

Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application

PREPARATION CHECKLIST ☑

- If you are an engineering student, you must receive additional signature on the Academic Verification Form.
- Complete the attached forms. Page 2 includes obtaining a required signature from your college or department (You must complete this step prior to attending an OPT 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 with International Student & Scholar Services Office (ISSSO). OPT application appointments are in a group setting. (This will show as a green color on the appointment calendar for each advisor)

APPOINTMENT CHECKLIST ☑

You bring the following:

- Bring your immigration documents, which includes your current I-20, passport, visa page, I-94, and any other documents pertaining to your immigration status.
- Have the attached “Academic Verification & Student Responsibility” form signed.
- Complete form I-765 and G-1145. These forms can be downloaded at: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
PRE-COMPLETION OPT APPLICANTS: Question 27 should be coded (c) (3) (A).

ISSSO does the following:

- Requests a new I-20 from SEVIS with a recommendation for Pre-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.
- A plastic bag for your passport photos

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 Lockbox Facility WITHIN 30 DAYS from the time that the Pre-OPT recommendation was given.*

- Pick up your new I-20 and photocopies from ISSSO.
- Mail the following documents in the envelope provided:
 - 1) G-1145 Delivery Confirmation form
 - 2) I-765 application form
 - 3) Check, money order, or cashier’s check for **\$410** payable to **U.S. Department of Homeland Security** stapled to I-765. Credit card payment is available using form G-1450.
 - 4) 2x Passport Photos stapled to I-765.
 - 5) Photocopy of new I-20 with OPT recommendation on p. 2. **You keep the original.**
 - 6) Photocopy of passport and visa pages.
 - 7) Copy of I-94 printout.
 - 8) Any additional documents that may be required.
- Send to USCIS using Priority Mail with Delivery Confirmation (enables you to confirm delivery at USPS website: 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 2-3 weeks. *The receipt number (SRC or YSC#) on this form can be used to track the progress of your case from the USCIS website at <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>.*
- Processing times are normally between 60-90 days, but may be longer.

AFTER RECEIVING YOUR CARD ☑

- Submit a copy of your EAD card to ISSSO by emailing sevis@central.uh.edu
- F-1s on OPT are required by U. S. law to report to ISSSO 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 until your Pre-Completion OPT period ends.

Pre-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 Associate Dean and additional procedures that the student must follow to apply for this program.**

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

ACADEMIC VERIFICATION

- College or Departmental Signature Required -

This section needs to be signed by the Dean, Dissertation/Thesis Advisor, and/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 student to work for up to one year in a field related to his/her major before (pre-completion) or after(post-completion) graduation. In order to recommend the student for pre-completion OPT, we need to know the expected completion date and type of pre-completion OPT being requested. It is helpful for the student to apply as early as allowed under law, since it may take at least two to three months to process the Employment Authorization Card. Students applying for pre-completion OPT are not eligible to transition directly to OPT-STEM Extension if otherwise eligible. 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 an OPT appointment.

1. This student is currently pursuing studies at the following degree level (please circle one):

Bachelor

Masters

Doctorate

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

(This date is usually the official closing of the semester or when the thesis/dissertation is/will be submitted. For Graduates: If a graduate student is enrolled in a 1 credit hour course for administrative purposes with an early submission deadline before the start of the next semester, he/she will be in their 60 day grace period following this deadline, even if they do not apply for OPT. Nor can this time frame cannot be used to apply for Pre-Completion OPT or CPT. A student is not eligible for Pre-OPT or CPT if they have met all their degree requirements.)

3. Type of PRE-COMPLETION OPT (Select one):

Part-time (During the main semesters or summer)

Full-time (Summer Semester break only)

Full-time having completed all course work (including department requirements, like screening exams, qualifying exams, and thesis/dissertation proposals, etc.) and is exclusively on thesis/dissertation only.

"I support this student's application to participate in the type of pre-completion OPT checked above."

Academic or Thesis Dissertation Advisor: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Associate Dean of College: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____
(Engineering Students Only)

Please return the form to the student.

Student Pre-Completion OPT Request Form

Please input your period of work, the start and end dates, for Pre-Completion OPT that you want below. This period of time cannot exceed one year and must be within the time of your degree program. The end date cannot exceed the date of completion as shown on the Academic Verification Form.

My requested Pre-OPT start date is: _____
(mm/dd/yyyy)

My requested Pre-OPT end date is: _____
(mm/dd/yyyy)

F-1 STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY on Pre-Completion OPT

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

- 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. Your period of Pre-Completion OPT will end prior to the end date if you complete all degree requirements early.
- Only work in a job related to your major area of study.
- 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.
- Any change of degree level I-20 or transfer out to a new school will cancel your period of Pre-Completion OPT.
- Any time used on Pre-Completion OPT will take away from your period of Post-Completion OPT. If you reached 1 year of Pre-Completion, you have lost your eligibility for Post-Completion OPT.
- Pre-Completion OPT cannot lead into OPT-STEM Extension, if otherwise eligible.
- You are not required to be employed during the period of Pre-Completion OPT, but you are required to report any work that do with ISSSO using the OPT-Self-Report within 10 days of starting a job. The link for OPT Self-Report is: <https://uh.edu/oisss/opt-details/OPT%20Self%20Report/>
- Supply ISSSO with your employer's name and address (keep this data current).
- Keep your address, phone, and email information current with ISSSO during your Pre-OPT.
- Inform ISSSO of any change or adjustment of status or plans to depart the U.S. permanently.

