OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING
The OPT workshop will cover these topics:

- Understand OPT and your eligibility
- Detail the OPT application procedures
- Understand obligations during OPT and maintaining F-1 status
- Essential resources
OPT Overview:

What is Optional Practical Training?

- Optional Practical Training is work permission available for eligible F-1 students. It allows students to have real work experience related to their major field of study.

- Designated School Official (DSO) recommends OPT in SEVIS

- Student must apply for the work permit with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

- If approved, USCIS will issue an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). The student must not begin working before the start date on the EAD card.
OPT Overview - Types of OPT:

- Pre-Completion OPT: Any portion of OPT used before the student’s Program End Date. It may be part-time or full-time.

- Post-Completion OPT: Any portion of OPT used after the student’s Program End Date. It must be full-time.

- H-1B Cap Gap OPT: For students whose prospective employers filed a qualifying H-1B-cap subject petition. (Possible for Spring graduates and Summer graduates, with an H-1B Cap-Subject employer)

- OPT STEM-Extension (24 months) For students who majored in designated Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) degrees approved by DHS.
OPT Eligibility – who is Eligible for OPT?

- F-1 students who have attended an SEVP certified institution on a full-time basis, for a minimum of one academic year
- May be authorized for up to 12 months of OPT
- Each subsequent application for a new Post-Completion OPT, must be for a higher degree level – OPT may only be granted once per degree level, and only if moving upward in degree level
- F-1 students with one year or greater (12 months or greater) of Full-Time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) are no longer eligible for OPT at that current degree level
- Part-Time CPT does not affect OPT eligibility
Transitions during OPT and after OPT

Resuming study for a new degree level:

- If resuming study at University of Houston, the new I-20 must be printed prior to the 60 day grace period ending. Your OPT work authorization ends, and the EAD card becomes invalid on the date of printing an I-20 for a new degree level.

- If resuming study at another institution, the SEVIS record must be transferred to the new institution prior to the 60 day grace period ending. Your period of OPT ends upon the transfer release date in SEVIS.

- The first day of classes must be within 5 months of the OPT EAD card end date or the date of your transfer, and you may not exceed 90 days of unemployment during the OPT EAD dates.

- Your OPT period cannot continue when classes have begun - You will need an updated I-20 to reflect your new program of study - You may choose to end OPT early to resume study.
OPT Application Procedures

- **Deadline**: Your application must be received and receipted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) within **30 days of the DSO’s recommendation**, and within your 60 day grace period, whichever is earlier!

- Application filing window: F-1 students may apply for Post Completion OPT from 90 days prior to the degree program completion, and up to 60 days after the program end date.

- A timely-filed OPT application means that you may legally remain in the U.S. while the OPT application is pending with USCIS

- You should apply as early as possible for OPT, when you find out that you will meet the graduation requirements.
OPT Application Procedures

The date indicated by your academic advisor / graduate advisor will be used as the **new I-20 Program End date** on your OPT recommended I-20

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**ACADEMIC VERIFICATION**

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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.
OPT Application Procedures – Shorten I-20

- Because the I-20 Program Dates must match your degree program dates, it is necessary that our office shorten your I-20 program end date - The I-20 will be shortened to the date provided by your academic advisor on the OPT Academic Verification form.

- If you find that you will have a delay in completion of degree requirements, you must request an I-20 Program Extension immediately or risk violating your F-1 status.

- SEVP strongly recommends that a student who may not be able to successfully complete all program requirements on time defer applying for Post Completion OPT until after his or her program ends.

- Your I-20 can only be extended prior to the new I-20 program end date - not after.
OPT Application Procedures – Shorten I-20

- If there is a delay in completion of degree requirements, you must request an I-20 Program Extension immediately or risk violating your F-1 status – While this is critical to maintaining a student’s status, there is an exception for Thesis track and Dissertation track students with all coursework completed:

  - SEVP Policy Guidance issued on April 23, 2010 states:
  - Can a student in a graduate-level program who has completed all program requirements, aside from thesis or equivalent, apply for either Pre-Completion OPT or Post-Completion OPT? Yes, a student who only has the thesis or equivalent remaining may either apply for pre-completion OPT or post-completion OPT while completing the thesis/dissertation.
For all Thesis track and Dissertation track students with all coursework completed: If you experience a delay in completing your Thesis / Dissertation, it is not necessary for you to request I-20 program extension.

