

International Student & Scholar Services

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phone 612-330-1659

campus box 68

location Oyaté Commons, Christensen Center



F-1 OPT Advising Handout

OPT is short for Optional Practical Training and an immigration benefit available to F-1 students. Students can apply for OPT without a job offer, it is a benefit of having F-1 Status. The required application fee is \$410. Your immigration status is still tied to Augsburg University. Some other basic details to keep in mind:

- You can do OPT at each degree level of education you receive

- There are specific qualifying STEM majors that are eligible for a 24-month STEM Extension

- If you choose not to do OPT, you have a 60-day grace period after graduation to be in the United States in F-1 Status.

- OPT can be both paid and unpaid training. You can have multiple positions at one time or throughout your year or at a time as long as they are related to your major field of study at Augsburg.

Post Completion OPT General Information

Post-Completion OPT refers to doing OPT after graduation. Students are eligible for full-time employment. For post-completion OPT, you may apply no earlier than 90 days before or as late as 60 days after the I-20 program end date. But remember: it may take 60 to 90 days, sometimes more, to process your request.

- You will need to have OPT recommended in SEVIS by an International Student Advisor and receive approval from United States Citizen & Immigration Services (USCIS) in order to obtain a work permit, that is called an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

- You are only allowed to work in a job directly connected to your major field of study.

- You may only start work after you receive your EAD physical card and during the authorized 12-month period which appears on the EAD.

- You are allowed a total of 90 days of unemployment during the 12 month OPT authorization which appears on your EAD. OPT terminates automatically once you go beyond 90 days of unemployment.

Travel While on OPT

- You need a valid Form I-20 signed for reentry within 6 months of the reentry date, a valid F-1 visa and you should carry your EAD card and letter from your employer to present upon request at the port of entry.

- Students who travel on Post-Completion OPT may face a higher risk of denial upon re-entry into the U.S. Before making a commitment to travel outside the U.S. while OPT is pending or once approved, please consult your Augsburg International Student Advisor in advance for detailed instructions and guidance.

School Transfer During OPT

Your authorized OPT is affiliated with your F-1 student status at Augsburg University. If you are admitted to another school in the United States and plan to have your SEVIS record, please consult your Augsburg International Student Advisor for procedures and guidance. Please note: any remaining OPT will automatically become void once your SEVIS record is transferred to the new school.

