Optional Practical Training:
Filing Instructions and Future Responsibilities for PRE and POST Completion OPT
International Student and Scholar Services/Middlebury College

In order to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT), ISSS offers the recommendations below.

Note: each student is ultimately responsible for filing their own accurate, complete application with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

1. **Attend an OPT workshop with ISSS.**
   Here you will not only be able to view our presentation, but you will get additional details and the benefit of posing questions/hearing responses to other questions that might be of interest. Our OPT presentation can be found online at [http://www.middlebury.edu/international/isss/employment](http://www.middlebury.edu/international/isss/employment).

As you prepare your OPT Request for ISSS, you may have additional questions. Please attend one of our OPT Information Workshops, or OPT Review and Questions Sessions, or come during one of the ISSS Drop-In Advising sessions

2. **Compile your OPT Request** (hard copies).
   The forms below are available on the ISSS website at [http://www.middlebury.edu/international/isss/employment](http://www.middlebury.edu/international/isss/employment) or on the USCIS website at [https://www.uscis.gov/forms](https://www.uscis.gov/forms)

   - **ISSS OPT Intake Form**
     Completed and signed. We must have a month/day/year start date and (end date if requesting pre-completion OPT). For use by the ISSS office only. *This form is not sent to USCIS.*

   - **Original USCIS Form I-765**
     Completed, signed, with all items completed in black ink (typed or printed legibly).
     
     To obtain the most current form, visit the [USCIS website](https://www.uscis.gov/forms). Use the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader and filling it out on a PC is best. Read all USCIS instructions provided before completing the form. Additional Form I-765 Filing Tips are included on pages 3-5 of this document

     *Note: even if you do not need all 7 pages of the application, you should submit all 7 pages to USCIS.*

   - **Original USCIS Form G-1145 e-Notification of Application.**
     This USCIS form is optional but highly recommended if you want to receive an email or text that your application has been accepted at a USCIS Lockbox facility.

   - **Money order** (preferred) or check for US $410 made payable to *U.S. Department of Homeland Security.*
     The money order/check must be from a financial institution based in the U.S. and payable in U.S. currency.
     
     Do not write any abbreviations (such as DHS). The name must be spelled out in full. Please confirm the current filing fee before submitting your application. Make sure that your name, address and date of birth appear on the document. Use the MONTH/DAY/YEAR format when dating checks.

     While it is possible to pay your filing fee using a credit card, ISSS does not recommend it.
☐ 1 Copy of Passport Identification Page.
   This includes any additional pages that confirm the document’s most current date of expiration.

☐ 1 Copy of your most recent F-1 Visa (if applicable).

☐ 1 Copy of your Current I-94 Card front and back or Electronic I-94 Record.
   Obtain this document using your passport ID page at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/. Do not include the travel history.

☐ 1 Copy of your most recent F-1 Entry Stamp for admission into the U.S. (if you have one).

☐ 2 Passport Photos, to USCIS specifications (see below).
   Write your name and date of birth and SEVIS ID # on the back of each in pencil.

☐ 1 copy of any previous EADs (Employment Authorization Document), front and backsides, if applicable.
   If you do not have these documents, write a short letter of explanation including approved start and end dates.

☐ 1 copy of all previous I-20 Forms (pages 1 and 2).

☐ For students who will have completed the one-year requirement based on your F-1 status now and a previous valid nonimmigrant status only:
   You must include evidence of having been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis in the prior status as well as any proof of a change of status to F-1.

3. Submit your complete OPT Request to ISSS.
   Drop off your completed OPT Request to ISSS during our working hours of 8:30 am to 5:00 pm with the ISSS Specialist in Office 201. An ISSS Advisor will review and process your request; please allow up to 5-7 business days for processing.

