Optional Practical Training workshop

Last updated: Nov. 17, 2026

International Student & Scholar Services
University of Missouri

This PowerPoint is intended for the sole use of Mizzou F-1 students and alumni who participate in OPT under a valid Mizzou-issued I-20. Any information contained within or linked to is subject to changes and updates. While MU International Student and Scholar Services makes reasonable efforts to keep this information up to date, you assume personal responsibility for verifying the accuracy and sufficiency of the information, as well as the consequences of any decisions that you make. MU International Student and Scholar Services is not responsible for adjudications made by USCIS on OPT and/or STEM extension eligibility.

Workshop agenda

- Introduction to OPT
- Application process
- Maintaining status on OPT
- Travel information
- After initial OPT

What is OPT?

Benefit of F-1 status at each higher-level degree

Eligible one time at bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. level

Work authorization for 12 months

Permission from U.S. government to work in the U.S. before (pre-completion) or after graduation (post-completion OPT)

Employment related to field of study

Job must be related to major, not minor

You are eligible for OPT if you…

1 Have been in F-1 status for one academic year

6 Have a passport valid six months into the future

364 Accumulated no more than 364 days of full-time CPT

Two kinds of OPT

- Pre-completion:
  - **Before** graduation and I-20 program end date
  - Reduces the post-completion OPT time available after graduation

- Post-completion:
  - **After** graduation and I-20 program end date

*This presentation focuses on post-completion OPT

Thesis/dissertation students

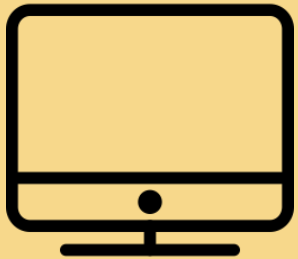
- Post-completion OPT can start before you graduate
  - > For **graduate students** who only have research left to complete
  - > PhD students must complete the comprehensive exam before they are eligible
- Program end date will be shortened to facilitate the start of your OPT period

Application process

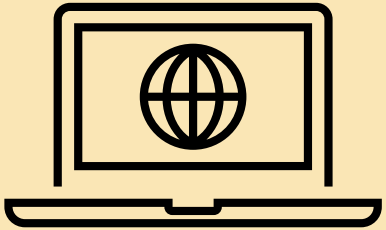
Application: 3 step process



Step 1: Gather and complete required documents



Step 2: Submit online request through myStatus



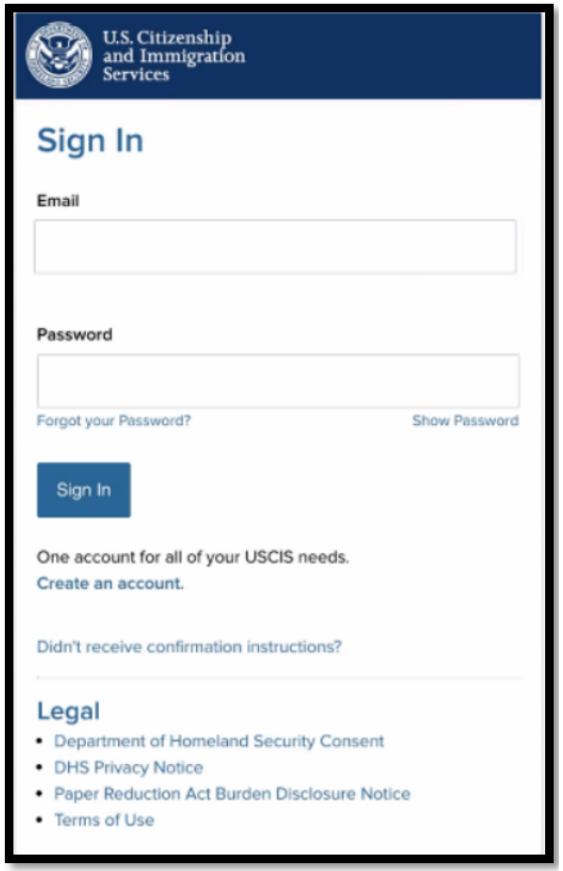
Step 3: File USCIS application online and wait

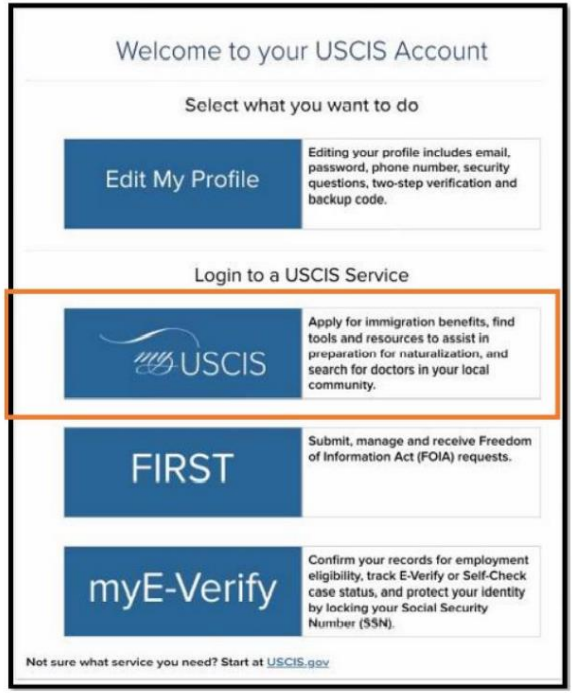
Step 1: Gather and complete paperwork

- I-765
- Copies of previous I-20s with CPT/OPT authorization
- Copies of passport, visa, I-94 and any previous EAD cards
- $75 OPT processing fee
  - > Credit/debit payable in myStatus



