

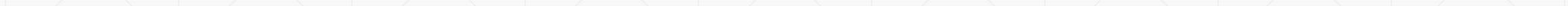
# OPT

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A step-by-step guide

# What is OPT?

- **Optional Practical Training**
  - Work permission for **1 year** (with option to **extend 2 years** for **STEM** degrees)
  - Purpose is to gain **experience in your field**
- 
- One year of OPT **per degree level**
    - Must be progressively higher (i.e. bachelor → master → doctoral)



# OPT Application Process



# Don't I need a job to apply for OPT?

NO!

- Why not??
  - USCIS can take more than **three months** to review your OPT application
  - It would be **WAY TOO LATE** to apply if you waited to find a job first
-

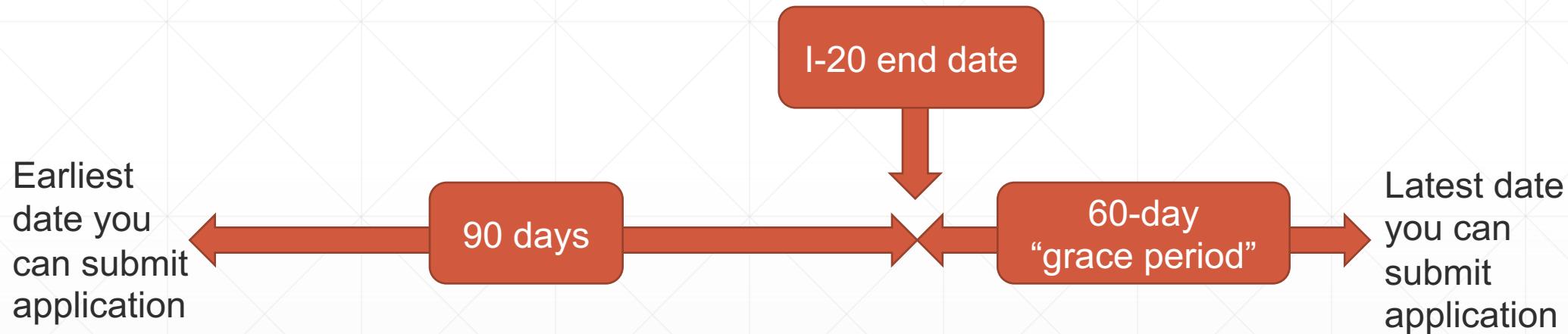
# When can I apply?

- Apply for OPT during your **last** semester at UMBC
- The **earliest** you can apply for OPT is **90 days** before your I-20 end date
- The **latest** you can apply for OPT is **60 days** after your I-20 end date

*Approximate OPT timeline by grad term*

	<b>Spring grads</b>	<b>Fall grads</b>
Earliest date	Feb 25	Sept 25
I-20 end date	May 25	Dec 23
Latest date	July 24	Feb 20

