

F-1 Student OPT Application (Non-STEM) Checklist

Note: This checklist is intended to serve as general guidance on the OPT application process. You should always speak with an international student advisor regarding OPT or any other benefit associated with your F-1 status. If you believe you are eligible for OPT and would benefit from practical training (a work permit) in your field of study, please start the application process by completing the following these steps.

Step	Action	Completed
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with your International Student Advisor (DSO) and discuss your eligibility to apply for OPT. Meet with your Academic Advisor or Program/Department Chair to determine your exact program completion date. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request an OPT recommendation letter. See Page 3 for Letter Example/Template. Must be printed on LLU letter head, with an original signature. 	
2.	<p>Complete Forms required > email them + recommendation letter to DSO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I-538 – ISSS website OPT Acknowledgement – ISSS website Advisor/Department OPT recommendation letter 	

3. Create account on USCIS & start online I-765 – <https://www.uscis.gov/>

Create an Account or Sign In

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Get started at:

- www.uscis.gov
- my.uscis.gov
- myaccount.uscis.gov

Account Onboarding

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Welcome to Your USCIS Account

Select what you want to do

- Add a paper-filed case
- File a form online**
- Enter a representative passcode
- Verify your identity

Select the form you want to file online.

- Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card (I-90)
- Request for a Hearing on a Decision in Naturalization Proceedings (N-336)
- Application for Naturalization (N-400)
- Application for Replacement Naturalization/Citizenship Document (N-565)
- Application for Certificate of Citizenship (N-600)
- Application for Citizenship and Issuance of Certificate Under Section 322 (N-600K)
- Petition for Alien Relative (I-130)
- Application To Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status (I-539)

Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)

Only certain F-1 students seeking optional practical training (OPT) may file Form I-765 online. This includes:

- Pre-completion OPT - (c)(3)(A) eligibility category;
- Post-completion OPT - (c)(3)(B) eligibility category; or
- a 24-month extension for STEM students (students holding a degree in science technology, engineering, or mathematics) - (c)(3)(C) eligibility category.

- **Application Category – Post-Completion OPT > (c) (3) (B)**

Items required to upload with Online I-765:

- Most recent I-94 record – <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>
- Valid passport – copy of information page (and renewal or extensions)
- F-1 Visa (if applicable) – copy of visa page
- OPT I-20 issued by DSO
- Copies of any CPT I-20s from LLU
- Copies of any previous Employment Authorization Documents (EAD)
- Copies of any previous OPT I-20s from other U.S. schools
- One photograph (JPG, JPEG, or PNG file only)
 - 2x2 inch U.S. passport size
 - White Background

4. Meet with your DSO via Zoom to ask question about online I-765 & finalize OPT I-20 dates:

- Your DSO will issue the *OPT I-20* and email you the electronic copy.
- Send DRAFT of I-765 application to DSO for review and editing (if needed) before submitting final I-765 online.
- **DO NOT submit payment until DSO has approved the I-765 DRAFT.**

****WARNING** – You must receive the *OPT I-20* from your DSO **BEFORE** you can submit your I-765 application. **Failure to upload the OPT I-20 before I-765 is submitted will result in a denial from USCIS.**

5. Submit the I-765 application online:

- Upload all items in Step 3
- Submit fee payment online through a secure USCIS website
- Once payment is completed, the I-765 application is filed
- I-765 must be filed within 30 days of date DSO issues the *OPT I-20*

TEMPLATE– Academic Advisor/Department Chair Recommendation Letter

Letter of recommendation, must be printed on LLU letter head, with an original signature of the department dean/chair or the academic advisor.

(To:) Esther Guerpo, Director
International Student & Scholar Services, SSC 1201
Loma Linda University, CA

(Salutation)

I am recommending Dr./Mr./Ms. _____ (student's name), a(n) _____ (undergraduate or graduate) who will complete all the requirement for a _____ (A.S., B.S., etc.) degree on, _____ *(date that has not yet been reached – mm,dd,yyyy).

The student's major field of study is _____ and post-completion optional practical training in the area of _____ (specific area of training) is highly recommended. This training will give the student an opportunity to gain valuable practical work experience in _____ (his/her) field of study and nicely compliments the theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom.

** This date is the day that the student with complete all the requirements for their degree, this might not necessarily be student's graduation date or the quarter/term end date.*

Important OPT Reminders:

- For pre-completion OPT, you can file the Form I-765 up to 90 days before being enrolled for a full academic year, as long as the OPT will not begin until after you have completed a full academic year. If you have been enrolled for a full academic year, you can file the Form I-765 up to 120 days prior to the requested OPT start date.
- For post-completion OPT, you can file the Form I-765 up to 90 days before your program end date and no later than 60 days after your program end date.
- The Form I-765 must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the date your international student advisor made the OPT recommendation in SEVIS (see page 2 of the printed Form I-20 for the dates you requested OPT).
- If you move and do not provide USCIS with your new address, your EAD will be returned to USCIS. To change your address, submit an online Form AR-11 to USCIS, or ask your DSO to update SEVIS. All address changes must be submitted with 10 days of your move.
- Your OPT employment must be directly related to your field of study and cannot begin until you have the EAD card in hand (and the start date has arrived).
- F-1 status is dependent upon full-time employment or volunteer service while on post-completion OPT. You cannot accrue more than 90 days of unemployment while on post-completion OPT. If you are close to 90 days, consult with your DSO.
- You will need to continue to update your DSO with address changes in employment while on post-completion OPT.

****Immigration will track your employment to be sure you do not exceed more than 90 days of unemployment. It is imperative that you update your employment in a timely manner. If you exceed this limit, your OPT will automatically cancel and your F-1 status will be terminated.**