

# YOU HAVE BEEN RECOMMENDED FOR OPT...NOW WHAT?

## **NEW I-20:**

In approximately 2-3 business days, you will receive an email from OISS notifying you that your new OPT recommendation I-20 is ready for pick up.

## **FINAL PREPARATIONS:**

Pick up your new I-20 as soon as possible during OISS business hours (8am-5pm, M-F) and do the following:

- Sign the I-20 at the bottom of page 1.
- Photocopy pages 1 and 3 of the new, signed I-20.
- Add your photocopied I-20 (not the original!) to your application packet.
- Mail your OPT application to USCIS. *Note: your OPT application **must** be received by USCIS within 30 days of the date the OPT recommendation I-20 was created.*

## **CHECKLIST FOR MAILING OUT YOUR APPLICATION TO USCIS:**

USCIS **must** receive your completed OPT application within 30 days of I-20 issuance.

- PHOTOCOPY of all pages of your **new I-20 endorsed for OPT**. (Do not send the original). Make sure to sign your new I-20 before you make the photocopy.
- Completed **I-765 form**.
- Completed **G-1145 form**.
- Photocopy of both sides of your **I-94 card**.
- Photocopy of the picture page/expiration date of your **passport**.
- Photocopy of your **U.S. Visa page**.
- Photocopies of all I-20s showing previous **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)** Authorization(s).
- 2** full frontal/passport **photos** (See example on page 2). Gently print your name and SEVIS number on the back of each photo.
- \$380.00** check or money order made payable to: **Department of Homeland Security** (do not abbreviate).

## **HOW TO MAIL:**

We recommend using either USPS Certified Mail (OISS will provide a pre-addressed envelope) or a courier service (FedEx, DHL, UPS etc) to mail your OPT application to USCIS. Certified mail is cheaper but slower, courier service is faster, but more expensive. Courier service will only speed up your application process by a few days.

## **RECEIPT NOTICE:**

If you include Form G-1145, USCIS will notify you within 48 hours of accepting your immigration form(s) via email and/or cell phone number. The message will provide a receipt number as information but will not constitute official notice of acceptance. The email notice will also provide a brief statement on how to get additional information about the status of your case. The email or text message does not grant any immigration status or benefit. You may not present a copy of the email or text message as evidence that USCIS has granted you any immigration status or benefit. Approximately 6 weeks after your application is mailed, you will receive a paper copy Receipt Notice from USCIS. This is your proof of application. It will state when your application was received and give you an application number. You can use the application number to check your application status at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov). **NOTE: If you receive OISS email for document pick up, please come in or call immediately. USCIS requests can be time sensitive.**

## **OPT APPROVAL:**

Approximately 90 days after your application is received, you will receive your EAD card (Employment Authorization Document), also called an OPT card. This is your approval. Once you have your EAD card and the start date has been reached, you may begin employment. **NOTE: If you do not use the OISS address as your OPT mailing address, you must provide OISS with a photocopy of your EAD card immediately after you receive it.**

## **UNEMPLOYMENT LIMITATIONS:**

You will have 90 days from the start date of your EAD card to begin employment. The minimum threshold for "employment" during regular OPT is work related to your field of study that engages you for a minimum of 20 hours per week. The work may be paid or unpaid.

### **EMPLOYMENT REPORTING:**

Once you find employment, you **must** report the name, and address of employer, and start date of employment at: <http://oiss.isp.msu.edu/students/employ/opt/optesf.htm>. If there is ever a **change or interruption** in your employment status, you **must** notify OISS immediately.

### **PERSONAL REPORTING:**

While on OPT, you **must** continue to update MSU regarding your residential address. Your address **must** describe where you live. It **cannot** be a P.O. Box or an office address. Visit <http://www.reg.msu.edu>, click on “Address Changes” and use “local address” to report the change.

### **HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE:**

Many times students on OPT do not go directly into a job where insurance coverage is provided. If you do not have access to other health insurance options during this interim period, you may extend your MSU student coverage by purchasing additional months. Contact the MSU Benefits Office for more information: 140 Nisbet Building, 517-353-4434.

### **TRAVEL:**

If you leave the U.S. and wish to return after the program completion date given by your academic advisor during the OPT application process (which then becomes the program end date on your I-20), you must show special documentation in order to return.

- **If your OPT is pending (not yet approved), you will need the following upon reentry to the U.S.:**
  - Valid passport
  - Valid F-1 visa stamp
  - I-20 with OPT recommendation and recent travel signature (within past 6 months)
  - OPT Receipt Notice (proof of application)
- **If your OPT is approved, you will need the following upon reentry to the U.S.:**
  - Valid passport
  - Valid F-1 visa stamp
  - I-20 with OPT recommendation and recent travel signature (within past 6 months)
  - Unexpired EAD card
  - Proof of employment (offer letter or employment confirmation letter from employer)

If you have an expired F-1 visa stamp and you plan to make a short trip to Canada, Mexico, or adjacent (Caribbean) islands, consult an OISS advisor or visit our page on Automatic Revalidation:

[http://www.oiss.msu.edu/students\\_travel\\_autorevalid.php](http://www.oiss.msu.edu/students_travel_autorevalid.php).

### **AFTER OPT:**

Once your EAD card is expired, you will have a 60-day grace period. Before the end of the grace period you **must** do one of the following:

- Depart the U.S.
- Apply for a different visa status
- Transfer to a new academic program

**NOTE: Only those who complete OPT receive the grace period – those who exceed the 90-day unemployment limit during OPT receive no grace period.**

### **TRANSITION TO H-1B:**

Some students find employers who wish to employ them longer than the OPT period. In these situations, employers will typically sponsor an H-1B employment visa. H-1B visas for private sector employers typically take effect on October 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. If an employer sponsors you for an H-1B visa and your OPT expires prior to October 1<sup>st</sup>, contact OISS to see if you are eligible for a “Cap-Gap” extension of your OPT work authorization and F-1 status.

### **17-MONTH EXTENSION:**

Students who receive a degree in a “STEM” field (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) may be eligible for an additional 17-month extension of OPT. Please consult our 17-month extension application packet for more information: [http://www.oiss.msu.edu/documents/students/opt\\_17.pdf](http://www.oiss.msu.edu/documents/students/opt_17.pdf)

**EMPLOYMENT REPORTING WHILE ON OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING:**

Please use the OISS online submission form: <http://oiss.isp.msu.edu/students/employ/opt/optesf.htm>

<b>SITUATION</b>	<b>STUDENT REPORTS TO OISS</b>
New Job	Name of the employer Start date employment Mailing address for the employer
Change to a new job (less than 10 days between jobs)	Name of the previous employer Ending date of the employment with the previous employer Name of the employer Start date of employment Mailing address for the employer
Multiple short-term gigs in one period with less than 10 days between gigs	Report at the beginning of the first gig and indicate "Multiple short term gigs"
Work for hire (start)	Indicate "Self-employed work for hire" Indicate the start date of the contract
Work for hire (ending more than 10 days between the end of one contract and the beginning of another contract or new job)	Indicate "Self-employed work for hire" Indicate you have no current contract Ending date of the last contract worked
Self-employed business owner (start)	Indicate "Self-employed business owner" Indicate business address Indicate date went into business
Self-employed business owner (end)	Indicate "Self-employed business owner" Indicate date business closed or student no longer worked for the business full time
Student decides to exit the U.S. and complete his or her F-1 status prior to the end date of OPT	Indicate "Completing OPT and exiting the United States" Date of exit

Resource 3-bz SEVP suggestions on how to report employment info while on OPT