## Another way to think about it

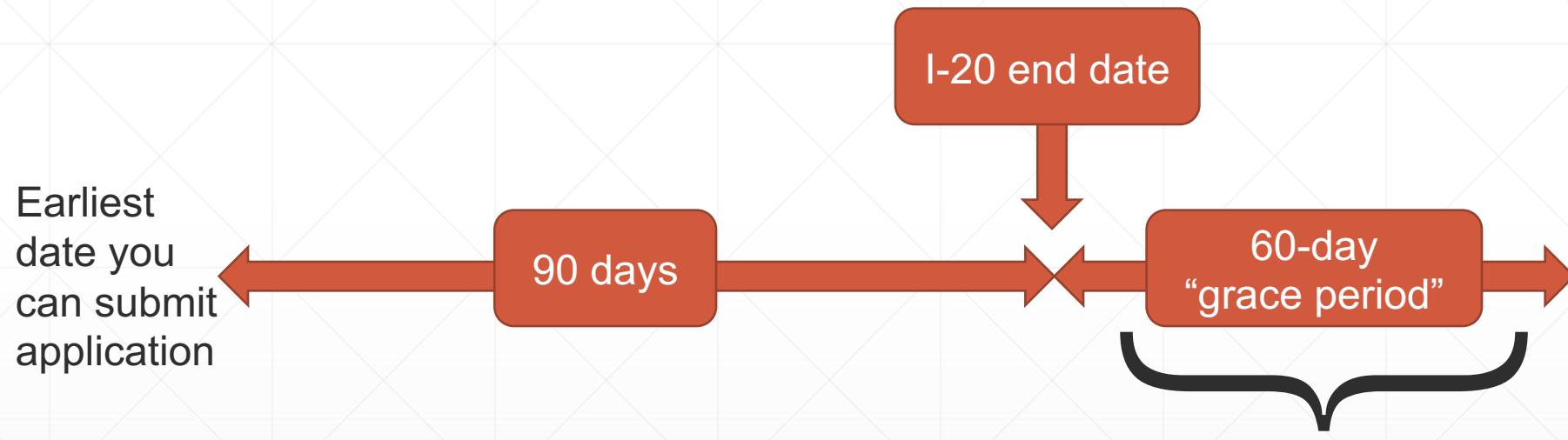


## **Don't wait until it's too late!**

- Remember that many other students will want to apply for OPT around the same time you do
- **OPT applications cannot be rushed**
- We process applications as they come in, **not based on your OPT start date**
- USCIS can take **more than 90 days** to review your OPT application



# Choosing a start date



OPT start date can be ANY time during “grace period”

## If I don't have a job, how do I pick a start date?

- Based on the job market or how much job hunting you've done so far
- Allow time for **application processing** – this can take **more than 90 days**
- Consider travel and what you might do during break from school
- There is no way to guarantee uninterrupted work permission– be open and honest with employers!
- **Remember: you do not have to have a job on your OPT start date**



# OK, I've chosen a start date. Now what?

1. Review the ISSS website for application instructions and prepare your draft Form I-765 through the USCIS online system.
2. Complete and submit OPT Application through the **ISSS Portal**
3. Invite your academic advisor to approve your application through the **ISSS Portal**
4. Receive scanned OPT I-20 in your **ISSS Portal** account, *print out and sign it!*
5. Submit your complete application online through <uscis.gov>.
6. Wait (patiently!) for approval



## **After you apply, you receive:**

### **1. Receipt**

- Available immediately through the USCIS website once you make your payment and submit your application.

### **2. Approval notice**

- Usually arrives after 2 – 3 months. Can take longer.

### **3. EAD card**

- Usually arrives about 1 week after approval notice



# I'm approved!

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Way to go, you!

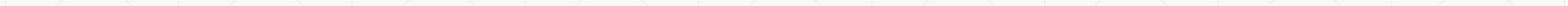
# What are the rules governing my OPT time?

- You **must** be **working!**
- The expectation is that you will be working during your year of OPT
- You also have up to **90 days of unemployment** time, meaning it is OK not to have a job in your SEVIS record for up to 3 of your 12 months of OPT
- All jobs during OPT must be **directly related** to your UMBC **degree program**
- Part-time (< 20 hrs) or Full-time, paid or unpaid — all OK during OPT
  - You must be working at least 20 hours per week (total) to meet these requirements



# What are the rules governing my OPT time?

- Unlike CPT, you are allowed to change jobs at any time
- However, you **must** update your SEVP Portal account whenever you:
  - change jobs
  - get a new job
  - end an earlier job
  - change your address
- SEVP Portal: <https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/>



# SEVP Portal

An official website of the United States government  
 SEVP Portal | Student and Exchange Visitor Program Portal

## Sign In

Attention: Only students who have OPT approved may use the SEVP Portal. You must create an account and set a password before using this log in page. Go to [Portal Help](#) for more information.

