



**AUBURN UNIVERSITY
AT MONTGOMERY**

**OFFICE OF
GLOBAL INITIATIVES**

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Steps for Preparing your OPT Application to USCIS:

***NOTE: The following is intended for use by F-1 students who have been issued a recommendation for OPT by Auburn University at Montgomery and is offered by the university's Designated School Officials (DSOs) for informational purposes only. This document does not constitute legal advice. If you desire legal advice for your specific case, please consult a qualified immigration attorney.*

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

- Be enrolled at Auburn University at Montgomery (AUM) for at least (1) one full academic year
- Be in active status with SEVIS
- Be making normal progress towards a degree

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

- A student is able to apply for full-time authorization during annual vacations.
- Degree candidates who have completed all course requirements for degree, but thesis can apply for full-time OPT to be used while they continue to make normal progress towards completing the thesis requirement.
- There are only 12 total months available and any training done before the degree is completed will count against the 12-month total and reduce time available after the degree is awarded.
- Each time you apply for OPT, you will pay the application fee again.

FORMS FOR USCIS APPLICATION:

- **Pay the \$300 nonrefundable STEM fee**
- Completed **I-765 Form**
- Photocopy of OPT I-20 that was issued by AUM within the past 30 days (page 1-3). **MUST SIGN IT.**
- Photocopy of all PRIOR I-20 Forms
- Photocopy of passport identification page
- Photocopy of F-1 visa page
- Two passport-style photos

- Lightly print and sign your name on the back of the photos with pencil.
 - **The photos must meet the following requirements:**
 - *Frame subject with full face, front view, eyes open*
 - *Photo must present full head from top of hair to bottom of chin and measure 1" to 1-3/8"*
 - *Center head within frame*
 - *Background should be plain white or off-white*
 - *Have a natural expression*
 - *Contain no distracting shadows on face or background*
- A printout of your electronic I-94 information, which can be obtained at **CBP.gov/I94**.
- **Payment:** Pay the associated filing fee via check or money order payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" (Do not postdate your check. The date format for your check should be as follows: month/day/year). This amount can change, please double check the instructions for the I-765 to verify the fee amount.
- Completed **G-1145 Form** (optional; it signs you up for email/text message notification of your application's arrival at USCIS)
- Photocopy of previously issued EAD (if applicable).

TIPS TO COMPLETE YOUR OPT APPLICATION:

- **Be sure to sign the Form I-765 with a "manual" or "wet" signature – that is, sign it by hand using blue ink. Do NOT use electronically generated signature images.**
- Do NOT submit original supporting documents with your application! The only original items/materials which should be submitted are the USCIS forms (I-765, and G-1145 if you choose to include it), the check/money order, and the two passport-style photos.
- Do not print your forms or supporting document copies on both sides of the paper – it is best to print single-sided for ease of scanning once your application arrives at USCIS.
- Be sure to make a copy of your completed application and keep it in your records.
- If you received your OPT application I-20 by mail, don't forget to sign and date it before making copies for your application.
- When you have the formal receipt notice from USCIS for your application, please send a copy of the receipt notice to your PDSO/DSO at AUM.
- Remember to submit reports to your PDSO/DSO at AUM any time you have changes in employment, living address, U.S. phone number, etc.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND HELPFUL HINTS DURING OPT:

- You must work a minimum of **20 hours per week** in a position related to your field of study.
- You cannot exceed more than **90 days of unemployment** while on OPT. Days of unemployment prior to your EAD start date do not count towards the 90 days. It is your responsibility to keep records of your employment and any periods of unemployment.
- Avoid long absences from the US during the OPT period. Time spent outside of the US while unemployed by a US employer counts toward your 90 days of unemployment. In most cases,

re-entry to the U.S. will not be possible once students complete their program unless they have been approved for OPT, received their EAD card, and have a valid offer of employment letter. **Travel outside of the United States while an application is pending with USCIS is strongly discouraged.**

- You must not enter the U.S. in a status other than F-1. This may result in the loss of your OPT eligibility.

COMPLETION TIME:

- **The application processing time is usually 3 months.** You should apply no earlier than 90 days before the completion date on your I-20 but you should apply as early as possible.
- Within approximately 21 to 30 working days after the Service Center receives your application packet, you will receive a “Notice of Action” (Form I-797C), verifying they have received your application for OPT. In the top left hand corner, you will see an SRC number that can be used to track the processing status of your application using the following link: <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard/CaseStatus>.

If you have any additional questions, please contact The Office of Global Initiatives at Auburn University at Montgomery.

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