- Requesting extension will cause problems with the OPT application.
- If EAD is granted, begin working 20 hours / week while completing the Thesis / Dissertation.
- Be careful about switching to Non-Thesis track – this would require I-20 extension.
- For all students: After your I-20 program end date is shortened, do NOT work on-campus or on CPT after the new I-20 program end date.
- You must wait until the EAD card is approved and the EAD start date.

OPT Application Procedures – **Shorten I-20**
OPT Application Procedures – **Start Date**

- You will need to choose an OPT Start Date and fill it in on the OPT Application Checklist form.

- Your requested OPT Start Date can be any day during your 60 day grace period, which begins with the completion of your program of study (I-20 Program End date).

- Note that the requested OPT Start Date may not be changed after your application is submitted to USCIS.

- Keep in mind the average 90 days processing time – allow adequate time for USCIS to grant your requested start date.

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**UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON**

Office of the Provost

International Student and Scholar Services

Student Center North, Room N203, Houston, TX 77204-3024 • Phone: (713) 743-5065 • Fax: (713) 743-5079 • http://uh.edu/oisss

My requested OPT start date is (mm/dd/yyyy): ________________

Post-completion OPT may begin on any day between the date of completing your degree and up to 60 days later.
OPT Application Procedures – **Start Date**

Choose your requested OPT Start Date within this range of dates

**I-20 Program End Date**
(from signed Academic Verification form)

60th calendar day after I-20 Program End Date
OPT – Employment Regulations

- All work during Post-Completion OPT must be in a job that is directly related to the student’s degree program, for which the OPT was granted
- Minimum of 20 hours per week
- During Post-Completion OPT, employment may be paid or unpaid
- You may work for multiple employers
- You may change jobs as needed
- You must report all employment changes within 10 days using the SEVP Portal (we will discuss in detail later)
- You may not exceed 90 days of unemployment during the entire period of OPT
- Any employment not related to your field of study is a violation of F-1 status
OPT – Employment Regulations

- Also fill the “F-1 Student Responsibility” page under “OPT Self Report” – by signing, you agree to follow all OPT reporting rules
- This is the same page as the OPT requested Start Date
- We will describe the reporting process in the next few slides

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 ISSS of any changes to this information.

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

Student Signature: ___________________________  Student ID: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________
You will gain access to the SEVP Portal when two things happen:

- First, the OPT request status in SEVIS changes to “Approved”
- Typically this OPT request status comes directly from USCIS when they approve an OPT application
- Second, the OPT period must be “Active”
OPT – Reporting Requirements

- Register and maintain your SEVP Portal Account
- Report all employment and personal information updates during Post-Completion OPT in the SEVP Portal
- Make sure to log in once every 60 days to make sure everything is accurate
OPT – Reporting Requirements

- On the start date of your EAD card (approximately), you will receive an automated email from: do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov

- Do not delete this email – you must click on the link in this email to setup your SEVP Portal account. The email used to send this information is your “destination email” in your UH account.

- The SEVP portal login page is: https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/

- The SEVP Portal account is the only method for reporting employment information during Post Completion OPT
OPT – Reporting Requirements

- You must follow the link to create your Portal account – initially you must provide your SEVIS ID number to create the account.