Email

Password

[Login](#) [Reset Password](#)

This system supports the following browsers: IE11 and above, Mozilla 38 and above, Google Chrome Version 53.0.2785.116 m and above, Safari OS X and above

Department of Homeland Security Consent

# SEVP Portal

Employer #:	Employer Name	Date	Errors
722631	Finmec...	7/1/2017 - 6/14/2018	-

Self Employed

**Employer Name: Required**  
Enter the legal name of the company that hired you.

Finmeccanica

**Employer Address: Required**

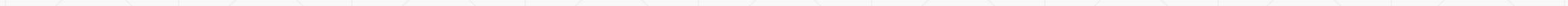
**Address:**  
Enter the address where you work. Enter the street address in the top line. Use Address 2 line for the name of the building, if it is normally part of the address. See <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov> for more details.

320 23rd St S

# Health insurance

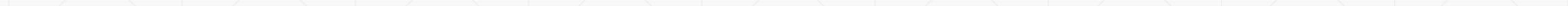
This is **VERY** serious:

- You will no longer be automatically enrolled in UMBC's health insurance
- You may be offered health insurance coverage from your employer, or you can look at third-party providers like ISO, Gateway USA, etc.
- You **need** to think about this! It is extremely risky to be in the US without health insurance. See about options your employer might have, or consider the Healthcare Marketplaces established through the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare)



## Continuing education

- You are free to take classes during OPT
- But you may **NOT** begin a new **degree program**, or your OPT will automatically terminate.
- Register for courses as a “non degree-seeking” or “visiting student”
- Degree-seeking programs would require you to transfer your SEVIS record or change your Education Level, which **automatically ends** your **OPT** approval



# **Got it. Let's do this.**

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Ready to complete the OPT application?

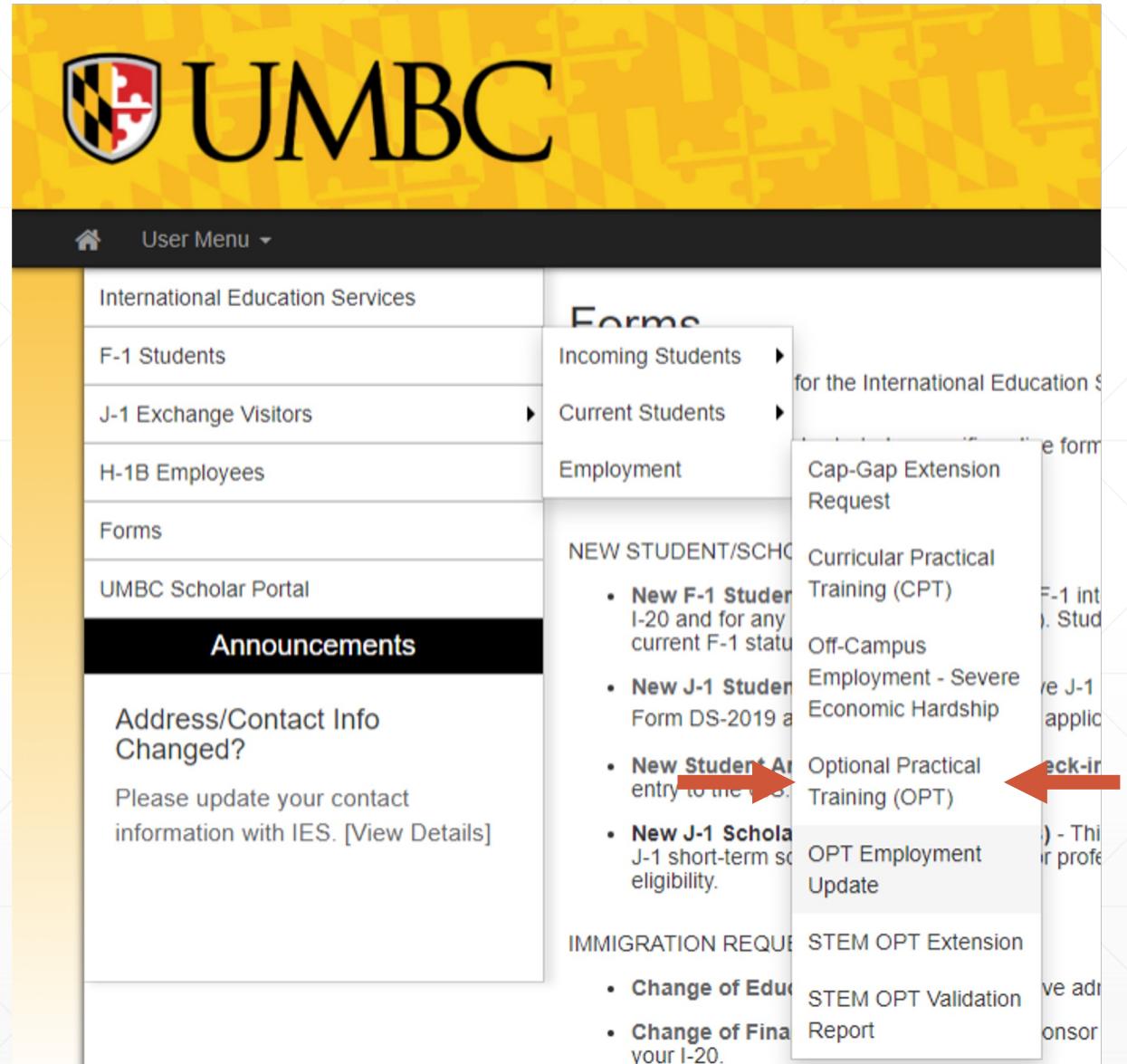
# Optional Practical Training application

