Optional Practical Training (OPT):
Guidance for Filing and Mailing
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 and complete application with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Students must be in the U.S. in F-1 student status to apply for OPT.

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).
   
   If you have additional questions, please stop by during drop in hours and/or schedule an appointment to meet with an advisor.

2. **Compile your OPT Request**
   >>> MAKE ALL DOCUMENTS SINGLE SIDED TO ENSURE ACCURATE USCIS PROCESSING. <<<

   The required ISSS OPT Intake Form and a link to the USCIS Form I-765 is available on the ISSS website at: [http://www.middlebury.edu/international/isss/employment](http://www.middlebury.edu/international/isss/employment). The USCIS I-765 and G-1145 forms are also available at: [https://www.uscis.gov/forms](https://www.uscis.gov/forms).

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

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

   - **Original USCIS Form I-765**
     Completed, signed, with all items completed in **black** (typed or printed legibly). Please note that typing the form provides greater clarity and accuracy on forms that will be scanned by USCIS.

     To obtain the most current form, visit the [USCIS website](https://www.uscis.gov/forms). Use the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader. Filling it out on a **PC computer** is best. (Students have encountered problems with date entries and other details when using a Mac). Read all USCIS instructions provided before completing the form. Additional guidance to complete Form I-765 is included on pages 3-4 of this document.

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

   - **1 Copy of Passport Identification Page.**
     This includes any additional pages that confirm the document’s validity dates.

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

   - **1 Copy** of your **Electronic I-94 Record** or **Current I-94 Card (front and back)** if you have a hard copy card.
Access this document using your passport ID page at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/ and print it. 
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).

☐ 1 copy of any previous EAD (Employment Authorization Document) cards (front and back), if applicable. If you misplaced your EAD, write a short letter of explanation, including approved start and end dates.

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

You do not need to submit the 3 items below to ISSS with your ISSS OPT Request.

☐ Money order (preferred) or check for the appropriate fee amount made payable to: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

- Confirm current filing fee at: https://www.uscis.gov/i-765 before submitting your application.
- The money order/check must be from a U.S.-based financial institution and payable in U.S. currency.
- Do not write any abbreviations (such as DHS). The name must be spelled out in full.
- Make sure that your name, address and date of birth appear on the document.
- Use the MONTH/DAY/YEAR (MM/DD/YYYY) format when dating checks.

☐ 2 Photos, USCIS PHOTO SPECIFICATIONS: you must submit two identical color, 2x2 inch, passport-style photographs, taken recently (ideally within the past 30 days). For specific details, please refer to the Form I-765 Instructions. Using pencil, lightly print your name and SEVIS ID# on the back of the photo. NOTE: Photos can be obtained locally at the US Postal Service, the UPS Store, and Kinney Drugs in Middlebury.

☐ For students who have not been in continuous F-1 status for a full year and will complete the 1-year requirement based on your F-1 status now and a previous valid nonimmigrant status: You must include evidence of having been lawfully enrolled as a student on a full-time basis in the prior status as well as any proof of a change of status to F-1. Ask ISSS if you have questions.

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 International Services Specialist in Office 201. An ISSS Advisor will review and process your request. Please anticipate up to 5-10 business days for processing.

4. Pick up your updated Form I-20 from ISSS.
ISSS will send you an email when your I-20 with the OPT recommendation 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. See page 5.

6. Carefully read page 6 for Nest Steps After Mailing.
Additional Form I-765 Filing Guidance

PART 1)
>> REASON FOR APPLYING
See the USCIS Form I-765 instructions for how to complete the form based on the Foreign Students Category.

PART 2)
>> YOUR FULL LEGAL NAME
List your full legal name instead 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 ISSS’s address as it is permanent.

5a: Middlebury College ISSS
5b: 14 Old Chapel Road
5c:
5d: Middlebury
5e: VT 5f: 05753
6: No

** 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.

>> YOUR U.S. PHYSICAL ADDRESS
Use a valid, U.S. address for where you are physically living. If you live on the Middlebury College campus, use:

7a: 14 Old Chapel Rd MC XXXX (insert your box number)
7b: Leave blank
7c: Middlebury
7d: VT 7e: 05753

>> OTHER INFORMATION
Question 8: If you have applied for a USCIS benefit before (such as pre-completion OPT), then you may have an A-Number. If you have one, you will find it at the top of your EAD card mailer or located under the USCIS # heading on your EAD card.) If you have not, then you can leave this question blank.

Question 9: If you have never created a USCIS On-line account number (most Middlebury College undergraduates probably have not), then you can leave this question blank.

Question 12: If you have applied for employment authorization in the past, select YES. Provide copies of all previous EADs, front and backside. (You will also have to provide additional information in PART 6.)