- Once you gain access to the Portal, you can:
  - Edit your profile (e.g., SEVIS address)
  - Edit employment information
  - View history
  - Change password

- If you change jobs, **never** delete the previous employer information or edit the start date due to a promotion – this causes unemployment time to be calculated.
OPT – Reporting Requirements

- The SEVP Portal will send you email in these situations:
  - When you create a portal account
  - When confirming your recently created account
  - When your portal password was changed
  - When your account is locked
  - When your email address changes in SEVIS
  - When your STEM OPT evaluation reporting dates require you to take action
  - When your OPT authorization ends, and you are notified that your account will be closed
Navigation in the SEVP Portal is user-friendly and self-explanatory:

- You will have 4 main navigation choices, plus “Help” and “Logout”
  - Profile (personal information, personal SEVIS address)
  - Employment
  - History
  - Account Management (for password changes)
During your OPT, you will always be able to view your employment information in the Portal – verify it for accuracy.

You **must** report all changes of employment information *within 10 calendar days* of the change.

Failure to timely report will mean that missed days count as unemployment.
DHS Guidance – Relation of employment to course of study

- U.S. Department of Homeland Security recently published guidance on “Practical Training - Determining a Direct Relationship Between Employment and a Student’s Major Area of Study”

- It requires the F-1 student to provide an explanation of how the job relates the student’s major area of study

- You will use the student access to your SEVP Portal account, and provide an explanation in the text box: “Relation to Field of Study: Explain How this job relates to the degree that qualified you for this OPT”

- You must keep historical records of your employment: **DO NOT delete** your previous information submitted in the SEVP Portal - always “Add” new information
OPT – DHS Guidance

- Students must provide an explanation in the text box: “Relation to Field of Study: Explain How this job relates to the degree that qualified you for this OPT”

- Below is a sample explanation:

  Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering: I work full time as an Electrical Engineer at ABC Corp., a government contractor. In my job, I analyze client requirements for electrical systems and provide them with cost estimates of such systems. My work requires understanding of electrical circuit theory, which I studied in-depth at the University of ABC.
OPT – DHS Guidance

- Below are other sample explanations:

  - Bachelor's degree in Business: I work full time as a Loan Officer at a mortgage company, Happy Homes, where I meet with clients and evaluate, authorize and recommend approval of loan applications. On a daily basis, I use the knowledge I gained in my credit analysis, sales and marketing classes that I took as part of my major program of study.

  - Master’s degree in Music: I am working at a hospital playing the harp in patient rooms. I also conduct hands-on harp beginner workshops for long-term patients. On average, I work at the hospital 35 hours a week. My duties directly utilize the skills and knowledge I acquired from my coursework and degree in music therapy.
OPT – DHS Guidance

- Below are other sample explanations:

- **PhD in Computer Science:** I am employed as a Computer and Information Research Scientist at ABC Research Institute. I work as part of a team of scientists and engineers that designs experiments to test the operation of various software systems. My work builds on research in complex algorithms and machine learning, which I studied as part of my dissertation.

- **Master’s degree in Kinesiology:** I am working 25 hours a week in a health food store as a consultant for Self-Made Inc., designing and teaching exercise classes that are incorporated into a customer’s overall nutrition and exercise plan. My designs and customer instruction draw upon my studies and classwork in exercise therapy and physical reconditioning.
To view the SEVP Portal Help videos and detailed guides, visit the Study in the States webpage: studyinthestates.dhs.gov
OPT – Reporting Requirements

- In addition to maintaining your SEVP portal account, you must also provide a copy of your EAD card – front and back – by email attachment to SEVIS@Central.UH.edu – with your student ID number.

Save the front and back as a PDF file – Do this within 10 days of receiving the EAD card.
OPT – Unemployment:

- During Post-Completion OPT, unemployment is counted only from the EAD card start date, not from the time of application or graduation.
- Approved business travel or approved vacation travel from a U.S. employer does not count as "unemployment".
- The maximum allowable unemployment period during Post-Completion OPT is 90 calendar days, accumulative.
- There is NO additional grace period beyond the 90 days – Any student who reaches 90 days of unemployment during Post-Completion OPT will be in violation of their F-1 status.
- Working less than 20 hours per week counts as unemployment on OPT unless you have multiple jobs that equal 20 hours or more.