Visit the **ISSS Portal**

[iss-portal.umbc.edu](http://iss-portal.umbc.edu)

Click the **Search Forms** button on your user account, or from the **ISSS Portal** homepage, find the OPT application under:

*F-1 Students > Employment >  
Optional Practical Training (OPT)*



# Optional Practical Training application

You must complete ALL sections of the application before clicking “Submit.”

Download draft snapshot of Form I-765 from USCIS online account and upload to your OPT request

David M Anguish

Request: Optional Practical Training (OPT) (F-M)

Term/Year: Request, 2019

Dates: TBA

## Instructions

Please review and click on ALL sections of this page to confirm if each is applicable to you.

**Upload** a draft copy of your **Form I-765**. Please use the **I-765 Guidelines** to help you complete the form correctly.

**Address:** use an address where you can receive mail over the next 3 months.

**For question #16:** enter the category (c)(3)(B)

**Note:** the OPT: Academic Adviser recommendation must also be requested from your academic/department adviser.

Once you have completed ALL sections, click the **Submit** button at the top of this page to have this record reviewed by IES staff.

# Download “Draft Snapshot” of Form I-765

I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

- Getting Started
- About You
- Evidence
- Additional Information

**Review and Submit**

- Review your application
- Your application summary**
- Your statement

Review the I-765 form information

Here is a summary of all the information you provided in your application. Make sure you have provided responses for everything that applies to you before you submit your application. You can edit your responses by going to each application section using the site navigation.

We also prepared a draft case snapshot with your responses, which you can download below.

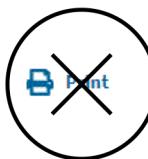
[View draft snapshot](#) 

**Getting Started**

Basis of eligibility

What is your eligibility category?

(c)(3)(B) Student Post-Completion OPT



- To generate a draft Form I-765, click the “View Draft Snapshot” button
- Do NOT click the Print button!!
- You can upload the “Draft Snapshot” to your OPT Request in the ISSS Portal

# Optional Practical Training application

Read and digitally sign the “Signature Documents”

Complete the OPT Student Request Form – this is where you’ll indicate your preferred OPT start date

## Signature Documents

Click the following to view and digitally sign important documents to indicate your agreement and understanding.

