

Students wishing to apply for OPT must schedule an appointment with their IPS Immigration Advisor (906.487.2160). Please bring this checklist and all documents noted below to the Advisor at the time of the appointment. We also request that you bring photocopies as noted below. IPS can make copies at the time of your appointment if you do not have access to a copier.

**CHECKLIST: [Please do not staple copied pages together.]**

1. I-765 Form: See <http://www.uscis.gov/>
  - a. Address on I-765 (Post Office will NOT forward EAD cards)
  - b. List current address only if you'll be there when card is expected to arrive
  - c. You may give the IPS address: IPS, Michigan Tech, 1400 Townsend Dr, Houghton, MI 49931. We will email you when the card arrives and request a forwarding address.
  - d. You may give a friend's/relative's address, but your name must be on the mailbox.
2. Academic advisor's letter printed on department letterhead:  
[http://www.ips.mtu.edu/Forms/Immigration/opt\\_advisor\\_letter.pdf](http://www.ips.mtu.edu/Forms/Immigration/opt_advisor_letter.pdf)
3. All immigration documents:
  - a. I-94 – photocopy of both sides
  - b. valid passport – photocopy of photo page, renewal page if original has expired, and pages showing amendments such as name changes, corrections, etc.
  - c. visa – photocopy of visa page
4. 2 photos: IPS recommends Brockway Photography in downtown Houghton. Photos MUST be the correct size. See sample at  
[http://travel.state.gov/passport/guide/composition/composition\\_874.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/guide/composition/composition_874.html)
5. Write your name and I-94 card number on the back of each photo in pencil.
6. \$340 fee (Check or Money Order payable to USCIS). Personal checks must have the account holder's address printed on them. These will be handled as Electronic Funds Transfers and will be deducted from your account immediately upon receipt.
7. Offer letter from your future employer if you have one.
8. Any correspondence with the USCIS (if applicable) – photocopy all correspondence, envelopes, receipts, notifications, etc. as may be appropriate for the situation
9. Previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD cards, if applicable) – and photocopy of card

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:**

1. Students are allowed to apply for OPT up to 90 days prior to the completion of their program or as long as 60 days following completion. The OPT application must be RECEIVED BY the USCIS office prior to the 60<sup>th</sup> day following completion of your program.
2. IPS will mail applications at standard postal rates. Students may take and mail the application packets themselves if they wish to expedite delivery.

**REPORTING REQUIREMENTS WHILE ON OPT:**

**IF IN DOUBT, REPORT.** You must report any change of location and/or visa status to the IPS office during their OPT employment. Report changes [HERE](#):  
[http://www.ips.mtu.edu/Forms/Immigration/Employer\\_Change\\_Web.htm](http://www.ips.mtu.edu/Forms/Immigration/Employer_Change_Web.htm)

- a. Must report any change of employment (starting employment, ending employment, moving from one site to another with the same employer) including employer's name and address and employment dates
- b. Must report any change of name and/or visa status (H1-B approval, Permanent Residency applied for)
- c. Must report departure from US if you don't plan to return. Travel letter should be obtained from either employer or MTU before leaving country if you plan to return.

## **AUTOMATIC “CAP GAP” EXTENSION:**

This extension is only partially “automatic.” I must still issue an extended I-20, but the extension does not need “approval”. If your employer has petitioned for an H1 visa, you will be eligible to work until the petition is either approved or denied. If it is approved, you are eligible for a work-authorization extension until your H1 becomes effective. You may request the cap gap extension by email to [mjvogler@mtu.edu](mailto:mjvogler@mtu.edu) attaching proof that your petition has been timely filed (statement from your employer and delivery receipt) and/or approved (official notice from DHS). This should be done prior to the expiration of your original OPT.