Employer #: Employer Name Date Errors
722631 Finmec...
OPT – Unemployment:

- Student on H-1B Cap Gap extension do not receive additional days of unemployment
- Plan carefully so that you do not use all of your allowable unemployment period
- Any SEVIS record on Post-Completion OPT with 90 consecutive days of unemployment may be automatically terminated by the SEVIS system
- Report all employment changes within 10 days to avoid consequences
Form I-765: Our office highly recommends all OPT students to file form I-765 online with USCIS, although you can still choose to file the paper application – online filing is user-friendly and much more efficient than paper filing.

Begin by creating an account on the USCIS website:

www.uscis.gov
Confirm your email address to begin setting up your USCIS online account – it must be an email that you check frequently.
After reading the acknowledgment, click “I Agree”.

By clicking “I agree”, I acknowledge that I have read the Terms and understand and will comply with them. I agree to abide by the Terms and understand that if I do not accept the Terms, I am not eligible to access or use USCIS online electronic immigration system. I understand that any violations of these Terms and any criminal activity will result in immediate suspension and/or termination of my access to and use of USCIS online electronic immigration system and that I may be subject to administrative or civil action as allowed by law, or criminal prosecution.
After establishing a password, you will choose a two-step verification method.
Save your backup code, if applicable.

Two-Step Verification Backup Code

If you lose access to your authentication device (you get a new mobile device or change your phone number), you can use this backup code to login to your USCIS account. If you change and confirm a new two-step verification method preference, your old code will no longer work.

Please print or save a copy of this code, and store it somewhere safe so that you are not locked out of your account.

Your backup code is: [Redacted]

[Buttons: Export As PDF, Proceed]
Form I-765

Select, “I am an applicant, petitioner, or requestor…”
Welcome To Your USCIS Account
Select What You Want To Do

File a form online
Start a new form, upload evidence, and pay and submit online
Select “Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)”
Form I-765

Read the form description carefully, and note that the eligibility includes Post-Completion OPT for F-1 students
Form I-765

Fee

Fee: $410.

Refund Policy: USCIS does not refund fees, regardless of any action we take on your application, petition or request, or how long USCIS takes to reach a decision. By continuing this transaction, you acknowledge that you must submit fees in the exact amount and that you are paying the fees for a government service.

Please refer to the instructions for the form(s) you are filing for additional information or you may call the USCIS Contact Center at 800-375-5283. For TTY (deaf or hard of hearing) 800-767-1833.

Note the fee details carefully.
Documents you may need

Most applicants must upload:

- A copy of your Form I-94, Nonimmigrant Arrival-Departure Record (front and back), a printout of your electronic Form I-94 from www.cbp.gov/i94, passport, or other travel document.

- A copy of your last EAD (front and back). If you were not previously issued an EAD, you must submit a copy of a government-issued identity document (such as a passport) showing your picture, name, and date of birth; a birth certificate with photo ID; a visa issued by a foreign consulate; or a national ID document with photo and/or fingerprint. The identity document photocopy must clearly show your facial features and contain your biographical information.

- A color passport-style photograph of yourself taken recently.

Note the description of documents to prepare in advance of filing the application.
Biometric services appointment

USCIS may require that you appear for an interview or provide biometrics (fingerprints, photograph, and/or signature) at any time to verify your identity, obtain additional information, and conduct background and security checks, including a check of criminal history records maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), before making a decision on your application or petition. After USCIS receives your application and ensures it is complete, we will inform you in writing if you need to attend a biometric services appointment.

Note the Biometrics appointment details; USCIS will notify if applicable.
Note the overview of the application process, and then click “next”.
After reading the paperwork reduction notice, details, and security reminder, press “start” to proceed with the application.
As you begin the application, use the dropdown menu to select the eligibility category, c(3)(B) for Post-Completion OPT.
Select your reason for applying as “Initial permission to accept employment”

Select yes or no, to indicate whether you have previously filed the form I-765
Form I-765

Select “No”, unless you are retaining a lawyer or attorney to file the form on your behalf.
Is someone assisting you with completing this application? ONLY select “Yes” if you are hiring your attorney or lawyer, or you have an interpreter to fill the form.