I-765 Online

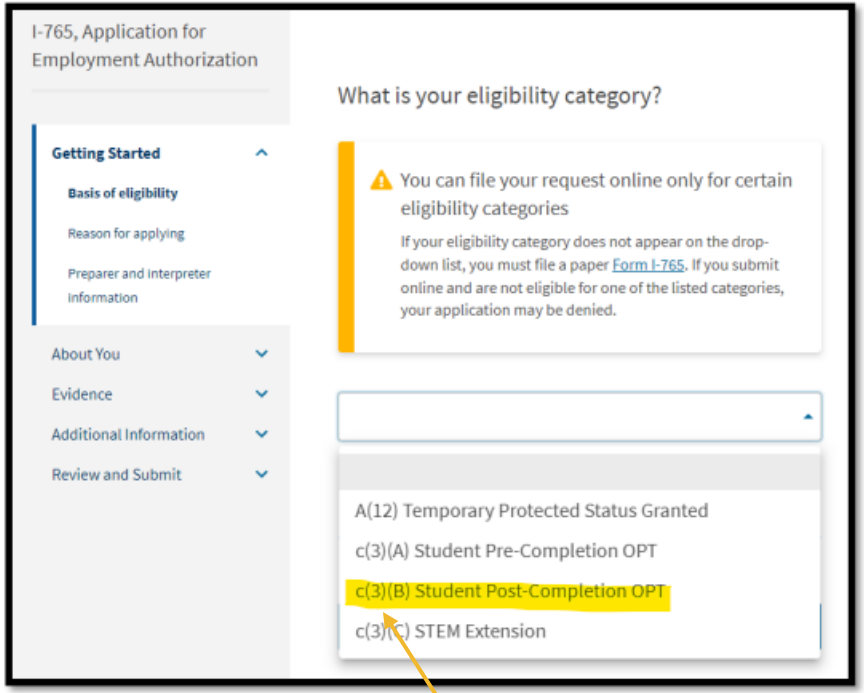

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Sign In
Email
Password
Forgot your Password?
Show Password
Sign In
One account for all of your USCIS needs.
Create an account.
Didn't receive confirmation instructions?
Legal
Department of Homeland Security Consent
DHS Privacy Notice
Paper Reduction Act Burden Disclosure Notice
Terms of Use


Welcome to your USCIS Account
Select what you want to do
Edit My Profile
Editing your profile includes email, password, phone number, security questions, two-step verification and backup code.
Login to a USCIS Service
myUSCIS
Apply for immigration benefits, find tools and resources to assist in preparation for naturalization, and search for doctors in your local community.
FIRST
Submit, manage and receive Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.
myE-Verify
Confirm your records for employment eligibility, track E-Verify or Self-Check case status, and protect your identity by locking your Social Security Number (SSN).
Not sure what service you need? Start at USCIS.gov


U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
My Account
Welcome To Your USCIS
Select What You Want To
Add a paper-filed case
View your case status and case history by adding your case to your account
File a form online
Start a new form, upload evidence, and pay and submit online
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

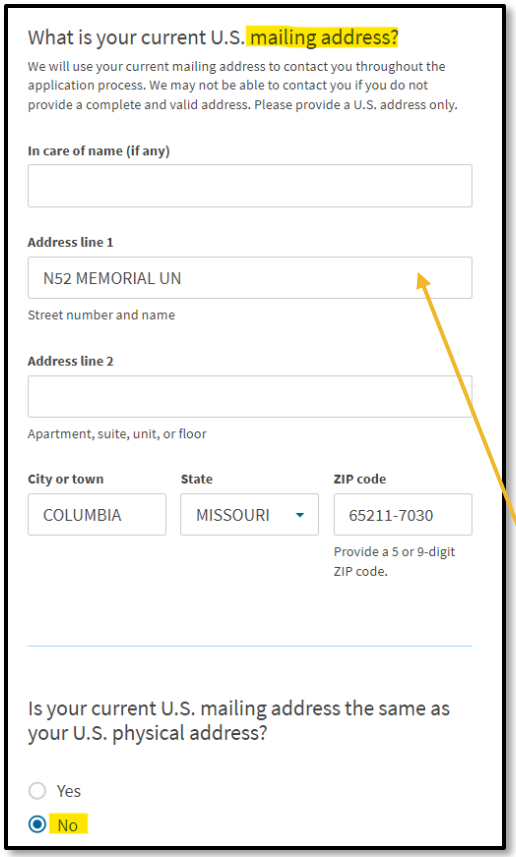
I-765 Online





Eligibility code: (C) (3) (B)

