

## POST COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) APPLICATION CHECKLIST

MY REQUESTED OPT START DATE IS \_\_\_\_\_ Post-completion OPT may begin on any day between the date of completing your degree and up to 60 days later.

### PREPARATION CHECKLIST

- If you are an engineering student, you must follow additional steps.
- Complete the attached application forms on pages 2 and 4, including obtaining a required signature from your college or department. You must complete this step prior to attending an OPT group appointment.
- Obtain 2 color "passport type" photographs (e.g. head and shoulders looking straight ahead on a white background).  
*The Creation Station in the University Center Underground will do the photos correctly for \$10.*
- Schedule an appointment at International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS). OPT application appointments are in a group setting.

### APPOINTMENT CHECKLIST

*You do the following:*

- Bring your current I-20, passport(s) that is valid for six months into the future and most recent visa page, and I-94 card.
  - Have the attached "Academic Verification & Student Responsibility" form signed.
  - Complete form I-765. This form is either attached or can be downloaded at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf>
- POST-COMPLETION OPT APPLICANTS: Question 16 should be coded (c) (3) (B).**
- Bring the 2 color passport type photos described above.
  - Bring a personal check payable to **U.S. Department of Homeland Security** for \$410.
  - Select a start date for your OPT. The start date must be between the date of completion (e.g., usually the official closing of the final semester or date thesis or dissertation is submitted for binding) and up to 60 days later.

*ISSS does the following:*

- Requests a new I-20 from SEVIS with a recommendation for OPT.
- Reviews application for accuracy and answers your questions.
- Supplies an envelope with a mailing label for you to mail your completed application to USCIS.

### MAILING CHECKLIST

**NOTE:** You are responsible for mailing your application to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in a timely manner. Your application must arrive at the USCIS Texas Service Center WITHIN 30 DAYS of your OPT appointment or 10 days before the end of your grace period, whichever occurs sooner.

- Pick up your new I-20 and photocopies from ISSS. ISSS will supply an envelope and mailing label in your appointment.
- Mail the following six documents in the envelope provided:
  - 1) G-1145 Delivery Confirmation form
  - 2) I-765 application form
    - Check for \$410 payable to **U.S. Department of Homeland Security** stapled to I-765.
    - Photos stapled to I-765.
  - 3) Photocopy of new I-20 with OPT recommendation on p. 3. **You keep the original.**
  - 4) Photocopy of passport photo page including expiration date and most recent visa page.
  - 5) Photocopy of front and back of I-94 card.
- Send to USCIS using Priority Mail with Delivery Confirmation (enables you to confirm delivery at USPS website: [www.usps.gov](http://www.usps.gov)). Once your application is posted as "delivered", print this page for your own records.

### APPROVAL CHECKLIST

- By submitting the G-1145 form, you should receive a text message or email notification that your package arrived at the USCIS Lockbox facility. This is separate from your formal receipt notice.
- You should receive an official receipt (called a Notice of Action) in about 2 weeks. *The receipt number (SRC #) on this form can be used to track the progress of your case from the USCIS website at <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsp/index.jsp>.*
- Normal processing times are from 60-90 days. If you have to wait more than 90 days from the official receipt date and you have a job offer letter, contact ISSS for assistance.

### AFTER RECEIVING YOUR CARD

- Submit your EAD Card to ISSSO for photocopying once you have received it or send us a clear picture-quality-photocopy.
- F-1s on OPT are required by U. S. law to report to ISSS any biographical or employment changes within 10 days of such changes.**
- Continue to update your SEVIS address in PeopleSoft and submit changes in employment via OPT Self Report online.
- Once your OPT ends you have a 60 day grace period to file for a change in your status, receive a new I-20, or depart the United States.

## POST COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) ACADEMIC VERIFICATION & STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY FORM

Student: Print your name below and take this form to your department for the required signature(s). **Note: The Engineering College requires the signature of the Dean and additional procedures that the student must follow to apply for this program.**

Student's name \_\_\_\_\_ PS ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### ACADEMIC VERIFICATION

– College or Departmental Signature Required –

This section needs to be signed by the Dean, Dissertation/Thesis Advisor, OR the student's Academic Advisor. The student is applying for Optional Practical Training (OPT), which is available through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). It allows an F-1 international student to work for up to one year in a field related to his/her major. In order to recommend the student for this post-completion practical training, we need to know the expected completion date. A student is allowed to apply 90 days before the completion of studies. It is helpful for the student to apply as early as allowed under law, since it may take up to three months to process the Employment Authorization Card from DHS. If the student does not complete the degree when expected, the Employment Authorization Card may be cancelled as long as the OPT start date has not begun. If the card is cancelled the student may reapply for OPT. If you have any questions, please call #35065 and ask to speak to an International Student Counselor. **NOTE:** Engineering majors have additional steps to follow. Please check with your department before attending a group OPT appointment.