Most applicants should select “No”

ISSSSO is NOT completing the form for you.
Form I-765

Fill your full legal name, matching your passport name exactly; answer “No”, unless you have legally changed your name on an identity document.
Form I-765

Fill all requested contact information, although you may check the box and leave the 2nd telephone number blank; at least one telephone and one email address are required.
Form I-765

Provide a U.S. address which you have carefully verified, and which will **NOT** change in the next 3-5 months

Check “Yes”, unless the address you provided is not a physical address (e.g., Post Office box address)
Form I-765

Generally, allow the website to verify the address per U.S. postal service formatting standards.

Verify your address

We are unable to verify your address with the U.S. Postal Service. To avoid delays, please use the recommended address.

- **Original address:**
  4465 University Dr., Suite N203
  Houston, TX, 77204

- **Recommended address:**
  4465 UNIVERSITY DR, RM N203
  HOUSTON, TX, 77204-3024

[Use selected address]  [Edit original address]
Answer the gender and marital status questions
Answer all questions related to your birth location and date of birth.
Answer the citizenship, I-94, and arrival questions.
Provide your most recent date of arrival in the U.S., place of arrival, and visa status at last arrival;

Provide your passport number, but do not answer the travel document question
Form I-765

Provide your passport expiration date;

Provide the country that issued your passport (which country’s government issued your passport)

Select F-1 Student for your current immigration status
Fill your SEVIS number, except the “N” which is already filled; your SEVIS number is on your form I-20, page 1, at the top.
A-Number: this is assigned by USCIS if you file an application to USCIS, such as an OPT application; if you have never previously filed an application to USCIS, then you will not have an A-Number.

USCIS online account number: you would have this number only if USCIS sent an account access notice to you (most students do not have this when filing for OPT)
Answer the Social Security Number questions. Most students already have the SSN when applying for OPT; however, if you do not have the SSN, you may use this section to request the SSN, by giving consent for USCIS to forward your request to the Social Security Administration (SSA), and by providing your parents’ names. If you already have the SSN, you will not answer those questions.

Answers shown here are for a student who already has the SSN.
In this section, you will upload your new, recent passport photo; be sure that it meets the format requirements (e.g., 2x2 inches square, etc.) Do not use an old photo.
Upload your most recent I-94 – which you may download from www.cbp.gov/I-94 - click “Get most recent I-94” and enter the data from your U.S. visa page.
Form I-765

Upload your passport scan at this screen; if you have a previous EAD card, upload your passport AND the EAD card; also upload a scan of your most recent U.S. visa page (visa sticker)
If you had any CPT during this degree program, your OPT advisor will provide a CPT screenshot when the OPT request is ready; upload the CPT screenshot here; if you did not have any CPT, then do not upload anything on this screen.
This will be a new I-20 with OPT recommendation provided to you after the OPT webinar. This is typically in 5-7 business days.
Additional Information

If you need to provide any additional information for any of your answers to the questions in this form, enter it into the space below. You should include the questions that you are referencing.

If you do not need to provide any additional information, you may leave this section blank.

Add a response
Carefully note the application refund policy before continuing.
Form I-765

You may review your I-765 answers as a draft snapshot, prior to final submission of the application.
Read and acknowledge the applicant’s statement, then continue.
Read the entire applicant’s declaration and certification.
Check the box, and then type your name as your digital signature.
Pay for and submit your application

The final step to submit your Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, is to pay the required fee.

Your application fee is: $410.

Refund Policy: By continuing this transaction, you agree that you are paying for a government service and that the filing fee, biometric services fee and all related financial transactions are final and not refundable, regardless of any action USCIS takes on an application, petition or request, or how long USCIS takes to reach a decision. You must submit all fees in the exact amounts.
Be sure that you have uploaded all required evidence before submitting your application – prior to submission, your application will be saved as a draft, up to 30 days maximum.
As you finish the application, you will be redirected to Pay.gov for application payment, and then redirected back to USCIS for your receipt number (case number). When you have the receipt number, you have finished the application.
Encountering Fraud While Participating in OPT:

- International students participating in OPT must understand and abide by OPT regulations to maintain their nonimmigrant status.