I-765 Online

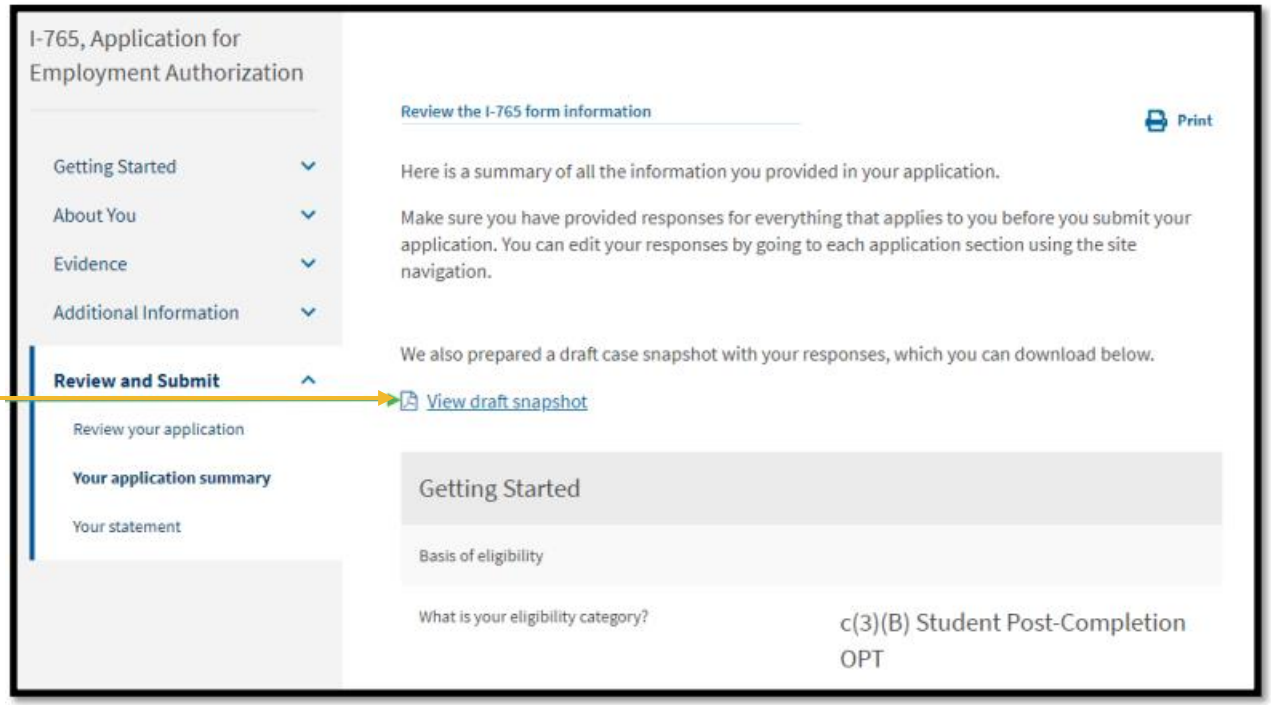


Optional:
You can use the International Center's mailing address.

N52 Memorial Union
Columbia, MO 65211

I-765 Online

View draft snapshot (PDF)



STOP

After completing the questions, **DO NOT** submit to USCIS. Download the draft snapshot and submit to ISSS for review.

I-765 Online

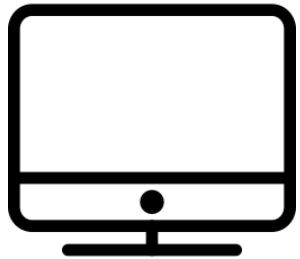
- Filing the I-765 electronically
  - > Complete form at uscis.gov/i-765
  - > Select ‘view draft snapshot’
  - > Upload draft I-765 to myStatus for international student adviser review



After completing the questions, **DO NOT** submit to USCIS. Download the draft snapshot and submit to ISSS for review.

Step 2: Submit OPT request to ISSS

- Submit request in myStatus
  - > Start new request -> F-1: OPT Request
  - > Read OPT acknowledgements
  - > Read OPT fee information
  - > Complete OPT employment questionnaire
  - > Send approval verification to academic adviser
- Submit documents from step 1 in myStatus
  - > Pay $75 OPT processing fee in myStatus



Step 2: Receive documents from ISSS

- Processing time for International Student and Scholar Services takes up to **five business days** after all required documents are submitted
- Documents provided by ISSS :
  - > New I-20 with OPT recommendation (will be uploaded to your documents in myStatus)

Before submitting your application to USCIS, please let your international student adviser know if you need to make any changes.