Title	Completed
OPT Statement of Understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Questionnaire(s)

Click the following to view and complete the following online questionnaire(s). You may begin a questionnaire and save it for later completion, but note that you must click Submit in order for the questionnaire to be logged as complete and ready for review.

Title	Completed
OPT Student Request Form	<input type="checkbox"/>

# Optional Practical Training application

You must send an electronic request to your academic/department advisor through the **ISSS Portal**.

Your advisor will verify your eligibility for OPT.

Click “Request Electronic Recommendation”

**Recommendations**

Requests	Completed
<p><b>OPT: Academic Advisor</b> (1 required) To apply for OPT, your academic/department advisor must verify your academic eligibility.</p> <p>Please click the link below to request this confirmation from your academic advisor in the directory search.</p> <p>- <a href="#">Request Electronic Recommendation</a></p>	

*1 or more required recommendations have not yet been requested.*

# Optional Practical Training application

Use the UMBC Directory Lookup section on the next page to look up your academic advisor.

You should *only* enter your advisor's details manually if you cannot find them through the Directory Lookup.

Try NOT to use the Manual Entry feature.

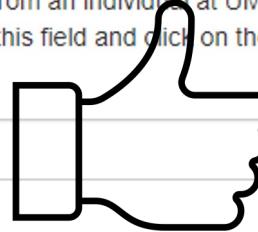
## User Search

### UMBC Directory Lookup:

To request a recommendation from an individual at UMBC, enter the first/last name or email address of the person in this field and click on the 'Search' button.

Keywords:

Search >



### Manual Entry:

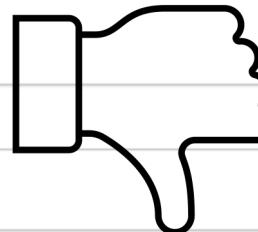
To request a recommendation from a staff/faculty member not at UMBC, enter the first/last name in the 'Add User' button.

First Name:

Last Name:

Phone:

Add User



## Review by ISSS

- If you have detailed questions or doubts about OPT—[contact ISSS](#) ahead of time, before submitting all your OPT application through the **ISSS Portal**.
- You *cannot* apply for OPT in person at the ISSS office; everything must be handled through the **ISSS Portal**.
- ISSS advisors review the “Draft Snapshot” of your Form I-765 when we process your OPT request. **We will let you know if your draft I-765 requires any edits.**



# Optional Practical Training application

Once ISSS reviews your application, the data will be sent overnight to SEVIS.

Once processed through SEVIS, we will upload your new, signed OPT I-20 to the “Attached Documents” section of your OPT application.

## Attached Documents

The following files have been attached. Click the filename to download the attached document.

Form I-20  
( 1670\_001 (1).pdf )

Form I-765  
( 6 May 2018 e-Statement .pdf )

You can attach documents to this record by choosing the file from your drive, selecting the type of document you are attaching, and clicking on the 'Upload' button.

No file chosen

# IMPORTANT!



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: N00 [REDACTED] (F-1)

NAME: [REDACTED]

## EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATIONS

TYPE	FULL/PART-TIME	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
POST-COMPLETION OPT	FULL TIME	REQUESTED	30 SEPTEMBER 2023	29 SEPTEMBER 2024

## CHANGE OF STATUS/CAP-GAP EXTENSION



- Once you receive your OPT I-20 in the ISSS Portal, you **MUST** check the “Employment Authorizations” box on page 2 to be sure that a Post-Completion OPT request has been added and to verify that your chosen start date is listed.
- Failure to check this can result in your OPT application being denied by USCIS!*
- If there are any errors, contact ISSS via Help Ticket or Live Chat

# Assembling your OPT application package

Once you receive your signed OPT I-20 in your **ISSS Portal** account, you can print, sign, and include that I-20 in the OPT application package you sent to USCIS.