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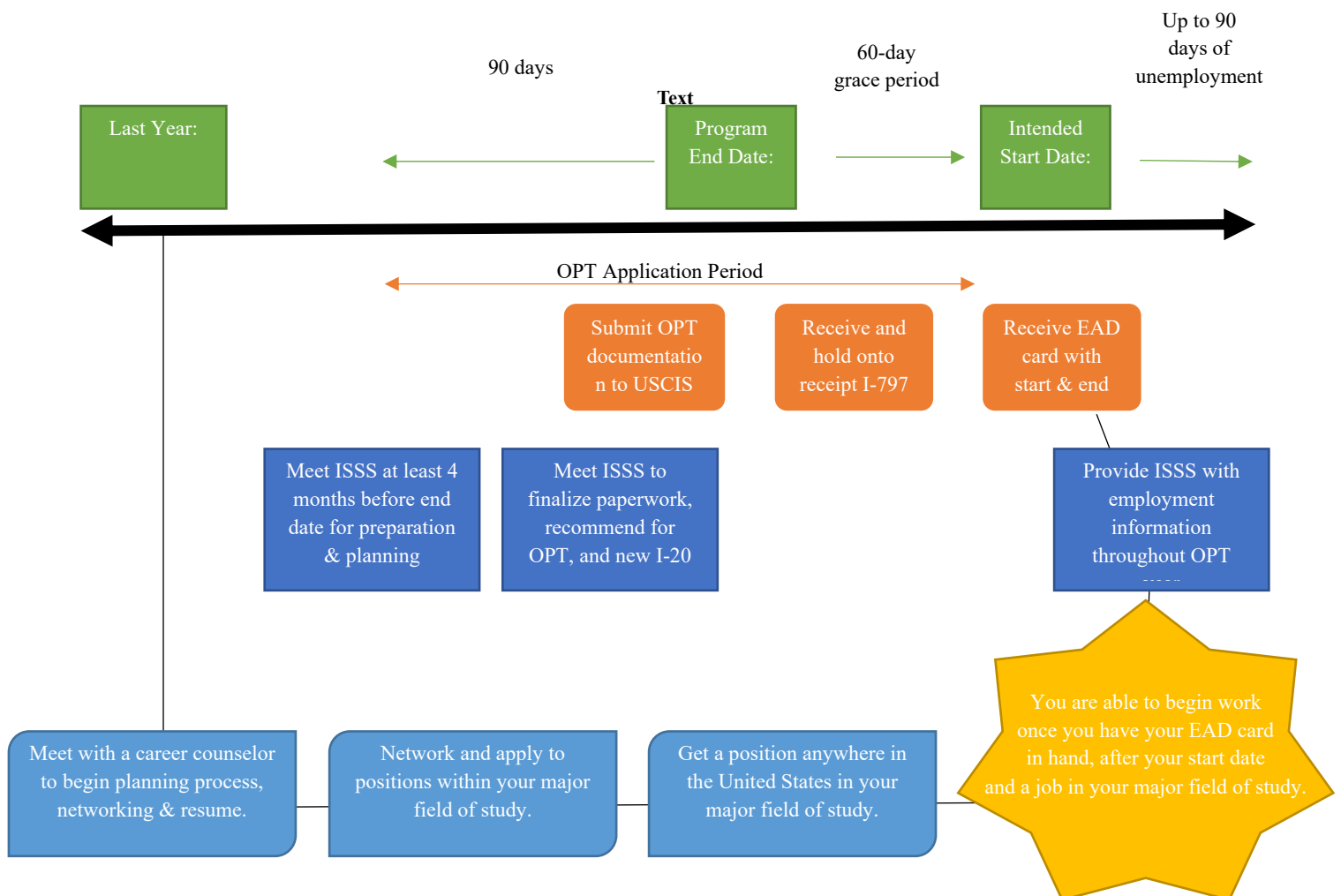
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F-1 OPT Packet Checklist

Please Bring all of these items to your DSO in your final meeting. This will result in having a more prepared application. You can send the I-765 by email before the final meeting so that we check for corrections.

For your Advisor/DSO

Complete an **Intent to Graduate Form** with Academic Advising & Registrar's office to confirm graduation timeline the semester before your final semester.

Complete **OPT Request and Verification Form** (below) and indicate the expected program completion date on the form as well as your EAD start/end date. Note: Your EAD start date can be as early as the next day after your program end or as late as the 60th day after your program end. The EAD end date will be a year from the chosen start date. Your I-20 program end date needs to match the final day on which you completed your final graduation requirement; it is common for your International Student Advisor to need to shorten the program end date of the I-20 before recommending OPT.

For your OPT Application to USCIS

This is your responsibility to do this properly, but your International Student Advisor will double check all of this for you when you come prepared for your OPT Meeting. This is in order of what should be on the top to the bottom of the packet.

Write a check or obtain a money order for the Form I-765 filing fee (\$410), made payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security."

Obtain two identical immigration-style photos taken within 30 days of filing I-765. Write your name and SEVIS ID number *lightly* on the back and place in an envelope, also labeled with name and SEVIS ID.

Complete [Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#)

Important Reminders:

- **Part 2.5(US Mailing Address):** Because the post office does not forward USCIS mail, be sure the address used on the I-765 will be valid for at least 120 days. Notify your International Student Advisor immediately if you have a planned/unplanned change of address while your OPT is pending, as you will need to take specific steps to make sure the update is made with USCIS.
- Marked with the proper code at **Part 2.27**:
 - ✓ (c)(3)(A) for pre-completion OPT
 - ✓ (c)(3)(B) for standard post-completion OPT
- **The signature** that appears on the EAD card is scanned directly from the I-765. If any part of the signature crosses the line on which students are supposed to sign, the signature can be rejected.
- You may also apply for a **Social Security Number** or a replacement card. Once approved for the EAD, you will receive a SSC within two weeks.

Photocopy all prior Forms I-20 with most current on top (we will add the current I-20 here).

Photocopy any previous employment authorization documents (EAD's) if any.