New I-20

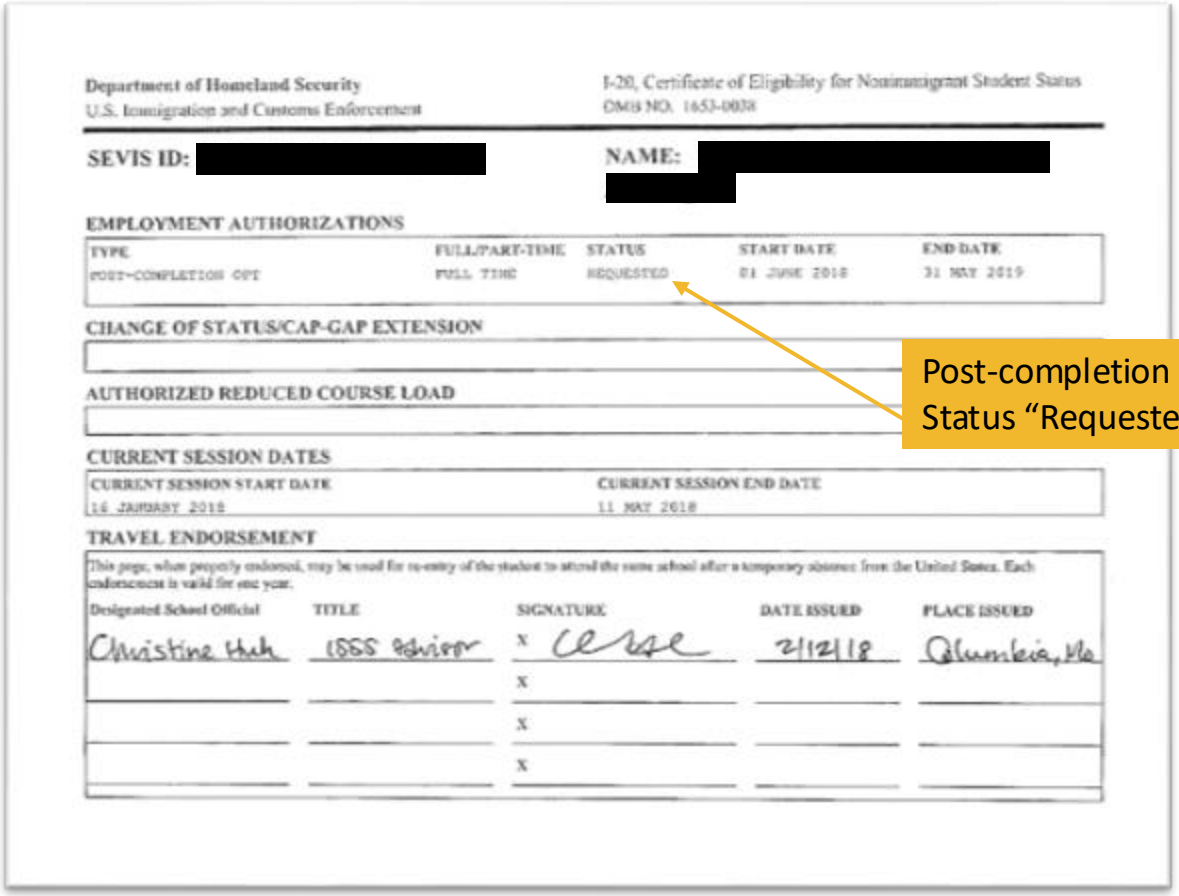
- OPT starts and ends **after** the end date on your I-20
- Program end date will be adjusted to the end of the semester of your graduation



PROGRAM OF STUDY

EDUCATION LEVEL	MAJOR 1	MAJOR 2
DOCTORATE	Economics, General 45.0601	None 00.0000
NORMAL PROGRAM LENGTH	**PROGRAM ENGLISH PROFICIENCY**	**ENGLISH PROFICIENCY NOTES**
72 Months	Required	Student is proficient
PROGRAM START DATE	**PROGRAM END DATE**	
01 SEPTEMBER 2015	31 MAY 2021	

New I-20



Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status
OMB NO. 1653-0038

SEVIS ID: [redacted]

NAME: [redacted]

EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATIONS

TYPE	FULL/PART-TIME	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
POST-COMPLETION OPT	FULL TIME	REQUESTED	01 JUNE 2018	31 MAY 2019

CHANGE OF STATUS/CAP-GAP EXTENSION

AUTHORIZED REDUCED COURSE LOAD

CURRENT SESSION DATES

CURRENT SESSION START DATE	CURRENT SESSION END DATE
16 JANUARY 2018	11 MAY 2018

TRAVEL ENDORSEMENT

This page, when properly endorsed, may be used for re-entry of the student to attend the same school after a temporary absence from the United States. Each endorsement is valid for one year.

Designated School Official	TITLE	SIGNATURE	DATE ISSUED	PLACE ISSUED
Christine Huh	DSO Advisor	X	2/12/18	Columbia, Mo
		X		
		X		
		X		

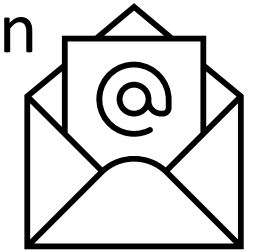
Post-completion OPT
Status “Requested”

