INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AND SCHOLAR SERVICES

Pre-Completion OPT Checklist

Follow these steps to request Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (Pre-OPT) while you are still completing your degree.

Before you begin

Pre-Completion OPT is optional and uses part of your 12-month OPT allowance at this degree level. Part-time Pre-OPT (20 hours per week or less) is deducted at half rate (50 %); full-time (more than 20 hours) at full rate. Time authorized by USCIS is deducted even if you do not work.

Step 1: Check that you are eligible

You must be able to check every box below.

- ☐ I am in the U.S. and maintaining valid F-1 status.
- ☐ I have a valid passport and an I-94 record showing F-1 status.
- ☐ I have enrolled full-time for at least one full academic year (Fall and Spring).
  You may apply up to 90 days before meeting the one full academic year, but your Pre-OPT start date must fall after you complete it.
- ☐ I am in good academic standing and have not completed my academic program.
- ☐ I have not used 12 months of OPT at this degree level, and I have not completed 365 days or more of full-time CPT at this level.
- ☐ The work I want to do is directly related to my major or field of study.
- ☐ I have enough time left in my program to take part in Pre-OPT.

Is CPT an option instead?

CPT may be approved only when practical experience is a required part of the curriculum for all students in the program. If a course requires an internship but can be replaced by a course that does not, the experience is not required, and CPT does not apply. Ask your academic advisor, who may contact ISSS directly if CPT is required for your program.

Step 2: Meet with ISSS and request your Pre-OPT I-20

Submit through iNorthTX. You must receive an ISSS-issued I-20 with the Pre-Completion OPT recommendation before you apply to USCIS.

- ☐ I reviewed the Pre-OPT requirements.
- ☐ I met with an ISSS advisor. Be ready to discuss:
  - Your expected program completion date
  - Any OPT you used before at this degree level
  - Your proposed employment
  - Part-time vs. full-time
  - Your requested Pre-OPT dates
  - How Pre-OPT will affect your future Post-OPT

☐ I chose my dates carefully:

- Start date: Must be after one academic year in F-1 status. Choose a date at least 2 months after you apply, since processing times vary, unless you plan to use premium processing. Check USCIS Processing Times (Form I-765, category (c)(3)).
  - **Students who have not yet met the one full academic year requirement:** can file for pre-completion OPT no sooner than 90 days before meeting that requirement, provided the employment start date requested is on or after the date they meet the one full academic year requirement.
  - **Students who have already met the one full academic year requirement:** regulations do not clearly state whether pre-completion OPT applications are limited to 90 days before the requested start date. As a precaution, UNT recommends applying no more than 90 days before your requested start date.
- End date: on or before your program end date, and no more than 12 months from your start date.
- Part-time only during long semesters (Fall or Spring). Full-time may be possible during an official break or annual summer vacation, but not if summer is a required term or your final semester.

Dates and part-time/full-time status cannot be changed after you file with USCIS. A change needs a new I-20 and a new application and an application fee.

☐ I submitted the Pre-OPT request in iNorthTX with all documents ISSS requied.

☐ ISSS issued my Pre-OPT-recommended I-20. (Pre-OPT is not automatic; ISSS must first determine your eligibility)

☐ I will file my Pre-OPT application with USCIS within 30 days after receiving my Pre-OPT-recommended I-20.

> **Check your new I-20 right away**
> Confirm that the Pre-OPT authorization is listed at the top of page 2, and that the dates and part-time/full-time choice are correct. If anything is wrong or missing, **do not use that I-20 to file. Contact ISSS first.**

Step 3: Prepare your USCIS application

You prepare and file your own Form I-765. ISSS cannot file it for you.

FEE

☐ I confirmed the current filing fee on the USCIS I-765 page.
Online: pay by card or bank draft as the last step. By mail: check or money order payable to the Department of Homeland Security, or a signed G-1450. Fees can change without notice. Premium processing is available for an additional fee. USCIS and ISSS strongly recommend filling online.

DOCUMENTS TO GATHER

☐ **Signed Pre-OPT I-20.** Sign and date the Student Attestation on page 1 by hand in ink, then copy pages 1 and 2 (or scan if filing online).
The OPT recommendation must have been entered in SEVIS within the last 30 days.

☐ **Passport-style photo(s)** meeting U.S. Department of State requirements (2x2, color, white background, taken within the last 30 days).
By mail you need two photos with your name and I-94 number lightly penciled on the back. USCIS may also send a biometrics appointment notice after you file, so check your mail, email, and MyUSCIS account.