On the ISSS website, you will find a list of all the other application requirements.

In brief....



# Form I-765

- This is the primary form in your OPT application, the application for employment authorization.
- **We recommend online filing through the USCIS application system, NOT filling out the PDF and mailing it to USCIS.**
- If you choose to file by mail, Be sure to download the latest edition of the Form I-765 from USCIS's website:  
<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>  
**NEVER** use a form that a friend sends you or that you found on the website of an international student office or message board. These are often out of date.



## Application For Employment Authorization

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

USCIS  
Form I-765  
OMB No. 1615-0040  
Expires 07/31/2022

For USCIS Use Only	<input type="checkbox"/> Authorization/Extension Valid From <hr/>	Fee Stamp	Action Block
	<input type="checkbox"/> Authorization/Extension Valid Through <hr/>		
	Alien Registration Number A- <input type="text"/>		
	Remarks		

To be completed by an attorney or Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA)-accredited representative (if any).	<input type="checkbox"/> Select this box if Form G-28 is attached.	Attorney or Accredited Representative USCIS Online Account Number (if any) <input type="text"/>
--	--	--

► **START HERE - Type or print in black ink.** Answer all questions fully and accurately. If a question does not apply to you (for example, if you have never been married and the question asks, "Provide the name of your current spouse"), type or print "N/A" unless otherwise directed. If your answer to a question which requires a numeric response is zero or none (for example, "How many children do you have" or "How many times have you departed the United States"), type or print "None" unless otherwise directed.

### Part 1. Reason for Applying

I am applying for (select only one box):

- 1.a.  Initial permission to accept employment.

### Other Names Used

Provide all other names you have ever used, including aliases, maiden name, and nicknames. If you need extra space to complete this section, use the space provided in Part 6.

# Forms I-20

- USCIS requires OPT applicants to include certain information in the “Additional Information” section of the Form I-765.
- List any periods of CPT or OPT approved in the past and include the dates of the approval, as well as the academic level at which it was approved (e.g. Bachelor’s, Master’s, Doctorate).
- USCIS recommends uploading a copy of any Forms I-20 showing work authorization.
- If you ever held F-1 status with a different SEVIS ID number, you must enter it here.

***NOTE: ISSS does NOT maintain copies of all the I-20s you've been issued; that is your responsibility!***

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# I-94

- Available online  
Search for “I-94” – choose **.gov** site
- Enter name **exactly** as it appears on your F-1 student visa
- Copy passport number and issuing country from your passport
- Click next....

## Enter Your Traveler Info

**Note:** The info returned may not reflect applications submitted to or benefits received by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services or Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

 \_\_\_\_\_

\* First (Given) Name :  \* Last (Family) Name/Surname :  

\* Birth Date :  Day  Month  Year 

 \_\_\_\_\_

\* Passport Number :  

# I-94

- Available online  
Search for “I-94,” choose .gov site
- Enter name **exactly** as it appears on  
your F-1 student visa
- Copy passport number and issuing  
country from your passport
- Click next....
- This is your I-94 record!

## I-94 Admission Record

Admission (I-94) Record Number :

Most Recent Date of Entry:

16 JANUARY 16

Class of Admission :

F1

Admit Until Date :

D/S

Details provided on the I-94 Information form:

1. Last/Surname :

2. First (Given) Name :

3. Birth Date :

16 JULY 85

# I-94

- The “Admission (I-94) Record Number” will be entered on the form I-765
- You can also view your **Travel History** through this site
- The most recent entry record will also be entered on the form I-765

## I-94 Admission Record

Admission (I-94) Record Number :

Most Recent Date of Entry:

January  16

Class of Admission :

F1

Admit Until Date :

D/S

Details provided on the I-94 Information form:

1. Last/Surname :

2. First (Given) Name :

3. Birth Date :

July

## Passport and visa

- Make photocopies of your current passport and F-1 student visa
  - If your F-1 visa is in an older passport, include copies of **both** old and new passport in your application
  - Your F-1 visa **can** be expired
  - Your passport **cannot** be expired and should generally have at least 6 months of validity remaining.
-

See here for detailed instructions to e-file your OPT application with USCIS:

<https://issss.umbc.edu/opt-application-information/#checklist>

# Now, file online!

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Once you have your OPT I-20 from ISSS, you can submit your application online

## After submitting your application...

- If you receive a Request for Evidence (RFE), a Notice of Intent to Deny (NOID), or your application is returned to you, **you MUST notify ISSS** as soon as possible so that we can help you to understand the response from USCIS and help you to resolve or refile, if necessary. Send us a copy of whatever you receive from USCIS.
- There are **very tight deadlines**, so be sure to notify ISSS as soon as possible
- Whatever you do, **do not put a denied or rejected OPT application back in the mail** without talking to ISSS first!



# Special topics

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1. International travel
2. MVA/DMV
3. Ph.D. end dates

- **Before** your OPT start date, the same rules apply to international travel as when you were a full-time student. You must carry your valid passport, visa, and I-20 with a travel signature not older than 1 year.
- **After** your OPT start date, you must **ALSO** carry your EAD card, a job offer letter or proof of employment, and your I-20 signature cannot be older than **six months**.
- **After** your I-20 end date but **before** your OPT start date, no US Embassy or Consulate will renew your visa
- So be sure to consult with ISSS regarding any travel if you do not hold a valid F-1 visa

## Special topics

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1. International travel
2. MVA/DMV
3. Ph.D. end dates

- It can be difficult to renew your driver's license or State ID Card while your OPT application is **pending**
- When your I-20 end date has passed but your OPT start date has not yet arrived, you may have difficulty renewing your license
- Be sure to complete the **SAVE verification** online **before** you go to the MVA
- There is a link to the SAVE verification form from ISSS's website

## Special topics

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1. International travel
2. MVA/DMV
3. Ph.D. end dates

- Doctoral students have some flexibility in their I-20 end dates, as many students conduct ongoing dissertation research during their OPT period
- There is a type of OPT called **pre-completion**, which, as the name suggests, is OPT authorization **before** your academic program is complete and your I-20 end date arrives
- ISSS generally discourages this option when **full-time CPT** is available, but we are more than happy to discuss your options if you are an eligible Ph.D. student

## Special topics

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1. International travel
2. MVA/DMV
3. Ph.D. end dates

# After OPT

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Post-practical training options

# After OPT

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1. STEM OPT
2. I-20 transfer
3. Change of Ed Level
4. Leave US

- Students in **approved STEM disciplines** have the option of **extending** their year of OPT an additional **two years**
- You must submit another OPT application to USCIS **before** the end date of your post-completion OPT and **no earlier** than **90 days** before that end date
- Must show you have **earned your degree** OR that you have a thesis pending (ISSS cannot prove this)
- Can only work for employers enrolled in E-Verify
- Must submit **I-983 Training Plan** for each and every employer you work for during STEM OPT
- See the ISSS website for further information about STEM OPT

## After OPT

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1. STEM OPT
2. I-20 transfer
3. Change of Ed Level
4. Leave US

- When your OPT ends (or your STEM OPT ends, if you are eligible and apply), you have **another 60-day grace period**, during which you **cannot work** but can **legally remain** in the US
- You can choose to begin a new degree program, either at UMBC through a Change of Education Level, or at another school through an I-20 transfer
- If you do not wish to begin a new program, your F-1 status requires that you leave the US within the 60-day grace period
- Instructions on changing your education level or transferring your I-20 to another school are available on the ISSS website

## After OPT

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1. STEM OPT
2. I-20 transfer
3. Change of Ed Level
4. Leave US

# Questions?

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Now's the time to ask!

# OPT Application Process