Update: OPT fee proposal

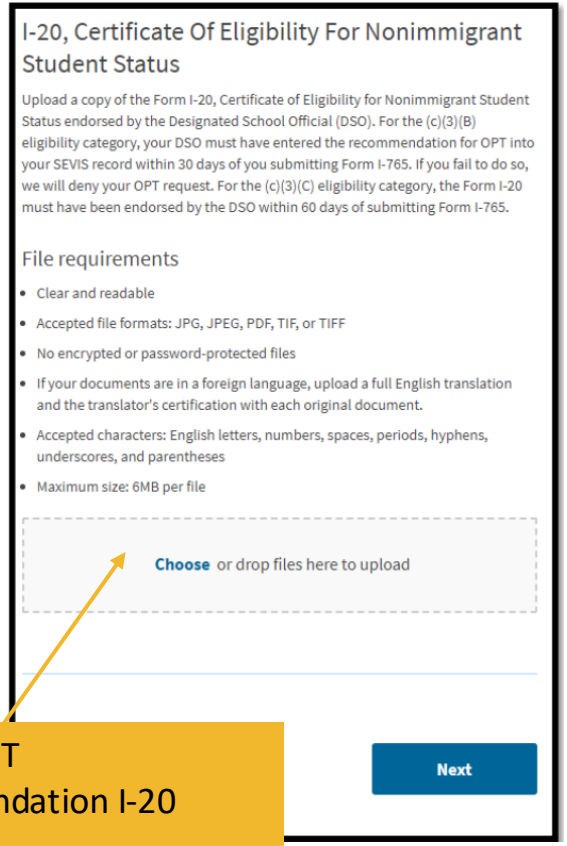
- On October 8, 2026, the Department of Homeland Security proposed that schools pay a fee to the U.S. government when issuing I-20 OPT recommendations for students. This is a proposal – it is **not** in effect right now
- The proposal will undergo a comment period until November 9, 2026. Afterwards, the proposal will go through a formal review process
- International Student and Scholar Services will monitor this proposal and provide updates as they become available

Step 3: Submit application to USCIS electronically

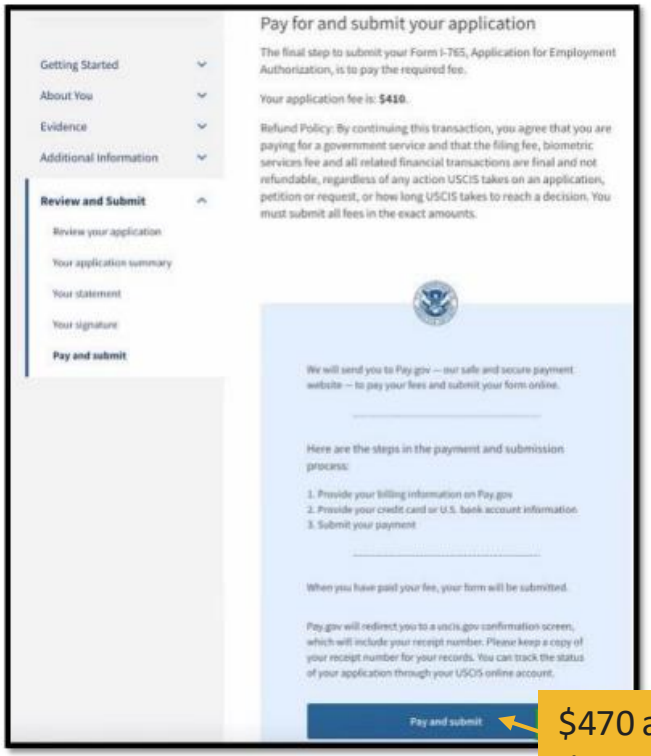
- Payment for $470
- Passport-style photograph (taken recently)
- I-765 questionnaire
- Copy of new OPT I-20 (with your handwritten signature on student attestation, page 1)
- Copies of previous I-20s with CPT/OPT authorization
- Copies of I-94, visa, passport, any previous EADs



I-765 Online



Upload OPT Recommendation I-20



$470 application fee paid through Pay.gov

Review

What are the three steps to apply for OPT?

A.

1. Gather documents
2. Submit to USCIS
3. Start working

B.

1. Gather documents
2. Submit myStatus request
3. Submit electronically to USCIS

C.

1. Apply to International Center
2. Get OPT approval from International Center
3. Start working

D.

1. Apply to International Center
2. get new I-20
3. start working

Review

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Application timeline

International Student
& Scholar Services
University of Missouri

OPT application timeline



- Work authorization for maximum of 12 months from OPT start date
- Use of pre-completion OPT may result in a shorter employment period

Time to transfer, start a new program, change status or exit the U.S.

Important dates

Key:
Dates for fall 2026 graduates
Dates for spring 2027 graduates
Dates for summer 2027 graduates

Program end date:
Dec. 18, 2026
May 14, 2027
July 30, 2027

Earliest application date:
Sept. 19, 2026
Feb. 13, 2027
May 1, 2027

Application deadline:
Feb. 16, 2027
July 13, 2027
Sept. 28, 2027



Choose OPT employment start date between:

Dec. 19, 2026 and Feb. 16, 2027
May 15, 2027 and July 13, 2027
July 31, 2027 and Sept. 28, 2027

OPT end date between:

Dec. 18, 2027 and Feb. 15, 2027
May 14, 2028 and July 12, 2028
July 30, 2028 and Sept. 27, 2028

(depending on start date)