☐ **I-94 record,** printed from i94.cbp.dhs.gov.

☐ **Passport copy:** photo/identity page, expiration, and F-1 visa page(s).

☐ **Prior authorizations** (only if you have them): copies of previous EAD cards, and CPT or OPT I-20s from this or earlier degree levels. Leave blank if none.

☐ **G-1145** (mail-in only, optional): place on top of your packet to get an email or text when USCIS receives it.

FORM I-765

☐ I completed Form I-765 with eligibility category **(c)(3)(A)** (Pre-Completion OPT).
Online, choose "initial permission to accept employment" as the reason. By mail, write (c)(3)(A) in Question 27. If you file via mail, make sure to use the latest form version from USCIS.

☐ I used a U.S. mailing address that will be valid for at least 6 months.
Changing your address while your application is pending can cause your EAD to be lost or delayed. Mail from USCIS cannot be forwarded by USPS. If your address may change, consider a PO Box or personal mailbox, or a friend or family address with "In care of" filled in.

Step 4: File with USCIS within 30 days

Process: ISSS enters the OPT recommendation in SEVIS → you receive and sign the OPT I-20 → USCIS receives your I-765 within 30 days → USCIS decides → EAD issued if approved.

> **30-day rule**
> USCIS must receive your I-765 within 30 days of the date the OPT recommendation was entered in SEVIS. A late filing will be denied. Do not wait until the last day.

☐ I am physically in the U.S. when I file.
If you leave before filing, wait until you re-enter in F-1 status and have your new I-94 before you submit.

☐ I filed **online or by mail, not both**. Online filing is strongly recommended by USCIS: it gives immediate proof of receipt and fewer rejections. For mail filings, check the current USCIS address since USPS and courier addresses differ and keep a full copy of your packet.

☐ I saved my receipt notice (I-797C) and checked that my name is spelled correctly.

Step 5: Wait for your EAD

☐ I am watching my mail, email, and USCIS account for notices.
Contact ISSS if your application is denied or rejected (if filling via mail), or if you receive a Request for Evidence (RFE). Check status with your receipt number at egov.uscis.gov.

☐ If I move, I updated my address with USCIS and with UNT in my my.unt portal.

☐ I received my EAD card and checked that the dates and details are correct.

☐ I uploaded a copy of my EAD to ISSS through iNorthTX.

> **Travel**
> While you apply and while on Pre-OPT, you remain in F-1 status. You may travel as usual with your normal F-1 documents. Notices from USCIS go to your U.S. mailing address, so a delay in answering them could delay or sink your case.

Step 6: Start working only when all three are true

- ☐ USCIS has approved my OPT.
- ☐ I have my EAD card in hand.
- ☐ The start date on my EAD has arrived.

> **Not enough to start work**
> Receiving the Pre-OPT I-20 does not authorize employment. Submitting the I-765 does not authorize employment.

Step 7: While you are on Pre-OPT

Period	Hours allowed
While classes are in session (Fall/Spring)	20 hours per week or less
Official school break or eligible annual summer vacation, but not if summer is a required term or your final semester	Full-time may be permitted if approved for full-time Pre-OPT
Dissertation only	Either full-time or part-time

- ☐ If I am authorized for part-time Pre-OPT, I can only work part-time during the authorized period.
- ☐ I must remain enrolled full-time as required, and I will work only within my authorized hours. I talk to ISSS before moving between part-time and full-time.
- ☐ Every job, internship, or volunteer position is directly related to my major. I can explain how my coursework and skills apply.
- ☐ I must report changes to ISSS through iNorthTX **within 10 days**:
  - Starting or ending a job
  - New employer, employer name, or worksite address
  - New U.S. address or legal name change

  For each job, be ready to provide: offer letter or verification, employer name, job title, start date (and end date), worksite address, average weekly hours, job duties, and a short note on how it relates to your degree.
- ☐ I must keep my own records: all OPT I-20s, copy of the I-765, USCIS receipt and approval notices, EAD, offer letters, job descriptions, dates and hours worked, and any messages from ISSS or USCIS.
- ☐ I know my Pre-OPT should end on or before my program completion date. To extend or add a period, I must repeat the I-20 request and USCIS filing.

Need help? Schedule an appointment with ISSS, email internationaladvising@unt.edu, or call 940-565-2195. Marquis Hall, 1511 W. Mulberry Street.

USCIS rules, forms, and fees change with little notice. Always confirm the current requirements on the USCIS website. Immigration regulations and policies can change frequently. Please visit the ISSS website regularly to stay informed of the latest updates.