

Post Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Preparation Checklist

- Complete the attached forms on pages 2 & 3, including the required signature(s) from your department (engineering majors require additional signature). You **must** complete this step prior to attending an OPT group appointment.
- Obtain (1) digital color “passport type” photograph, (2) photos if filing by regular mail (directions on page 5).
✓ *The Creation Station in the Student Center Underground is a good for an on-campus option.*
- Schedule an OPT appointment through MyUH with an International Student & Scholar Services Office (ISSSO) counselor. OPT appointments are in a group setting and completed virtually (OPT workshop appointments show as a **green color** on the appointment calendar for each counselor, on the Advising tab through MyUH).

Appointment Checklist

- Current I-20, passport that is valid for six months into the future, most recent visa page, and current I-94.
- Have the attached “Academic Verification” form signed by your academic advisor.
- Do Not** submit and pay for your OPT application through USCIS at this time.

Processing Checklist

After completing the OPT workshop, ISSSO counselor will ask for the following documents by email:

- Completed Academic Verification Form (p 2)
- Completed F-1 Student Responsibility Form (p 3)
- Copies of passport biographical page, visa page, and I-94. If applicable to you: Previous EAD card and/or F-1 Approval Notice
- Submit \$100 Alumni fee to ISSSO in person or by regular mail. Link to payment coupon:
https://uh.edu/oisss/resources/forms/issso_payment_coupon.pdf

ISSSO counselor will then do the following:

- Request a new I-20 from SEVIS with a recommendation for OPT
- Print out a CPT screenshot (if applicable)

E-Filing Checklist

Note: *You are responsible for submitting your application to USCIS in a timely manner. Your application must be completed and paid **WITHIN 30 DAYS** of requesting the OPT recommendation I-20 or before the end of your 60 grace period, whichever comes first.*

- Wait to receive your updated I-20 with the OPT recommendation from ISSSO counselor by email, in person at our office, or by regular mail. Make sure to sign the I-20 prior to uploading it to USCIS.
- Create a USCIS account to prepare for e-filing (https://myaccount.uscis.gov/users/sign_up).
- Upload the following documents as part of your application online:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Most recent I-94 or change of status approval notice in JPG or PDF format 2) Under EAD: Upload a color scan of your passport biographical page, VISA page, and any prior EAD card you may have/. Make sure the images are clear, in color, and in PDF format. 3) CPT screenshot from ISSSO counselor (if you did CPT during your degree program) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) <u>Your</u> new I-20 with OPT recommendation on p. 2. Make sure to sign prior to uploading in PDF format 5) Under additional information: Add any prior CPT or OPT you may have had at a prior degree level. Also any prior SEVIS ID’s that you had while attending school in the U.S. 6) One passport photo in JPG, JPEG, or PNG format
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- Once everything is uploaded, then you can electronically sign and submit. It should take you to pay.gov where you can make the \$410 payment. You will receive an E-notice receipt of your filing showing IOE as the starting letters. This notice should also arrive by regular mail. Following the payment for your OPT application, you are allowed to request for premium processing to receive an adjudication result of your EAD card within 15 days. The cost for this expedited processing is \$1500.

After Filing Checklist

- You should receive an official receipt (called an I-797 Notice of Action) within 2-3 weeks.
- Processing times for the EAD card is normally between 30-60 days but may take up to 120 days or longer. Once received, submit a copy of the front and back of your EAD Card to us through our OPT/X self-report system.
- You are required by law to report any biographical or employment changes within 10 days.**
✓ Continue to update your SEVIS address in PeopleSoft and submit employment changes in the SEVP Portal as required.
- Once your OPT ends you have a 60-day grace period to file for a change of status, receive a new I-20 for a program that begins at the next available semester that is within 5 months (transfer or change of degree level), or depart the U.S.

Academic Verification Form

Student: Print your name below and take this form to your department for the required signature(s). **Note: Engineering majors require the signature of the Dean and additional procedures that you must follow to apply for OPT.**

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 their field of study. 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 Document (EAD) Card from DHS. If the student does not complete the degree when expected, the EAD card may be cancelled as long as it has not been approved by USCIS. If the card is cancelled the student may reapply for OPT with the cancellation letter from USCIS. If you have any questions, please call 713-743-5065 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 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 ____/____/____.

(This is the official closing of the semester or when the thesis/dissertation is/will be submitted. For Graduates: If enrolled in the 1 credit hour course for administrative purposes with an early submission deadline before the start of the next semester, a student will be in their 60 day grace period following this deadline, even if they do not apply for OPT, see below.)

Attention Advisors: A student cannot prolong their stay in the U.S. by taking additional courses they do not need (because they failed to apply for graduation) or they are administratively enrolled. If the student has completed all degree requirements, they are required to take action to maintain status.

The federal regulations in 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(iii)(C) state:

"If the student is not required to take any additional courses to satisfy the requirements for completion, but continues to be enrolled for administrative purposes, the student is considered to have completed the course of study and must take action to maintain status."

Academic or Thesis/Dissertation Advisor: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Associate Dean of College _____ Signature _____ Date _____
(Engineering Majors Only)

Please return the form to the student.

My requested Post-Completion 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.

