



OPT APPLICATION CHECKLIST

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This handout was adapted from ones created by the international departments of South Dakota Mines and Glendale Community College with many thanks.

Basic Process to Apply for, and Begin Working on, Optional Practical Training (OPT)

1	Apply for graduation in ctclink
2	Take photos and prepare other documents
3	Create an account at USCIS.gov
4	Start an I-765 application and begin uploading documents (but STOP when you reach the I-20 screen)
5	Submit ISP's OPT I-20 Request Form and schedule an I-765 Review Meeting with an ISP Advisor
6	Attend I-765 Review Meeting
7	Receive OPT I-20 from Advisor
8	Finish I-765 application and pay fee

Detailed Process

1	Apply for graduation in ctclink
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Apply for graduation in ctclink. See instructions at <https://registration.highline.edu/graduation/>.

2	Take photos and prepare other documents
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Note: All documents must be in one of the following formats and no more than 6 MB per file: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, OR TIFF (exceptions are specified below). Give each document a clear name, using English characters only. We recommend scanning your documents from a scanner/copier machine (or using a scanning app on your phone) and uploading “clean” clearly-legible images, free of shadows, and with nothing in the “background” – no fingers, tabletops, other documents, etc.

- 1. US passport-style photo (2”x2” with a white background, taken in the past 6 months)**
 - Many stores with photo counters (Walgreens, Costco, Staples, UPS Store, etc.) will provide you with a pair of printed photos for less than \$20. You may be able to get digital images upon request, or you can scan the printed photos yourself. (Bring a USB/flash drive with you; not all stores have the ability to send emails to customers.)
 - You may be able to skip getting printed photos and do it online. Some students have had success with these two options: [iVisa](#) and [Passport Photo AiD](#)
 - For uploading: the photo must be 600x600 pixels; no more than 6 MB: file must be a **JPG, JPEG, or PNG – NO PDF**.
 - Photos must meet US photograph requirements, or they will be rejected and delay processing. Check yours at [Travel.State.Gov](#).
- 2. Copy of current I-94**, saved as a PDF from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>.
 - If you changed your status to F-1 within the US, your current I-94 is found on your I-797 approval notice. (The I-94 website will still always show the status you had at time of entry.)
 - If you were given a physical I-94 card upon entry to the US, make scans/photos of both the front and the back.
- 3. Scan/photo of passport photo page**
 - Your passport must be valid. If you are within 6 months of the expiration date, make sure to begin the renewal process BEFORE filing for OPT. You will need to include information about where you are in the renewal process in the “Additional Information” section when you file.

- If there are any pages in your passport showing amendments such as name changes, corrections, etc., please include those as well.
4. If applicable, scan/photo of any previously issued **employment authorization documents** (EAD cards).

3	Create an account at USCIS.gov
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Go to <https://myaccount.uscis.gov/> and create an account. Follow the instructions for setting up a password.

If you have previously created an account with [USCIS.gov](https://uscis.gov), we recommend using that again.

4	Start an I-765 application and begin uploading documents (but STOP when you reach the I-20 screen)
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Once you have created an account and logged in, you will select 'My USCIS'

You will select:

- Applicant;
- File a form online (I-765);
- The authorization you are applying for: **“(c) (3) (B) Student Post-Completion OPT”**

Complete the questions and start uploading documents (except your OPT I-20, which you don't have yet). If you don't know an answer or you aren't sure what to upload, review the online resources below for help. If you are still unsure, just skip that part for now and move on to the next section... but please STOP before you get to the payment section. Do not enter this information yet. The form auto-saves and can be edited for 30 days.

DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR USCIS APPLICATION UNTIL AFTER YOUR I-765 REVIEW MEETING. FAILURE TO INCLUDE THE NEW OPT I-20 IN YOUR APPLICATION WILL RESULT IN DENIAL.

Online Filing Resources:

[USCIS.gov screenshots with tips](#) (prepared by Glendale Community College)
[OPT Filing Video Walk-Through \(without sound\)](#) (provided by NAFSA Region XII)
[How to Avoid Form I-765 Delays](#) (prepared by Department of Homeland Security)

5	Submit ISP's OPT I-20 Request Form and schedule an I-765 Review Meeting with an ISP Advisor
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[Request OPT I-20 here.](#) (You must log in to your Highline email account to access this form.) Advisors will review your request and let you know if we have any questions. Your OPT I-20 will be provided to you during or shortly after the I-765 Review Appointment.

Schedule an I-765 Review Appointment through ISP's front desk staff - you can come to the office to do this or contact them at 206-592-3725 or int@highline.edu. If contacting us by email, be sure to specify if you want an in-person appointment or if you prefer to meet in Zoom. Set the appointment far enough in the future so that you will be able to prepare all of your documents, and do most of the I-765 application at USCIS.gov, in advance of the meeting.

If you are not adequately prepared, you will be asked to reschedule the meeting for a later date.

6	Attend I-765 Review Meeting
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Be ready to log in to your USCIS account and show your draft I-765 application. **If you are not adequately prepared, you will be asked to reschedule the meeting for a later date.**

- If you are meeting in Zoom, you will be asked to screenshare.
- If you have an in-person meeting, please bring your laptop and connect to wifi.

Come to the meeting prepared with any questions you want to ask (about the application or OPT in general).

7	Receive OPT I-20 from Advisor
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The ISP Advisor will check your USCIS application and issue your OPT I-20, either electronically or as a printed document. They will shorten your program length so that your program end date matches your last date of study. They will also indicate your requested OPT dates on both page 1 and 2 of the I-20.

8	Finish I-765 application and pay fee
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Important: You must complete the filing process within 30 days of the issuance of the OPT I-20. Late filing will result in a denial.

1. Add your signature to your OPT I-20 and save it as an electronic document (make sure there is no password protection). Upload it to the application in the I-20 section.
 - a. If you have been approved for CPT or OPT before, please upload those I-20s as well.
 - b. No other I-20s will need to be uploaded.
2. Make any other changes as recommended by your advisor.
3. Enter details to pay the OPT filing fee (double check the fee amount at <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>). Payment options:
 - Credit or debit card (Visa, MasterCard, American Express or Discover). Call your credit card company or bank to let them know this fee will be charged.
 - Bank Account and Routing number (Must be drawn at a financial institution that is physically located in the US.)
4. When you're sure everything is perfect... Submit!! You will be assigned a receipt number immediately.

What happens after filing the application?

You wait! Feel free to start applying for jobs in your field, but you **MUST NOT WORK** until (a) you have received your EAD, and (b) it is on or after the date printed on the EAD.

More information will be emailed to you at the end of your final quarter, but here's a preview:

9	Begin looking for jobs while you finish your program
10	Receive Employment Authorization Document (EAD) (and SSN if you requested it) by postal mail
11	Begin working (on or after EAD start date)
12	Report employment in SEVP Portal