1. This student has applied/will apply for graduation at the following degree level (please circle one):

Bachelor

Masters

Doctorate

2. This student is expected to complete/has completed all degree requirements on \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_.

(Usually the official closing of the semester or may be when the thesis or dissertation is submitted.)

Academic or Thesis/Dissertation

Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Dean of College \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Engineering Only)

Please return the form to the student.

### F-1 STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

-As an F-1 student, you have the following responsibilities. Please read them carefully before signing below.-

- If you withdraw your OPT application, you must notify ISSSO in writing. You are responsible to check your OPT application status on USCIS website: <http://www.uscis.gov/>, and to verify the information on your OPT (EAD) card.
- Do **not** work until you receive the Employment Authorization Card (EAD).
- Under no circumstances work **before or after** the start and ending dates on the EAD.
- Only work in a **field related to your major**.
- Do not attend school part-time or full-time in a degree seeking program.
- If you do not finish the degree in your expected final semester, check to see if you need a new I-20 to extend your program ending date. This must be done before your I-20 expires! To fail to do so may require reinstatement.
- Obtain a **new I-20** for any **new degree program**. If you plan to begin a new degree program at UH you will need a new I-20. If you plan to transfer to another school you will need to request your SEVIS record to be released from UH.
- **If you want to travel** outside the U.S. and reenter, you must have a valid I-20 travel endorsement no older than 6 months, a valid visa, valid passport, EAD card, and a letter from your employer verifying your employment.
- Supply ISSSO with your employer's name and address (**keep this data current**).
- **Keep your address, phone, and email information current with ISSS during your OPT.**
- At the end of your OPT you have a **60 day grace period** to file for a change in your status, receive a new I-20, or depart the U.S.
- **Inform ISSS** of any **change or adjustment of status** or **plans to depart** the U.S. permanently.

"I understand the above rules." Student signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: OPT

### What is OPT?

OPT stands for Optional Practical Training. It is a government authorized program that allows F-1 students to participate in up to one year of practical training in a field related to their major. You do not have to have a job offer in order to obtain OPT. The time is used even if you are not working. It is a one year "window of opportunity." **Technically, it may be done in two ways: Post-completion or Pre-completion.** Pre-completion has three subsets and requires special permission. *Most students choose post-completion OPT.*

- Post-completion OPT: Full-time after the completion of your degree. OPT STEM Extensions are only permitted for eligible students on post-completion OPT.
- Pre-completion OPT: Done while degree is in progress. Time utilized as pre-completion OPT will be subtracted from time permitted on post-completion OPT after graduation. CPT may be an option for students desiring Pre-completion OPT. Schedule an appointment with an International Student Counselor for additional information.
  - ✓ Part-time during the fall or spring semesters (20 hours a week or less). Time used is deducted at half the rate. Only available for non-supported students (e.g. cannot be combined with an assistantship).
  - ✓ Full-time during the summer. Only available for non-supported students (e.g. cannot be combined with an assistantship).
  - ✓ Full-time during fall or spring semester as a non-supported graduate student who has completed all course work (including department requirements, like screening exams, qualifying exams, and thesis/dissertation proposals, etc.) and is exclusively on thesis/dissertation only. Requires approval of thesis/dissertation advisor. Student's GPA, work and academic history, thesis/dissertation progress, supported or not supported will be evaluated to determine eligibility for this category.

### Who is eligible for OPT?

You must have completed one academic year (fall and spring semesters) as a legal full-time student and be in F-1 status at the time of your application. Students entering the United States under a new SEVIS ID# must wait to complete one full academic year as a full-time student before they are eligible to apply for OPT.

### Do I get another year of OPT if I complete a new degree?

You are allowed another year of OPT at the completion of another degree **at a higher level** (e.g. bachelor's to master's or master's to Ph.D.). Students who have received a bachelors, masters or doctoral degree in a field on the Department of Homeland Security STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Designated Degree Program List may be eligible for a once-in-a-lifetime only, 17- month extension to their OPT. There are additional requirements and qualifications for this special type of extension. If you think you may qualify, see an International Student Counselor for details.

### When should I apply?

You may apply for OPT 90 days before the completion of your studies **BUT PRIOR TO 60 DAYS AFTER THE COMPLETION OF YOUR STUDIES**. Since the application process may take up to 90 days and employment cannot begin until you have received an Employment Authorization Card (EAD card), we recommend that you apply early. Your application must arrive at the U.S. Texas Service Center and be officially receipted **before** the 60<sup>th</sup> day after the completion date of your degree program.