Photocopy Form I-94 (both sides) or online version (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>), passport ID page, pages showing amendments such as name changes, most current visa page (even if expired)

Final Steps

Set up an appointment with DSO and request a new Form I-20 with the OPT Recommendation.

Make any additional copy of documents you are submitting.

Mail the OPT application package to [USCIS](#) within 30 days from the DSO's OPT recommendation date.

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries
Make sure to send the mail certified:

USCIS Chicago Lockbox
USCIS
PO BOX 805373
Chicago, IL 60680

For FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries

USCIS
Attn.: I-765 C03
131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor
Chicago, IL 60680 - 5517

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F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) Student Request & Faculty Advisor's Verification Form

Completed by the Student

Last Name _____ First Name _____ Augsburg ID _____

Field of Study _____ Date of Birth mm/dd/yyyy ____/____/____

Phone _____ Personal Email _____

Estimate OPT Start Date mm/dd/yyyy ____/____/____ OPT End Date mm/dd/yyyy ____/____/____

Note: 1) You can choose your OPT start date as early as the first day or as late as 60 days after completing your program. The accumulation of 90 days of unemployment will begin accruing on the OPT start date you choose.

2) You cannot work on campus upon your completion/graduation date, unless you have received your Employment Authorization Document/card and your employment starts on or after your OPT start date.

3) Your on or off campus employment has to be directly related to your course of study and must be at least 20 hours per week to be considered full time.

By signing and dating below, I hereby agree and understand that it is my responsibility to not engage in unauthorized employment. If there are any changes in my employment, I will report to Augsburg ISSS Office immediately.

Student signature _____ Date _____

Completed by the Faculty Advisor

Student's Field of Study _____ Program Level: Bachelors Masters

Expected Completion of Program: ____/____/____ *Note: Please refer to the following list for specific dates.***UNDERGRADUATE**

- Last day of final exams in graduating semester **

MASTER'S – THESIS

- Thesis defense date * or,
- Thesis submission date * or,
- Last day of final exams in graduating semester **

MASTER'S – COMPREHENSIVE**EXAM**

- Comprehensive exam date or,
- Last day of final exams in graduating semester **

MASTER'S - OTHER

- Last day of final exams in graduating semesters **

*Note: You **must** be enrolled in the semester in which you graduate, including summer.*

Faculty Advisor Name *please print* _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Signature _____ Date _____

F-1 OPT DSO Procedures and Post-Application Advising

DSO will meet with the student to prepare for the OPT process at least one month before the application and advise on a variety of topics including OPT start date. DSO will meet with the student once they have all of their items for the OPT application package completed between 90 – 120 days before fulfilling their final graduation requirement and complete the following items.

Once approved for OPT, DSO will continue to be the advisor to the student, as their status is still connected to Augsburg University. Student must report any changes of address or interruption or change in employment during the time it is authorized and must receive travel signatures from the DSO. The DSO will make sure the employment is within the major field of study.

DSO Procedures

Carefully review the information provided by the student.

Make sure Address on I-765 will be valid during the time the EAD could possibly arrive (60 – 120 days)

Determine if the student is eligible for the given type and period of OPT.

Advise the student on their responsibilities for maintaining status:

- Pending Period of OPT – Watching mail, tracking online, & check deposit

- Timeline of work during EAD validity

- Only work in major field of study

- Cannot be unemployed more than 90 days total during EAD card dates

- Requirements for travel and reentry

- Termination of OPT

- Health Insurance

Update Student SEVIS record with the recommendation for OPT

Print, sign & copy new I-20, with page 2 reflecting OPT recommendation.

Instruct students on how to submit to USCIS and filing deadlines (30 days from recommendation)

OPT Application Period

Submit application within 30 days of DSO designation, and no more than 90 days before your program end date.

Within 3 weeks of submission, you should see your check cashed. Make sure you keep enough money in your bank account until they take the check.

After they receive it, they will send you a receipt. Keep this as you will be able to track your status on the [Case Status](#) website. You want to make sure you get this so you can track your receipt, and make sure they have your address correct.

When you are able to receive your EAD card, you will receive an approval notice, then a few days later, your card will come in a small package.

Bring a copy of your EAD to your DSO and make sure to follow the procedures to report your employment.