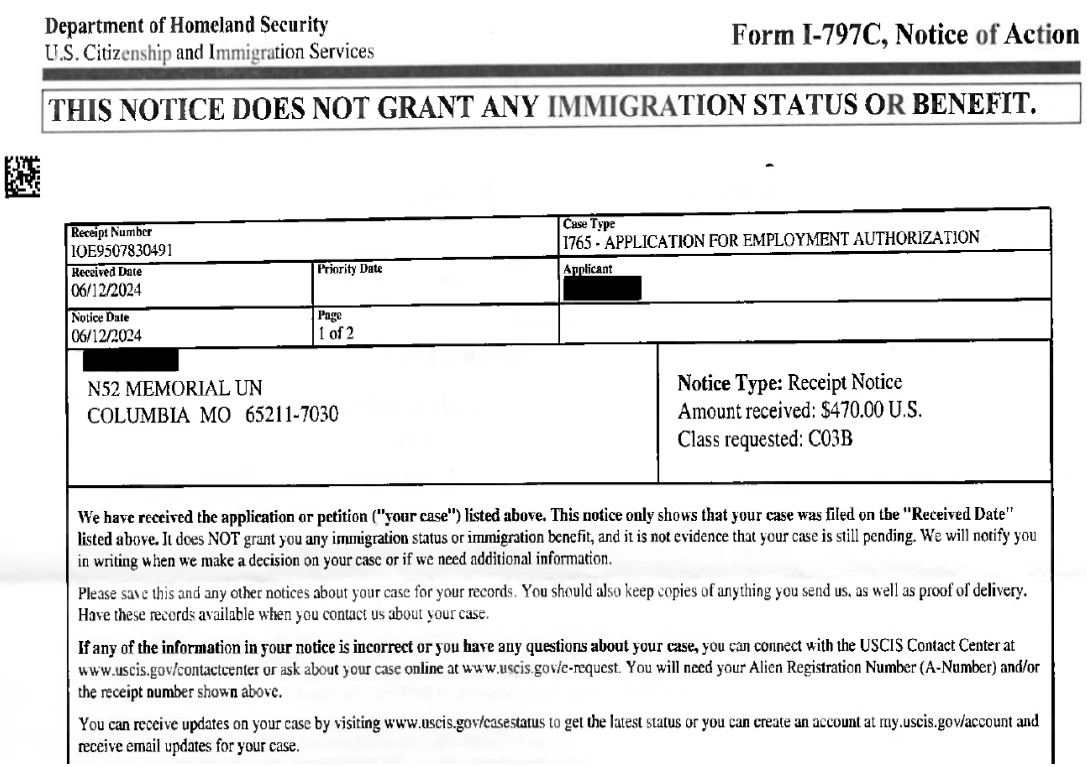
Application window

I-20 program end date	Earliest application date	Application deadline
Dec. 18, 2026	Sept. 19, 2026	Feb. 16, 2027
May 14, 2027	Feb. 13, 2027	July 13, 2027
July 30, 2027	May 1, 2027	Sept. 28, 2027

OPT employment start date range

I-20 program end date	Earliest start date	Latest start date
Dec. 18, 2026	Dec. 19, 2026	Feb. 16, 2027
May 14, 2027	May 15, 2027	July 13, 2027
July 30, 2027	July 31, 2027	Sept. 28, 2027

After you apply



Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Form I-797C, Notice of Action

THIS NOTICE DOES NOT GRANT ANY IMMIGRATION STATUS OR BENEFIT.

Receipt Number		Case Type
IOE9507830491		I765 - APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION
Received Date 06/12/2024	Priority Date	Applicant [redacted]
Notice Date 06/12/2024	Page 1 of 2	

[redacted]
N52 MEMORIAL UN
COLUMBIA MO 65211-7030

Notice Type: Receipt Notice
Amount received: $470.00 U.S.
Class requested: C03B

We have received the application or petition ("your case") listed above. This notice only shows that your case was filed on the "Received Date" listed above. It does NOT grant you any immigration status or immigration benefit, and it is not evidence that your case is still pending. We will notify you in writing when we make a decision on your case or if we need additional information.

Please save this and any other notices about your case for your records. You should also keep copies of anything you send us, as well as proof of delivery. Have these records available when you contact us about your case.

If any of the information in your notice is incorrect or you have any questions about your case, you can connect with the USCIS Contact Center at www.uscis.gov/contactcenter or ask about your case online at www.uscis.gov/e-request. You will need your Alien Registration Number (A-Number) and/or the receipt number shown above.

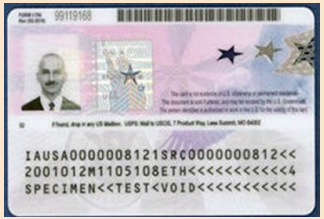
You can receive updates on your case by visiting www.uscis.gov/casestatus to get the latest status or you can create an account at my.uscis.gov/account and receive email updates for your case.

