

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application Procedures

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Optional Practical Training (OPT) benefit is available to F-1 students who wish to gain practical training experience in their major field of study. Eligible students may apply for up to 12 months of OPT per degree level. STEM field students may request 24-month extension for a total of 36 months of OPT. Review eligibility requirements on our website (<https://www.american.edu/ocl/iss/optinal-practical-training.cfm>).

Please note that Federal Regulations permit F-1 students to engage in OPT that is directly related to their major area of study only. 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(A).

APPLICATION STEPS:

STEP I: Watch the OPT information video in iEagle (ieagle.american.edu) > Optional Practical Training (OPT).

STEP II: Know when to apply.

- Pre-completion OPT applicants can apply up to 90 days before their desired employment start date.
- Post-completion OPT applicants can apply up to 90 days before through 60 days after their program completion date.

STEP III: Gather the following documents that are required for OPT applications:

- Most recent I-94 admission record from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>
- Unexpired passport (valid for at least 6 months in the future)
- Previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card (if applicable)
- Previous I-20s with authorized CPT(s) or OPT(s)

STEP IV: Submit required e-forms in iEagle (ieagle.american.edu) to begin OPT processing with ISSS.

- (1) Completion of Academic Program e-form (reviewed and approved by academic advisor)
- (2) OPT Application e-form

Once you submit these e-forms, ISSS will issue you a new I-20 with the OPT recommendation within 3-5 business days. You will download this new I-20 and receive a filing handout with tips on how to file online to your official AU email address.

STEP V: File your OPT application packet with USCIS including the following:

- 1 color passport photo taken within the last 30 days (not previously used). The online filing will require a clear scan of this photo.
- \$410 filing fee, payable at the time of filing.

Note: Your application must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the issue date on the new OPT I-20, otherwise your application will be denied by USCIS!

OPT Processing Time:

USCIS typically processes OPT requests within 2-4 months of the date of receipt. Save your USCIS receipt notice with your case number to track the status of your application: <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>. You may contact the National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283 to inquire about the status of your pending OPT application if 80 days has passed and you have not heard back from USCIS.

Photo Composition Checklist

7 Steps to Successful Photos

- ☑ Frame subject with full face, front view, eyes open
- ☑ Make sure photo presents full head from top of hair to bottom of chin; height of head should measure 1 inch to 1-3/8 inches (25 mm to 35 mm)
- ☑ Center head within frame (see Figure 2 below)
- ☑ Make sure eye height is between 1-1/8 inches to 1-3/8 inches (28 mm and 35 mm) from bottom of photo
- ☑ Photograph subject against a plain white or off-white background
- ☑ Position subject and lighting so that there are no distracting shadows on the face or background
- ☑ Encourage subject to have a natural expression

Photos must not have been taken more than 30 days prior to the submission of your application and not previously used!

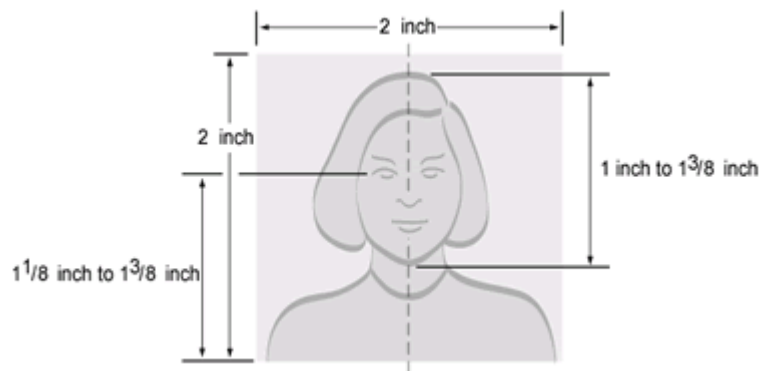


Figure 2. Head Position & Placement

Well-Composed Photos