## **17-MONTH STEM EXTENSION:**

1. Students in STEM areas who are employed by qualifying employers may apply for a 17-month extension of OPT.
  - a. Approved STEM areas are listed [HERE](#)
  - b. Employers must be registered with E-Verify. Information [HERE](#)
  - c. Process for applying for an extension. (For further information, see the DHS instructions that accompany the I-765 form online.)
  - d. Student completes I-765, including all parts of question #17. “Degree” requested on the I-765 should be your level, the CIP code, and a short name for your degree, e.g., MS, Computer Sci, CIP 11.0701.
    - i. Student sends completed I-765 to IPS for new I-20. A scanned color copy of the I-765 is acceptable and may be attached to an email. Faxed copies are not acceptable.
    - ii. Student should include in the request for a STEM extension I-20 a surface mail address to which the new I-20 should be sent.
    - iii. I-765 and OPT extension I-20 is returned to student by IPS
    - iv. All mailings from IPS will be at standard surface rate unless the student includes a prepaid UPS/FedEx mailer to expedite return.
    - v. Student sends the following documents in the order listed to the appropriate USCIS Service Center (list is in the I-765 instructions)
      - a) Two identical color passport-style photos 2x2 taken within 30 days of filing. (with pencil or felt pen, write name and I-94# on back)
      - b) Filing fee (check in the amount of \$340 payable to US Department of Homeland Security)
      - c) I-765, completed and signed
      - d) Copy of I-94 Departure Record (front and back)
      - e) Copy of your last EAD (front and back) Copy of passport and visa is not required since you have a prior EAD.
      - f) New I-20 for OPT extension
      - g) Copy of your degree (transcript showing completion)
  - e. Student informs IPS of date application for extension was mailed, and immediately upon receipt of new EAD with start date on new EAD.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

1. Students can engage in OPT in both pre- and post-completion of studies, but the cumulative maximum amount of time that can be granted for OPT should not exceed 12 months per educational level.
2. The student can choose the start date of the employment any time within 60 days after the program completion date.
3. Students applying for OPT may not start employment until they have received an Employment Authorization Card (EAD). The student is only allowed to begin work on or after the date specified in their EAD card.

4. When the EAD card is received, make a photocopy of it, indicate the date on which it is received, and either fax, email, or send the copy to the attention of your immigration advisor.
5. Once the OPT has been approved and an EAD card is issued, the OPT may not be withdrawn, canceled, or deferred.
6. Students on OPT are allowed to work for more than one employer or change employers provided that the new job is directly related to the student's area of study. Student must report current employer's address to IPS.

## **TRAVEL AFTER FILING AN OPT APPLICATION:**

**A. While your application for OPT is PENDING**, you *may* travel outside the US. However, if you do not have a job offer in hand, be certain you return before your EAD card is issued or you will forfeit your OPT. (Tricky since you don't know when it will be approved.)

If you travel while your OPT application is pending, take these things with you:

1. the receipt issued by USCIS for the OPT application
2. your job offer letter if you have one
3. all the standard travel documents:

[http://www.ips.mtu.edu/Current/Immigration/travel\\_info.pdf](http://www.ips.mtu.edu/Current/Immigration/travel_info.pdf)

- **NOTE: IF YOUR OPT HAS BEEN APPROVED and you depart the US before getting a job, your OPT ends and you cannot reenter.**
- Students engaged in OPT who wish to travel outside the United States are subject to the same travel requirements as an F-1 student.
- Once you have submitted an application for OPT, you will not be able to renew your F-1 visa. If it has expired or will expire during your OPT, you will have to remain in the US. The one exception is if an employer requires your travel outside the US. In that case, the employer can write a letter requesting a visa renewal and it will likely be renewed, though even then it is not guaranteed.

## **B. Once your OPT has been approved** (whether you've received the card or not)

Do not travel outside the US without:

1. a current I-20 endorsed for travel within the preceding 6 months
2. a valid F-1 visa
3. an unexpired EAD card or the receipt issued by USCIS for your OPT application.
4. an offer letter indicating you are/will be employed including dates of employment

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