

## ***A Five Step Guide to Optional Practical Training: ISSI Form 211***

\*\*\*\*Use the checklists below to ensure completion of each step in the process\*\*\*\*

### **Step 1**

**Obtaining the Application Packet and Scheduling an Appointment:** This form is a part of the ISSI's OPT information packet. After obtaining the OPT packet at the ISSI or at [www.issi.neu.edu/forms](http://www.issi.neu.edu/forms), the student should schedule an appointment with an international student advisor. Before the appointment the student should complete the following forms:

- Form I-765:** This form may be downloaded from: [www.uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/index.htm](http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/index.htm).
- The student--to the best of his/her ability--needs to complete and sign in blue ink this ***Application for Employment Authorization***. Please refer to ISSI form 209 for a complete set of guidelines on how to complete this application. For item number 16, the codes for Eligibility Categories should be entered as follows: **For OPT, please enter the following codes in the three consecutive parentheses: for Pre-completion OPT, enter: (c) (3) (A); for Post-completion OPT, enter: (c) (3) (B). For the 17 month STEM extension, enter: (c) (3) (C). If the I-765 Form is used for part-time work off-campus due to severe economic hardship, enter: (c) (3) (iii). For off-campus employment under the sponsorship of a qualifying international organization, enter: (c) (3) (ii).**
- Form ISSI 210:** This form is a ***Request for SEVIS I-20***, and is required since a student will be issued a new I-20 bearing the OPT recommendation. Please complete the required information.
- Form ISSI 217: Only for graduate students applying for pre-completion OPT**
- Form ISSI 133:** This form is the ***Certification of Program Completion for International Students*** that will confirm the expected date of program completion for those intending to engage in **post-completion OPT**.

### **Step 2**

**The Appointment:** The student must bring the following to the appointment with the ISSI advisor:

- The completed I-765 form.
- The appropriate and completed ISSI forms.
- Current original passport
- Original I-94 form
- Current I-20 and all previous I-20s.

### **Step 3**

**Mailing the Application:** After meeting with the international student advisor and obtaining a new I-20 with a recommendation for OPT, the student must assemble the following documents for mailing:

- Form I-765 (original). (Revised 05/27/08)N
- Check or money order for \$340 payable to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.
- Photocopy of Form I-94 (front and back).
- Photocopy of the new I-20 signed and dated with the recommendation for OPT on page 3.
- Photocopy of all previous I-20(s).

- Photocopy of previous Employment Authorization Card (EAC) if any.
- Two “full-frontal color passport style” photos are required. Follow the photo instructions given on the Department of State website at <http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/index.html> (see “Composition Checklist”/“Frequently Asked Question”). Print your name legibly on back of each photo.
- Photocopy of the biographical page of the passport.
- Photocopy of your most recent visa stamp.
- NSEERS (National Security Entry-Exit Registration System) registrants must include proof of special registration (consult an ISSI advisor for details).

Mail the above items by Certified Mail with return receipt to the USCIS service center that has jurisdiction over your district of residence as indicated on your form I-765. If you reside in Massachusetts send your application to:

**U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
Vermont Service Center  
75 Lower Welden Street  
St. Albans, VT 05479**

Please note that the application for OPT must be sent to USCIS within 30 days of the date of recommendation for OPT by the International Student Advisor at the ISSI, which appears on the new I-20 issued in conjunction with the application for OPT.

## **Step 4**

### **Processing Period for the OPT Application:**

**Receipt Notice (Form I-797):** After the student has mailed the OPT application to the USCIS, he or she will receive a confirmation of receipt: Form I-797. *Please keep this form.* This confirmation notification contains a case number assigned to you by the USCIS that you can use to track your case status online at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).

**Address Changes:** While the student’s application is pending, any changes in address **must be reported to two different places:** 1) the ISSI; 2) the USCIS at the Immigration Service Center processing your OPT application (the student should include a copy of his/her Form I-797 in any correspondence with the USCIS). *It is vital to inform the ISSI and USCIS of the correct address in order to ensure the timely delivery of the student’s EAC.*

**IMPORTANT:** Form AR-11 does not need to be filed except by students subject to special registration (NSEERS), who must notify the USCIS of their address changes by mailing Form AR-11SR to the address listed on that form (<http://uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/ar-11sr.htm>)

## **Step 5**

### **Maintaining Status while in post-completion OPT**

**EAC:** After having received permission to work from the USCIS in the form of an Employment Authorization Document, the student must **submit a copy of the card to the ISSI** for their records. *Students may work when and only when they have the EAC and only work within the dates specified on the employment card.*

**Address Changes:** Any **change of address must be reported within 10 days** to the ISSI. NSEERS students must notify the USCIS of their address changes by mailing Form AR-11SR to the address listed on that form (<http://uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/ar-11sr.htm>)

**Reporting Employer Name and Address and Changes in Employer:** Students must report their start date of employment, the name and address of their employer, as well as any change in employer or

interruption of their employment, to the ISSI as soon as optional practical training employment is secured or change in employer occurs.

**Limit of 90 days of unemployment during 12 month of post-completion OPT:** Federal regulations that went into effect on April 8, 2008 limit days of unemployment to 90 days during the 12-month period of post-completion optional practical training. The 90 days starts from the start date of employment as indicated on the Employment Authorization Card. Students will not be considered to be maintaining F-1 status once a total of 90 days of unemployment is reached. Days spent outside the U.S. once the start date of employment on the EAC occurs are included in these 90 days. Please note that periods of 10 days or less between different employers will not be counted towards the 90 days of unemployment.

**Travel:** Please refer to Form ISSI 216 - Travel Advisory for Student Engaged in Post-Completion Optional Practical Training

**Discontinuing OPT:** If the student decides to discontinue his or her OPT, the ISSI must be informed as soon as possible.

**Termination of OPT:** If the student transfers to another school or begins studies toward a higher degree, the OPT will automatically be terminated.

**17 Month STEM Extensions:** Please see an advisor at the ISSI for instructions.

**Cap Gap Extension:** Please see an advisor at the ISSI for instructions.