4. Pick up your updated Form I-20 from ISSS.
   ISSS will send you an email when your OPT I-20 is ready. Sign the student attestation section on page 1. Confirm the dates recommended for OPT on page 2 – these cannot be changed once submitted to USCIS. You will include a copy of this updated I-20 in your application. Keep the original Form I-20 with the OPT recommendation as your most current I-20.

5. ASSEMBLE THE OPT APPLICATION DOCUMENTS before mailing:
   Refer to the USCIS website regarding the filing of the I-765. Review the Checklist and follow both the General Requirements as well as the Student Seeking Pre- or Post-Completion guidance on the list.

As of February 18, 2019, according to USCIS, you should submit your documents as follows:
   • Check or Money Order for Filing Fee,
   • 2 Photographs that meet USCIS requirements (with name and date of birth and SEVIS ID # in pencil on back) – see note for USCIS Photo Specifications below #7 on page 3
   • Properly Signed and Dated Form I-765 Application (printed single sided)
   • Form G-1145 (if you want to be notified electronically)
   • Photocopy of new I-20 with DSO recommendation of OPT (signed and dated)
   • Photocopies of all previous I-20s
6. **BEFORE mailing, make a copy or SCAN of your entire OPT packet (I-765 and accompanying materials).**
   Keep this for your personal records.

7. **Mail your completed OPT application to the USCIS Dallas Lockbox.**
   Write “I-765 - OPT Application” on the front of the envelope. We recommend sending your application by an express mail service such as UPS (available at Mailing Services in the basement of the Freeman International Center building) or FedEx. Express mail enables you to track (and verify receipt of) your application.

   **USCIS must receive your OPT application with Form I-765 within 30 days of the date that your DSO enters the recommendation for OPT into your SEVIS record. If you fail to do so, USCIS will deny your OPT request.**

   **On the FRONT of the envelope, write the form number and nature of submission (Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization: OPT)**
   **DO NOT use a signature upon delivery option (because USCIS may not “sign” for the package).**

   **USCIS PHOTO SPECIFICATIONS:** you must submit two identical color pass-port style photographs of yourself taken recently. For specific details, please refer to the Form I-765 Instructions. Using pencil or felt pen, lightly print your name and date of birth on the back of the photo.

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**Additional Form I-765 Filing Tips:**

**PART 1)**

>> **REASON FOR APPLYING**

Refer to page 3 of the USCIS Form I-765 instructions for information on how to complete the form based on the Foreign Students Category. Students who have never applied for OPT at this educational level would choose INITIAL.

**PART 2)**

>> **YOUR FULL LEGAL NAME**

List your full legal name in lieu of any preferred names.
YOUR U.S. MAILING ADDRESS
Use a valid, U.S. address as this is where USCIS will send notices, the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and Social Security Number (SSN) (if requested). Many students use the ISSS office’s address as it is permanent.

In care of: Middlebury College, ISSS
Street Address: 84 S. Service Rd.
Town: Middlebury
State: VT
Zip Code: 05753
** If you use the ISSS mailing address and want to change your address on record with USCIS afterwards, please contact ISSS first before taking action so that you have a clear understanding of the implications of this action.

OTHER INFORMATION
Question 8: If you are renewing your EAD, the Alien Registration Number (A-Number) may be listed as the USCIS Number on the front of the card. If you have more than one A-Number, use the space provided in Part 6. Additional Information to provide the information. If you do not have an A-Number or if you cannot remember it, leave this space blank.

Question 12: If you have applied for employment authorization in the past, select YES. Provide copies of all previous EADs, front and back side.

Question 13a: Everyone must answer question 13a. It asks if the Social Security Administration (SSA) has ever officially issued you a Social Security card.

Question 14: If you answer No, you can skip ahead to Part 2, Question 18a.

You do have the option of applying for an SSN or requesting a replacement SSN if your original card was lost or stolen. You should receive your SSN within a week after your I-765 application is approved.