- International students who rely on recruitment agencies to obtain OPT placements should ensure those agencies are trustworthy and reputable. Reputable recruiters will not modify a student’s resume or academic background to secure OPT placement.

- If you witness fraudulent activity by an OPT recruiter or company, you should contact the ICE’s Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) tip line at 1-866-DHS-2ICE or www.ICE.gov/tips.
H-1B Cap Gap

- Current regulations allow certain students with pending or approved H-1B petitions to remain in F-1 status during the Cap-Gap period. This is referred to as filling the "Cap-Gap," meaning the regulations provide a way of filling the "gap" between the end of F-1 status and the beginning of H-1B status that might otherwise occur if F-1 status is not extended for qualifying students. The “Cap-Gap” period starts when an F-1 student’s status and work authorization expires and ends on the start date of their approved H-1B employment.

- H-1B petitions that are timely filed on behalf of an eligible F-1 student that request a change of status to H-1B on October 1 qualify for a Cap-Gap extension.

- Timely filed means that the H-1B petition (indicating change of status rather than consular processing) was filed during the H-1B acceptance period which begins April 1st while the student's authorized F-1 duration of status (D/S) admission was still in effect (including any period of time during the academic course of study, any authorized periods of post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT), and the 60-day departure preparation period, commonly known as the "grace period")
H-1B Cap Gap

- The Cap Gap I-20, requested from our office, will show evidence to your employer that you are authorized to work during the Cap Gap dates listed on the I-20.

- Please view the link, “How to request an H-1B Cap-Gap I-20” on our website, if you qualify for Cap Gap, and follow the instructions to make the request.

- Please keep in mind that your OPT employment data must be updated electronically, prior to requesting the H-1B Cap Gap I-20.
OPT STEM Extension

- The new 24 month OPT STEM Extension rule became effective on May 10, 2016, with requirements in addition to those under the old, 17 month rule.

- Who is eligible for the 24 month OPT STEM Extension?

- Applicant must hold a STEM eligible degree, from a U.S. institution, listed on the STEM list (The full list is available at www.ice.gov)

- Employer must maintain participation with E-verify

- Employer and employee must agree to, complete, and sign the Training Plan (form I-983)
OPT STEM Extension – when to apply:

- The application must be properly filed not more than 90 days prior to Post-Completion OPT EAD card end date, but not after the end date (Late applications are not accepted by USCIS)

- Application must be received and receipted, properly filed with USCIS, on or before the current OPT EAD card end date

- You must be currently on an approved Post-Completion OPT in order to apply for OPT STEM extension

- You may submit your OPT STEM request to our office 90 days prior to the OPT EAD card end date – please hold onto your request to our office until 90 days prior to the OPT EAD end date
Locate the 6 digit “CIP code” on your I-20 to determine eligibility, then compare with the STEM list at [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov)
CIP code list example from [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov) – Check for your particular CIP code to determine eligibility

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OPT STEM Extension for a previous degree

- New rule (2016) now allows 2 in lifetime, maximum, OPT STEM Extensions

- OPT STEM Extension may be granted based on a previously earned U.S. institution STEM degree, only if you have not already had a STEM extension based on the qualifying STEM degree

- Example: student graduates with a bachelor’s degree in Engineering, does NOT apply for OPT STEM Extension, then graduates with a master’s degree in Accounting, applies for Post-Completion OPT, then applies for OPT STEM Extension based on the student’s bachelor’s degree

- If extension is granted for a previous STEM degree, all employment during Post-Completion OPT must be related to the degree for which this OPT was granted

- All employment during OPT STEM extension must be directly related to the degree for which OPT STEM extension was granted

- Previous degree must have been earned within 10 years of the date of DSO recommendation for extension
When you are ready to apply for OPT STEM extension, please carefully read the slideshow (powerpoint) on our website for full detailed instructions.
International Travel during OPT

- If your OPT has been approved and you have received your OPT EAD, carefully prepare your documents for travel before leaving the United States, as detailed below.