“By signing, I understand and will follow the above rules and responsibilities.”

Student Signature: _____ Student ID: _____ 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. This benefit is allowed only once per degree level. 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. The transition to an OPT STEM Extension can only occur for eligible students participating in 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 completing all degree requirements. Should the student desire to transition to post-completion OPT, a new filing fee (currently \$410) with a new application to USCIS for a new EAD Card is required.
 - ✓ 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 and dean. 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 OPT-Stem Extension, 24-month extension to their OPT. They are allowed two in their life-time, but cannot be combined and has to be following Post-Completion OPT.

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 60th 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 with the end date being before you complete your degree requirements.

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

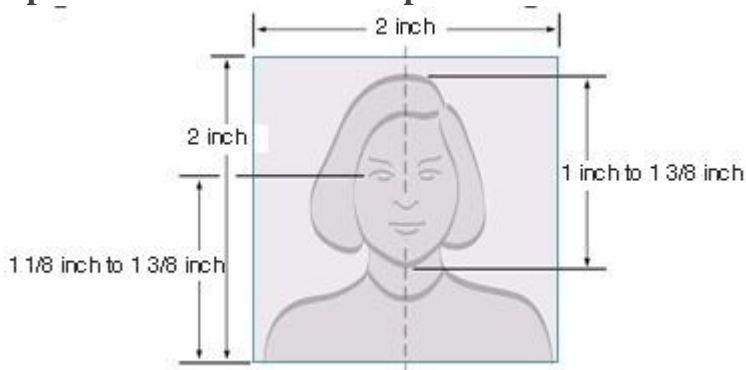
With Pre-OPT, the student receives an Employment Authorization Card from the Department of Homeland Security. With CPT, the authorization is granted by a Designated School Official (i.e. International Student Counselor at ISSSO) and is indicated on page 2 of the student’s I-20. Participation in CPT does 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. Pre and Post OPT does not have to be connected to the curriculum, but it does have to be in the field of the student’s major.

Photo Composition Template

Starting November 1, 2016, eye glasses will no longer be allowed in visa photos.

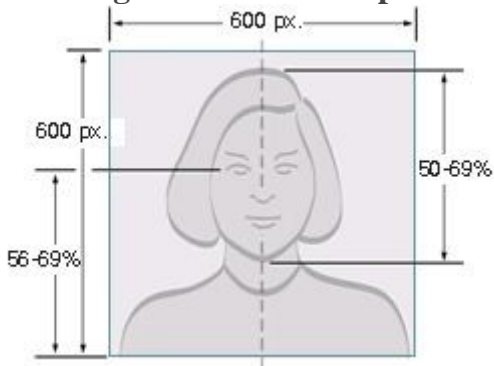
- Make sure the photo presents the full head from the top of the hair to the bottom of the chin
- Center the head with the frame
- The person in the photo should have a neutral expression and be facing the camera

Paper Photo Head Size Template

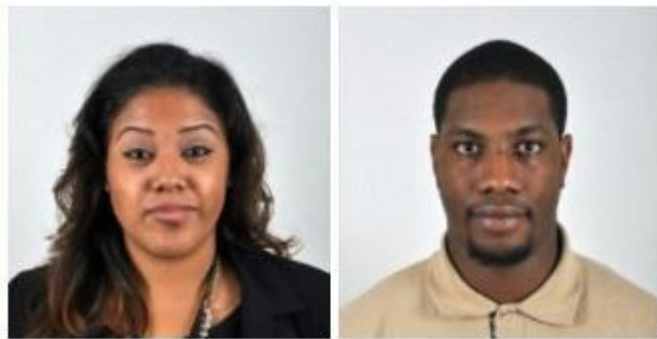


- Photo must be 2 inches by 2 inches
- The height of the head (top of hair to bottom of chin) should measure 1 inch to 1 3/8 inches (25 mm - 35 mm)
- Make sure the eye height is between 1 1/8 inches to 1 3/8 inches (28 mm - 35 mm) from the bottom of the photo

Digital Image Head Size Template



Well Composed Photo Composition Examples



- The top of the head, including the hair, to the bottom of the chin must be between 50% and 69% of the image's total height. The eye height (measured from the bottom of the image to the level of the eyes) should be between 56% and 69% of the image's height.
- Image pixel dimensions must be in a square aspect ratio (meaning the height must be equal to the width). Minimum acceptable dimensions are 600 pixels (width) x 600 pixels (height). Maximum acceptable dimensions are 1200 pixels (width) x 1200 pixels (height).