YOUR COUNTRY OR COUNTRIES OF CITIZENSHIP
• If you are stateless, use the name of the country where you were last a citizen or national.
• If you are a citizen or national of more than one country, use the name of the foreign country that issued your last passport.

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR LAST ARRIVAL IN THE U.S.

Question 21b: Use your passport information.

Question 21c: Most of you will be able to answer 21b with your passport information. In this case, you can write NONE for 21c. This is only to be used if you have a travel document other than a passport.

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY
Question 27: The pre-completion category is C 3 A. The post-completion category is C 3 B. You do not need to complete numbers 28 through 31 (this is only for STEM).

PART 3)
APPLICANT’S STATEMENT
Select the appropriate box. Most students will choose 1a.
>> APPLICANT’S CONTACT INFORMATION
For questions 3 to 5, use your contact information. If you do not have a phone number for question 3, use the ISSS number at 802-443-5858.

>> APPLICANT’S SIGNATURE
Sign your name in the box (black ink) for 7a and make sure that your signature stays in the box. USCIS will not accept a stamped or typewritten name in place of a signature.

DO NOT COMPLETE PARTS 4 OR 5. These are only used if the applicant uses an interpreter or preparer (attorney).

PART 6)
** FOR ANYONE WHO IS FILING A RENEWAL (i.e. a second request for employment at the same educational level): List all previously issued SEVIS numbers (the N number found on your Form I-20s), all periods of CPT and all periods of OPT as well as the educational level at which they were authorized. Since there are no clear USCIS instructions on how to list this information, consider the following method:

Page Number: 2
Part Number: 2
Item Number: 12
SEVIS ID N000000000000 (use your specific number)
MM/DD/YYYY to MM/DD/YYYY
Bachelors Level
Pre-completion OPT (or if CPT, list that as the type of employment authorization)

Answer all questions fully and accurately. If a question does not apply to you, type or print N/A, or NONE for questions requiring a numeric response, unless otherwise directed. If the form will not allow you to type N/A, you can type NOT APPLICABLE.

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APPROVAL PROCESS
Within a few weeks, USCIS will send a “Notice of Action” to confirm receipt of your application. With this form, you can check the status of your case online at www.uscis.gov. For any further correspondence to USCIS about your OPT application, always include a copy of your Notice of Action. If your application is incomplete, USCIS may deny your application completely or send a blue Request for Evidence (RFE) form. You must include this form (a copy is fine) when you return the evidence requested. Consult with ISSS to confirm that you are responding appropriately.

• If you call USCIS to inquire about your case, make sure you state “I do not wish to change my address of record” to avoid mailing complications.

• If you use the ISSS mailing address: ISSS will notify you by email when your EAD has arrived, and you can specify how you want to receive your card from ISSS at that time. Please notify ISSS immediately if you notice any errors on your EAD.

Once you receive the EAD, you are authorized to work during the time period specified on the card. Your employer will need to see the card to prove that you are eligible for employment. ISSS recommends that you make copies of both sides of your EAD. A lost or misplaced card cannot be quickly or easily replaced.
REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:
During your approved OPT period, you remain in F-1 student status under the sponsorship of Middlebury College. To maintain your F-1 status, you are required by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to:

- Report any changes in your U.S. address or legal name to ISSS within 10 days of the change occurring.
- Report all new employment. This includes providing a statement on how your employment is directly related to your Middlebury major field of study. If you do not report, then it will appear in SEVIS that you are unemployed.
- Report all changes in employment (i.e. ending a job, leaving the U.S. and ending OPT).
- Maintain a valid signature on page 2 of your Form I-20. Contact ISSS via email at least two months prior to your signature expiring to request that an updated document be mailed to you.
- Inform ISSS if you change to another visa status or plan to transfer to another U.S. academic institution.

There are two ways for you to report your Address Update, New Employment Update and Change of Employment Update:

1) Via the ISSS online forms. Visit http://www.middlebury.edu/international/iss and scroll to the bottom of the page. In the blue SEVIS Updates and Forms box, you will find the three relevant update forms.

