OPT I-20, page 1** (NOT the original)
☐ **OPT I-20, page 2** (NOT the original)
☐ **Passport**
Showing photo & expiration date; include renewal page if applicable
☐ **F-1 Visa Stamp**
☐ **I-94 printout**
Instructions for accessing your most recent one are available at:
http://www.siue.edu/iss/arrival/getting-your-i-94-number.shtml

> *You will receive an email from the Office of International Affairs once your OPT EAD card arrives.*
>
> *You can collect your EAD card in person or email us the name of a friend who will collect the card on your behalf.*

STEP 2: *Make a copy of the documents you are submitting to USCIS for your records.*

STEP 3: Staple your check and picture envelope to the front of the application packet.

STEP 4: *Mail your application.*
Send your completed OPT application packet **with TRACKING** to USCIS:

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:	For Express mail and courier deliveries (FedEx, UPS):
USCIS P.O. Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036	USCIS Attn: AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor, Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034

FAQs

1. When can I start working?

You must wait until you receive your EAD card from USCIS and your start date has arrived to begin working. Once you complete your degree, you cannot work on-campus or off-campus until you receive the EAD and your start date has arrived.

2. What counts as employment?

OPT is intended to enhance your academic program by providing a means to gain experience in your field of study. Work NOT related to your program of study is a violation of F-1 status. Students must work at least 20 hours a week in either a paid or unpaid position to qualify as employment.

3. What happens if I cannot find a job?

During post-completion OPT, students may not accrue a total of more than 90 days of unemployment.

4. What is my status while I am on OPT?

Students on OPT or with a pending OPT application are still in F-1 status and must maintain their F-1 status by following the employment and contact information reporting requirements.

5. Can I travel while I am on OPT?

Yes, travel on OPT is possible if you have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment. To see what documents you will need to re-enter the United States, go to: www.siue.edu/opt/travel

6. What about health insurance?

Students who complete their program of study are no longer eligible for the student health insurance plan administered by SIUE. The Office of International Affairs has information on health insurance plans for students on OPT. We highly recommend you stay insured.

7. What else do I have to do while I am on OPT?

You must report your employment and contact information at www.siue.edu/opt/reporting. All changes should be reported within 10 days.

8. Can I change my start dates?

If you have already submitted your application to USCIS, you cannot change the start dates of your OPT recommendation. If you have not sent your OPT materials, then you may ask your advisor to cancel the previous OPT recommendation. You will then have to provide your international advisor with new dates so that they can recommend your OPT again.

9. What can I do if I've been waiting more than 90 days for my OPT authorization?

After 90 days, you can submit a case for inquiry for "case outside normal processing time" on the USCIS website. Do not submit this inquiry before a full 90 days has passed. If you are unsure, check your I-797 receipt for the date your application was received.

10. What happens if I exceed the 90-day unemployment limit?

After 90 days of unemployment, an F-1 student in the post-completion period loses valid immigration status. While ISS does not report the violation or terminate the SEVIS record, students are encouraged to depart the United States or change status.

11. Can I change employers during OPT?

Yes. As long as the employment is directly related to your field of study, you can work for any and all employers you would like. You must report the new employment to the SEVP OPT Portal.

12. How long can I stay in the U.S. after my post-completion OPT end date?

There is a 60-day grace period following the end of the OPT period. The grace period is only applicable for those who have not exceeded the 90 days of unemployment during the OPT period.

13. May I ask USCIS to expedite processing of my OPT?

No. USCIS allows students to file the OPT application up to 90 days before the program end date. USCIS does not honor expedite requests for OPT. Should you make a request anyway, it might result in longer processing times. You should apply as early as you are able.