### When will my OPT begin?

Your employment authorization does not necessarily begin when your EAD card arrives. You will select the start date at the time of your appointment. For post-completion OPT, you may choose any date between your date of completion (usually the official closing of the semester) and up to 60 days later. For pre-completion OPT you choose the date that you want to start.

### May I get a temporary employment card if my application is delayed in processing?

No. This option is no longer available.

### How is OPT different from Curricular Practical Training (CPT)?

With OPT, the student receives an Employment Authorization Card from the Department of Homeland Security. With CPT, the authorization is granted by a Designated School Official (i.e. International Student Counselor at ISSS) and is indicated on page 3 of the student's I-20. Participation in CPT does not affect your future OPT as long as you work less than one year full-time under the CPT program. If one year or more of CPT is used, the student is no longer eligible for OPT that degree level. CPT must be an integral part of the curriculum. OPT does not have to be connected to the curriculum, but it does have to be in the field of the student's major.

### What do I do if I am not going to complete my degree as expected?

You should report immediately to our office. You may need to do a program extension, possibly apply for reinstatement for violation of status (if you were authorized for a reduced course load for your final semester), and or cancel your OPT.

## OPT SELF REPORT

According to the federal regulations [8 CFR 214.(f)], F-1 students are responsible for reporting the address, employer's name and address, and any periods of employment and unemployment while on OPT. ISSSO is responsible for updating the student's SEVIS record to reflect these changes. This reporting requirement is an on-going requirement. **Visit <http://issso.uh.edu> and click on OPT SELF REPORT to notify ISSS of changes to your information.** ISSS will then update your SEVIS record. As part of the OPT Self Report, you will need to send ISSS a clear copy of your EAD Card (front + back) and any I-797 notices you may have received.

### Acknowledgement of Responsibility:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am responsible for reporting the above information to International Student and Scholar Services while on optional practical training (OPT) and will immediately inform ISSSO of any changes to this information.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

SAMPLE SELF REPORT: Please fill out the information below to the best of your ability.

### Student Information:

SEVIS ID	PeopleSoft ID	Family Name	First Name		
Address		Apt #	City	State	ZIP
Email			Phone #		

### OPT Card Information:

Start Date	End Date	I will send a copy of my EAD Card to ISSSO by: (select one)
___/___/___	___/___/___	Fax_ ___ (713) 743-5079 or Email_ ___ ( <a href="mailto:sevis@central.uh.edu">sevis@central.uh.edu</a> , Subject: OPT Validation)

### Employer Information:

Primary Employer?	Employer's Name	Address	Suite/Apt.	City	State	ZIP	Start Date	End
(circle one) YES or NO								
(circle one) YES or NO		Address	Suite/Apt.	City	State	ZIP	Start Date	End

Supervisor Name	Supervisor Job Title/Position	Supervisor Phone #	Supervisor Email

### Exit Information: Please choose one of the following statements that best applies to you.

1. I returned to my home country on \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ and will not be returning to resume OPT.
2. I plan to leave the U.S. and will not be returning to resume my OPT. My anticipated departure date is: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_
3. I have changed my status from F-1 to: \_\_\_\_\_ Effective Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_  
I will send a copy of my approval notice (I-797) by: Fax \_\_\_ or Email \_\_\_ ([sevis@central.uh.edu](mailto:sevis@central.uh.edu), Subject: OPT Validation).
4. None of the above options apply to my situation at this present time.

## 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](#)

Passport Home

Traveling to Caribbean, Bermuda, Mexico, or Canada

Passport Card

US Electronic Passport

Get or Renew Passport

Application Processing Time

Online Application Status Check

National Passport Information Center

Applications and Forms

Lost or Stolen Passport

Frequently Requested Information

Passport Policy Information

Other Services and Information

Guide for Professional Photographers

Where to Apply in the U.S.

About Passport Services

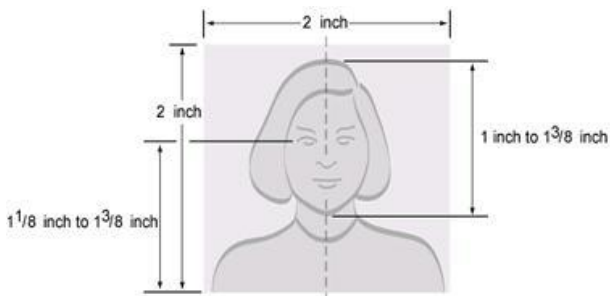


Figure 2. Head Position & Placement

### Well-Composed Photos

