

APPLYING FOR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Students wishing to engage in OPT must apply to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The application process is as follows:

- Student submits application packet to foreign student advisor (FSA).
- If student is eligible, FSA makes a request for OPT by issuing a new I-20 indicating the requested dates of employment on page 3.
- FSA sends application materials, including a copy of the new I-20, to the USCIS Service Center in Lincoln, Nebraska.
- Upon receipt of an application, USCIS issues to the student a **notice of receipt** indicating the application receipt number and the number of days estimated for processing the application (usually 90 days).

Important: *You should expect to receive your receipt notice within 30 days of the date your application is mailed. If you have not received a notice within 30 days, please contact the foreign student advisor. Failure to receive a notice of receipt may mean that there is a problem with your application.*

- When an application is approved, USCIS issues an EAD (Employment Authorization Document) to the student. The EAD is mailed to the address given on form I-765.

Important: *1) You may not begin working until you have received the EAD card, even if the requested employment start date has passed. 2) The ISO is required to keep a copy of your EAD on file. As soon as you have received the card, please submit a photocopy of it to the foreign student advisor.*

The entire application process, from the time you submit your application to the UDM foreign student advisor to the time you receive your EAD card, can take several months. The following deadlines apply:

Pre-completion OPT (OPT done before you finish your program): If you have not yet met the OPT eligibility requirement of two consecutive terms in F-1 status, the earliest you may submit an application to USCIS is **90 days** before the end of your second term (provided your employment start date is on or after that date). If you have already met the two-term requirement you may apply for pre-completion OPT up to **120 days** in advance of the requested employment start date.

Post-completion OPT (OPT done after you finish your program): Your application must be received by USCIS no sooner than 90 days before the date on which your academic program ends (the official end-of term date of your last semester) and no later than 60 days after the program end date. Please note that your program end date is not necessarily the same as the completion date on your I-20.

Important: *You must allow at least one week for the FSA to process your application and mail it to USCIS.*

Once you have your application receipt number, you can check the status of your application online at: <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsp/index.jsp>. You can also call a toll-free number:

1 (800) 375-5283. Automated information is available at this number 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you do not have an application receipt number, you will need to speak to a customer service representative. Representatives are available Monday-Friday between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.