- Documents you will need for travel internationally:
  - [1] Passport that is valid for at least 6 months into the future
  - [2] Visa which is still valid at the time of reentry to the U.S.
  - [3] I-20 with recent signature by a Designated School Official. During OPT, each travel endorsement on page 2 is valid for 6 months
  - Your current employer info is recommended to be printed on page 2 of the I-20 (You may request a reprint after you have completed OPT reporting)
    - For I-20 reprint, email SEVIS@Central.UH.edu – This email is listed on the OPT Self Report
  - [5] A current job offer letter from your employer. A written statement from your employer that you are returning from a period of approved vacation time may also be helpful, but is not required if the job offer letter is recent
International Travel during OPT

- Check your F-1 visa – if expired, you must renew with the U.S. consulate / embassy – usually in your home country
  - Certain travel under 30 days on expired VISA could be granted to Canada, Mexico, and the adjacent islands except Cuba
- If you are planning to travel while pending OPT, please contact an advisor regarding the risks involved. Our office does not officially recommend international travel while the OPT application is pending with USCIS.
- Travel during Cap-Gap Extension Period
  - An F-1 student may generally travel abroad and seek readmission to the United States in F-1 status during a Cap-Gap period if:
    - The student’s H-1B petition and request for change of status has been approved;
    - The student seeks readmission before his or her H-1B employment begins (normally at the beginning of the fiscal year, i.e., October 1); and
    - The student is otherwise admissible
What happens after the OPT session?

- Please keep your passport photos and payment for $410 – our office does not collect this.
- You will need to prepare a color, recent passport photo, in the U.S. format.
- 2 x 2 inches (5 cm x 5 cm), square.
- Upload it on [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) if you are filing online.
What are the fees for OPT?

- If you file online with USCIS, you will pay the I-765 filing fee, $410 through PAY.gov website, at the end of the application, when USCIS will redirect you to PAY.gov

OPT Alumni Fee:

- In order to process your Post-Completion OPT request, an alumni fee of $100 is required to be submitted to our office
- Mail a personal check or a money order, payable to “University of Houston”
- Do not mail cash
- Include the “ISSSO Payment Coupon” which is on the next slide
OPT Alumni Fee:

Download, fill in, and print this “Payment Coupon” and mail it with your OPT Alumni fee to our office.

We recommend that you obtain a tracking number from your courier (USPS, FedEx, UPS, etc.)

Download the Payment Coupon from:
https://uh.edu/oisss/forms-and-publications/
OPT Alumni Fee:

Kindly mail your check to:
University of Houston – Attention: Juanette Davis
International Student and Scholar Services
4465 University Drive, Room N203
Houston, TX 77204
In response to your application, USCIS will send you an email or text message with a receipt number.

The same receipt number will also be on your paper receipt notice – I-797C, mailed to the address you provided on your I-765.

Receipt number starts with a 3-letter code followed by numbers.
You will be able to check your case status – [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)
Please arrange your documents as follows prior to submission to the counselor – please email to your OPT advisor as PDF files with student ID number

- Passport copy
- Visa copy (most recent visa)
- I-94 screenshot - CBP.gov/I-94
- F-1 approval notice, form I-797A (if you changed visa status in the U.S. – not applicable to most students)
- Previous EAD copy, if you previously had OPT (not applicable to most students)
- Academic Verification form, signed by your college
- F-1 Student Responsibility, fully signed by you, with OPT Start Date, mm/dd/yyyy
OPT

- We appreciate your attention to OPT procedures
- At this time, prepare to email your complete OPT documents to the counselor
- We will do our best to complete your OPT request in 5 business days
- If you have questions, the counselor will be available for Q&A at the end
- Wait until you have an OPT recommendation new I-20 before filing with USCIS

- [www.uh.edu/OISSS](http://www.uh.edu/OISSS)
- 713-743-5065

- To track the status of your OPT application: [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) – with receipt number
- USCIS contact telephone: (800) 375-5283