- You will receive a receipt in the mail two to three weeks after your application is received by USCIS
- You may also receive an Application Support Center (ASC) appointment notice for biometrics
- Check the status of your application through the USCIS website
- International student adviser cannot contact USCIS on your behalf

After USCIS receives your application

- After you apply, changing dates or withdrawing your application is **difficult** and not guaranteed
  - > Be sure about your OPT plans
  - > Talk to your international student adviser if you decide to withdraw
- You cannot cancel your OPT after your application has been approved

USCIS decisions

Approved	Rejection/denial	Request for evidence
Yay! Congratulations!   	▪ **Application** > Received more than 90 days before program end date > Received more than 30 days after OPT recommendation > Filing online without the OPT I-20 ▪ **Old or previously used photos** ▪ **Payment** > Credit Card declined	RFE More information needed to make a decision ***If you receive an RFE, please let us know**

Timing tips: Timely filing

- You can stay in the U.S. while your OPT application is pending
- Submit your application within a **timely** manner (before the end of your F-1 grace period **and** within 30 days of ISSS creating your OPT I-20 recommendation)
  - If more than 30 days have passed since ISSS created your OPT recommendation, you must let your ISSS advisor know so they can enter a new recommendation and produce a new I-20
  - Filing with an **OPT recommendation that is more than 30 days old** will result in a **denial** from USCIS
- **Apply as early as possible** (no more than 90 days before your I-20 program end date), even if you don't have a job yet

Timing tips: Gaps in employment

- On-campus work authorization ends on the I-20 program end date
- USCIS can take 90 to 120 days to make a decision – or longer
  - You should not engage in any employment, paid or unpaid, while your OPT is pending
  - If you have a job offer, apply at least 90 days in advance of your start date
- You can only begin working on the approved OPT start date and once you have your EAD card in hand

Timing tips: USCIS communications and mail

- USCIS will send communication electronically and by mail
- If you receive an RFE or ASC appointment notice, you must follow the instructions in order for your application to proceed
- After approval, USCIS generally produces and sends out the EAD within two weeks. The delivery timeframe will vary
  - You must update USCIS and USPS promptly if you want to change your mailing address

Timing tips: Processing delays

- If USCIS does not approve your OPT by the requested start date, they will adjust your start and end dates accordingly
- However, USCIS will **not** give you a new OPT end date that is more than **14** months from your I-20 program end date
  - > If a year would put the new OPT end date beyond 14 months, then USCIS will give you an earlier end date and a shorter OPT period

Timing tips: Premium processing

$1,780 fee guarantees processing time within 30 **business** days

- I-907 can be filed together with I-765 or after I-765
- Business days do NOT include weekends or federal holidays
- If USCIS requires biometrics, premium processing might not begin until the ASC appointment has been completed

Other tips

- If your driver’s license is expiring, renew before submitting your OPT documents to International Student and Scholar Services
  - If your driver's license expires while your OPT is pending, you cannot renew it until USCIS approves your application
- If you intend to travel after graduation, you must submit your I-765 to USCIS **before** leaving the US
  - If you leave the U.S. before filing, you will no longer be able to file for OPT or return to the U.S. on F-1 status

Update: USCIS hold and Review

- On Dec. 2, 2025, U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) issued a policy memo that directs personnel to place a hold on pending benefits for individuals from the countries identified in Presidential proclamation 10949 and 10998
- On June 5, 2026, a federal district court issued a ruling that vacated and declared these policies unlawful. USCIS has resumed processing benefit applications, though the government may appeal this decision going forward
- Any additional updates regarding this announcement will be posted on our Insights page

Maintaining status on OPT

International Student
& Scholar Services
University of Missouri

Maintaining F-1 status on OPT

- You are still in **F-1 student status** with the University of Missouri and using a benefit of that status
- F-1 status is maintained through employment (not through enrollment)
- Your I-20 is still valid — the second page shows OPT dates even though the first page program end date has passed
- You can sign up for insurance through United Healthcare while on OPT, but it is not automatically applied unless you are enrolled in MU courses

Maintaining F-1 status on OPT

- Can take part-time incidental courses, but cannot start another academic program
  - Recreational or vocational courses for interest or fun are allowed
- Starting a new program at MU or another university ends your OPT eligibility
  - You will lose the rest of your approved OPT time – you cannot save it for later
  - You will have to complete another degree, potentially at a higher level, before you can apply for OPT again

OPT employment

- Employment can be paid or unpaid
- Must work **21 hours** or more each week
- Can switch employers
- Can work for multiple employers
- Allowed 90 days of unemployment
  - > From start date on approved EAD card. Does not include pending application time

Reporting requirements

- Submit these requests in myStatus within 10 days of . . .
  - > Moving to a new address: **F-1 OPT/STEM: U.S. Address Update**
  - > Finding employment or switching employers: **F-1: Add OPT Employer**
  - > Ending employment: **F-1: Edit OPT Employer**
  - > Material changes to employer information (address, supervisor, job title, full-time vs part-time status, etc.): **F-1 Edit OPT employer**
- If employment is not reported within 90 days from OPT start date, your SEVIS record will be automatically terminated

SEVP Portal

- When your OPT is approved, you will receive access to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) portal
  - > You may update the SEVP Portal with employment information
    - You must still let us know so we can issue new I-20
  - > You must update myStatus with employment
    - We will update SEVP information to issue new I-20

Review

What is your status while on OPT?

A. OPT

B. H-1B

C. F-1

D. J-1

Review

What is your status while on OPT?