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

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

Via this form, you have the option of applying for an SSN or requesting a replacement SSN if your original card was lost or stolen. If so, you should receive your SSN within 2 weeks 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 and that matches what is referenced in SEVIS on your I-20.

>> 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.

NOTE: 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, you may 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 fits within 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 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:

1. Family Name, Given Name, Middle Name (as listed in your passport and on the I-765)
2. A-Number (if any)—you can find it under the USCIS # on your EAD card or at the top of the EAD card mailer.
3a. Page Number: 2 3b. Part Number: 2 3c. Item Number: 12
3d. (provide the additional information):
   SEVIS ID N0000000000000 (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)

FINAL REMINDER:
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.
MAILING INSTRUCTIONS FOR OPT I-765 APPLICATIONS

1. ASSEMBLE THE OPT APPLICATION DOCUMENTS before mailing:

Refer to the USCIS website regarding the filing of the I-765. Review the Checklist. Follow the General Requirements as well as the Student Seeking Pre- or Post-Completion guidance on the list.

As of November 15, 2019, according to USCIS, you should submit your documents as follows:

Please note: Use a paper clip instead of staples to attach documents together.

>> MAKE ALL DOCUMENTS SINGLE SIDED TO ENSURE ACCURATE USCIS PROCESSING <<

- Check or Money Order for Filing Fee,
- 2 Photos that meet USCIS requirements (see page 2)
- Original Form G-1145 (if you want USCIS to notify you electronically)—properly signed and dated
- Original Form I-765 Application—properly signed and dated
- Copy of new I-20 with DSO recommendation of OPT—signed and dated by you and ISSS staff
- Copy of previous EAD cards (if you used OPT before)—both sides
- Printout of most recent I-94 record
- Copy of passport ID page(s), including validity dates, and most recent entry stamp, if available
- Copy of your F-1 visa (not required for citizens of Bermuda or Canada)
- Copies of all previous I-20s, both sides

2. BEFORE mailing, make a copy or SCAN of your entire OPT packet (I-765 and accompanying materials).

Keep this duplicate packet for your personal records, as you may need to refer to it in the future.

3. Mail the completed OPT application to the USCIS Dallas Lockbox (used for applicant addresses in Vermont).

Note: Mailing addresses for I-765 can change without notice. So, before mailing, verify the address on the USCIS website: https://www.uscis.gov/i-765 under “Where to File.”

On the front of the envelope you place inside the express mail envelope write: “I-765 - OPT Application.”

- For I-765 mailing information, see: https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses
- For the specific lockbox address you should use, see:
  https://www.uscis.gov/forms/forms-information/uscis-phoenix-and-dallas-lockbox-facilities
  
For FedEx, UPS and DHL express mail Deliveries:  For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries

USCIS  PO Box 660867
Attn: NFB AOS  Dallas, Texas 75266
2501S. State Hwy.121 Business, Suite 400  
Lewisville, Texas 75067

NOTE: USCIS must receive your OPT application, along with Form I-765, within 30 days of the date that your DSO enters the recommendation in your SEVIS record. Be sure to submit to USCIS within 30 days.

ISSS recommends sending your application by an express mail service such as UPS (available at Mailing Services in the Freeman International Center building) or FedEx that offer package tracking.

If you mail via US Postal Service (USPS), be sure to request a method with a tracking number.

DO NOT use a “signature upon delivery” option because USCIS may not “sign” for the package.
Next Steps After Mailing

Receipt Notice
Within a few weeks, USCIS will send an I-797 “Notice of Action” to confirm receipt of your application. With your case number from this form, you can check the status of your case online at www.uscis.gov. (USCIS only updates the site when action is taken.) ISSS will notify you by email when your receipt notice has arrived.

Approval Notice/Employment Authorization Card
OPT applications can take a significant amount of time for USCIS to process, please see their website for current estimated processing times. Upon approval your Employment Authorization Card (EAC) will be mailed to the ISSS office. ISSS will email you a notification along with instructions on how to get the EAC to you. Once you receive your EAC, double check it for any errors. Please notify ISSS immediately if you notice any errors on your EAC. Additionally, upon OPT approval, USCIS will email you a link to activate your SEVIS Portal Account. If you add the USCIS email address to your contacts, important messages from them will not be filtered into your spam or junk mail.

Travel Advice
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 (within 6 months)
- Valid F-1 visa (not required for citizens of Bermuda and Canada)
- Valid Passport (for at least six months into the future)
- Valid Employment Authorization Document (EAD) – (not required, yet highly recommended)
- 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 use for re-entry to 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.

Please do not enter the US in any other visa category. If you re-enter the United States through the Visa Waiver program or with a tourist visa, or any other visa status, 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.

International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS)
http://www.middlebury.edu/international/isss
802-443-5858
issss@middlebury.edu