2) Via the Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Portal

FOR STUDENTS ON POST-COMPLETION OPT ONLY: This is a new reporting option that is not yet mandatory yet encouraged as you can manage the reporting of your information.

On March 23, 2018, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) launched the new SEVP Portal to allow F-1 students who are currently in an active period of OPT or STEM-OPT the option of reporting information directly to SEVP themselves, after establishing a SEVP Portal account.

You will receive an email with more information from do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov to the email address that is currently listed in your SEVIS record. If you do not receive the email in your inbox, check your spam or junk mail folder. This is also a great time to ensure that your preferred email address is up-to-date in your SEVIS record. If you have recently changed your email address, please notify ISSS at iss@middlebury.edu, and we will update your SEVIS record.

With the SEVP Portal, you will be eligible to update specific information, such as address, telephone number, and employer information, after you create a SEVP Portal account.

If you are interested in learning more about the SEVP Portal, we recommend that you visit the SEVP Portal Help section on the Study in the States website. This webpage features a SEVP Portal User Guide, videos and a one-page reference sheet. You can access this website by using the following link: https://studyinthesates.dhs.gov/sevp-portal-help

We expect that SEVP will require the use of the portal for updates in the future. For now, we provide this information so you are aware of this new SEVIS development. Please let us know if you have any questions.
Travel Advisory for Graduating Seniors

ISSS recommends that you do not travel outside of the U.S. while your OPT application is pending approval. If you must travel, please discuss this with ISSS before departing the U.S.

Once your OPT has been approved, you may travel outside of the U.S. before and during your OPT period. You must present the following documents at the U.S. port of entry upon your return:

- Form I-20 endorsed for OPT on page 2 with a valid travel signature from ISSS
- Valid F-1 visa
- Valid Passport (for at least six months into the future)
- Valid Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
- Proof of employment/Employer letter

If your F-1 visa has expired, you will need to apply for a new F-1 visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your home country to re-enter the U.S. You may be required to show documentation that you have a job to return to and sufficient income or funds to cover your living expenses.

Travel to Canada, Mexico or an adjacent islands with an expired F-1 visa: Because immigration regulations are constantly changing, if you consider traveling to one of these places while on OPT, please consult with ISSS first.

If you re-enter the United States through the Visa Waiver program or with a tourist visa, you will not be authorized to work even if you have a valid EAD. You must be in F-1 status in order for this card and your authorization to remain valid. Your I-94 record is proof that you have arrived in the U.S. in a specific status.

While you are authorized to engage in OPT, you continue to be in F-1 status. Please be aware that you may need to file federal and possibly state income tax forms as required.

Students on post-completion OPT who are eligible to apply for a 24-month STEM-extension must do so BEFORE their post-completion OPT end date. Students may apply as early as 90 days before their OPT end date. OPT will automatically be extended for up to 180 days while the STEM OPT application is pending. ISSS recommends that students apply for STEM at least 2 weeks before their OPT EAD end date. Contact ISSS as soon as you know you would like to apply.

Students may apply as early as 90 days before their OPT end date. OPT will automatically be extended for up to 180 days while the STEM OPT application is pending. ISSS recommends that students apply for STEM at least 2 weeks before their OPT EAD end date. Contact ISSS as soon as you know you would like to apply.

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LIFE AFTER OPT

After your OPT EAD end date, you will have a 60-day grace period during which time you can depart the U.S. or transfer to another SEVIS-approved institution. Once you depart the U.S., whether it’s on day 6 or 60 of your grace period, you will not be able to use your Form I-20 from Middlebury for reentry. If you request to have your SEVIS record transferred to a new institution during your valid OPT period, you will lose any remaining OPT time for which you have been approved. You cannot engage in employment during your 60-day grace period.

Please contact the ISSS office at isss@middlebury.edu if you have questions.