A. OPT

B. H-1B

C. F-1

D. J-1

Travel information

International Student & Scholar Services
University of Missouri

Travel information

- Travelling with a pending or approved OPT application is possible, but it can be complicated
- Talk to your ISSS advisor before planning any international travel before, during or after the OPT application process

Travel with pending application

Pending OPT app + Before graduation = Valid passport and visa, I-20 w/ travel signature less than 6 months old

Pending OPT app + After graduation = Valid passport and visa, I-20 w/ travel signature less than 6 months old, OPT receipt notice

Travel with approved application

Approved OPT application

+

After graduation

=

- Valid passport and visa
- I-20 with:
  - Updated employment information
  - Travel signature less than six months old
- Proof of employment,
- EAD card*

*EAD card is not valid for re-entry by itself. After approval, you must have a job in order to re-enter the U.S.



Review

Who should you tell when you get a new job?

A. USCIS

B. Your best friend

C. MU International Student and Scholar Services

D. Your academic adviser

Review

Who should you tell when you get a new job?

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D. Your academic adviser

Review

When should you update them?

A. Today

B. Within 10 days

C. Within one month

D. As soon as you accept the job

Review

When should you update them?

A. Today

B. Within 10 days

C. Within one month

D. As soon as you accept the job

After initial OPT

International Student
& Scholar Services
University of Missouri

STEM OPT extension

- Eligibility:
  - > Your degree is in STEM-qualifying field
  - > You are working in a **paid** position related to your major
    - You can work for multiple employers, but **each** must be more than 20 hours/week
  - > Your employer is registered with the **E-Verify** employment verification system

Application for 24-month STEM extension

- Must apply **before** initial OPT period ends
  - > As early as 90 days before the end of current OPT EAD
  - > No grace period to apply
  - > Can attend optional workshop or review STEM OPT slides
- Log in to myStatus to request OPT STEM extension
  - > Some additional documents needed, so review online checklist

*60-day grace period

- Leave the United States
- Continue your studies at Mizzou
- Transfer your SEVIS record to start a degree at a different school
- Change to another visa status

**Each option has different requirements and deadlines. Meet with an international student adviser to discuss your situation well before the end of your OPT employment period.

H-1B cap-gap extension

- Automatic extension of F-1 status and/or OPT work authorization from the end of OPT through the start of H-1B status (Oct. 1 – April 1)
- Eligibility:
  - Employer is cap-subject and has timely filed a change of status to H-1B (NOT consular processing) with a start date in the following fiscal year (Oct. 1 – Sept. 30)
  - F-1 students on unexpired OPT and in valid F-1 status when the H-1B is filed can continue working
    - If filed during grace period, F-1 status may be extended, but work authorization will end
  - You must continue to fulfill OPT reporting requirements while on the cap gap extension
- Have questions? Consult with the employer who is filing the H-1B petition

MU Career Center

career.missouri.edu

CONTACT
(573) 882-6801
career@missouri.edu



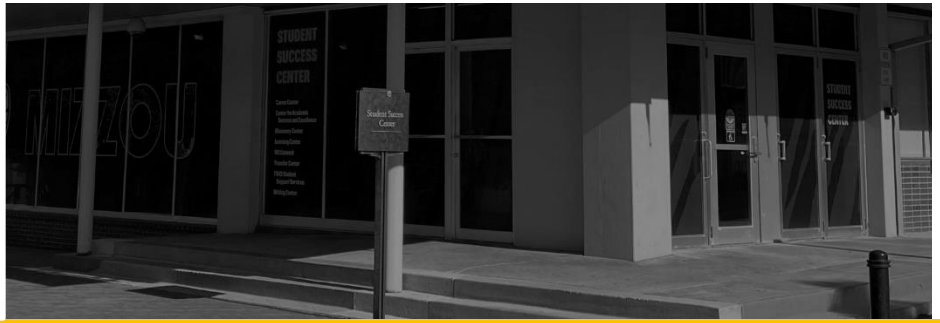
CAREER EXPLORATION

- Assessments
- Major/Career Resources
- Career Specialist Consultation

CAREER READINESS

- Resume & Cover Letters
- Interviews
- LinkedIn Profiles
- Job Search Strategies

Connect with the MU Career Center here:



Career Center
University of Missouri

M-F 9am-4pm
Student Success Center, Lower Level

Additional resources

- myStatus
- MU International Student and Scholar Services website
  - Optional Practical Training // International Student and Scholar Services
  - Travel // International Student and Scholar Services
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Study in the States
  - Training Opportunities in the United States | Study in the States
  - Applying for Practical Training | Study in the States
  - SEVP Portal Help | Study in the States
  - Eligible CIP Codes for the STEM OPT Extension | Study in the States
  - H-1B Status and the Cap Gap Extension | Study in the States
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
  - Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1 Students | USCIS
  - Application for Employment Authorization | USCIS
  - Filing Fees | USCIS
  - Case Processing Times
  - Request for Premium Processing Service | USCIS
  - How Do I Request Premium Processing? | USCIS
  - Form I-797: Types and Functions | USCIS
  - Preparing for Your Biometric Services Appointment | USCIS
  - How to Change Your Address | USCIS
  - Checking Your Case Status Online | USCIS
  - Employment Authorization | USCIS
  - Immigration Documents and How to Correct, Update, or Replace Them | USCIS
  - How to Track Delivery of Your Notice or Secure Identity Document (or Card) | USCIS

Questions?

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