F-1 Student Responsibility

-As an F-1 student, you have the following responsibilities. Please read them carefully, initial each one, and signing below.-

- ___ If I withdraw my OPT application, I must notify ISSSO first and then USCIS in writing. I am responsible for checking my OPT application status on the USCIS website: <http://www.uscis.gov/>, and to verify the information printed on my Employment Authorization Document (EAD).
- ___ If I do not finish the course work related to my degree in the expected final semester, I will check to see if I need a new I-20 to extend my program end date. This must be done before the I-20 expires! Failure to do so may require reinstatement.
- ___ I understand that my OPT application must be properly filed with USCIS within 30 days from requesting the OPT recommendation I-20 with ISSSO or before the last day of the grace period, whichever comes sooner.
- ___ I will **NOT work on CPT or in an on-campus job** after the completion of all my degree requirements. I understand that any work after the official closing date of the semester or term that I finish my degree would be considered as **unauthorized employment** unless authorized by USCIS with an approved EAD card (e.g. through OPT/-X).
- ___ I will only work in the **field related to my major**.
- ___ I will **not** work on OPT until I receive my EAD card with the approved dates of employment.
- ___ Under no circumstances will I work **before or after** the start and ending dates on the EAD.
- ___ **If I want to travel** outside the U.S. and re-enter, I will need a valid I-20 travel endorsement no older than 6 months, a valid F-1 visa, valid passport more than 6 months from expiration, EAD card, and a letter from my employer verifying the travel.
- ___ I will **not attend school** part-time or full-time while on OPT.
- ___ I will obtain a **new I-20** for any **new degree program**. If I plan to begin a new degree program at UH, I will need a new I-20. If I plan to transfer to another school, I will request ISSSO to release my SEVIS record from UH to that school. I also understand that any new program cannot begin more than five months from the end of OPT and start of classes.
- ___ At the end of my OPT, I understand that I will have a **60-day grace period** to file for a change in your status, receive a new I-20, or depart the U.S.
- ___ I will **inform ISSS** of any **adjustment of status** or **plans to depart** the U.S. permanently during my period of OPT.

OPT Self Report

According to the federal regulations [8 CFR 214.(f)], F-1 students must report any changes in personal address, employer's name and address, and any periods of employment and unemployment while on OPT **within 10 days** through the SEVP Portal. **The log-in email for the SEVP Portal will be sent to your UH destination email upon the start of your OPT period. Create an account and log-in as per instructions on the email. The direct link to the SEVP portal is: <https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/>.** As part of your responsibilities, you will need to upload a clear copy of your EAD Card (front + back) and any I-797 notices to our reporting system: <https://uh.edu/oiss/opt-details/opt-self-report-form/>

Acknowledgement of Responsibility

I, _____, am responsible for reporting all employment on the SEVP portal and will inform International Student and Scholar Services Office regarding any changes to my status or reporting issues while on optional practical training (OPT).

“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 job related to their major area of study. You do not need a job offer in order to obtain OPT. OPT can 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.

Who is eligible for OPT?

You must have completed one academic year (fall and spring semesters) as a full-time student directly prior to and be in F-1 status at the time of your application. Students entering the U.S. 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 (certain exceptions allowed for students traveling abroad for a change of status).

When should I apply for OPT?

In your final semester when you are certain that you will complete all your degree requirements. You may apply for OPT 90 days before the completion of your studies but no later than 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 your EAD card, applying early is recommended. Your application must be properly filed with USCIS and be officially received before the 60th day after the completion date of your degree program.

How should I apply for OPT?

The first step is to schedule an appointment with ISSSO for an OPT workshop. It is imperative that you follow the directions found on our website here: <https://uh.edu/oisss/opt-details/how-to-apply-for-opt/> Once you complete the workshop and submit the required documents to the ISSSO counselor, they will provide you with a new I-20 that includes an OPT recommendation on page 2. This new form I-20 is required to have prior to submitting an application to USCIS. If you submit an application without the updated I-20, your application will be denied and your payment forfeit.

When will my OPT begin?

Your employment authorization dates will be located on the approved EAD card that you receive from USCIS. 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.

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

With OPT, the student receives an EAD from USCIS. 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 at that degree level.

What should I do if I am not going to complete my degree as expected after applying for OPT?

You should report to our office for guidance. You may need to do a program extension to cover your additional course(s), be required to apply for reinstatement for violation of status, or withdraw your OPT application. If you are a doctoral student finishing your dissertation or a master's student working only on your thesis, you cannot extend your program of study. You would have to maintain your status on OPT while also be required to complete your dissertation/thesis.

What should I do if I never got the email to report work on the SEVP portal and now I've passed the 10 days to report?

You will have to email sevis@central.uh.edu and request ISSSO to resend the SEVP portal link to you. Once you receive the link, you can register your portal account to report your work. If you exceed your 10 days to report, you would have to report your work with a current start date and then email sevis@central.uh.edu to adjust your start date for the job.

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

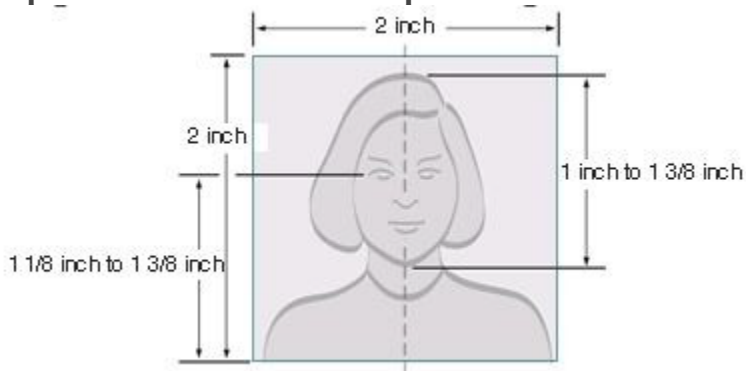
You are allowed another year of OPT at the completion of another degree at a higher level (e.g. bachelor's to master's or master's to Ph.D.). Students who have received a bachelors, masters, or doctoral degree in a field on the Department of Homeland Security STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Designated Degree Program List may be eligible for a 24 month extension to their Post-Completion OPT. There are additional requirements and qualifications for this extension. More information can be found on our website on how to apply.

Photo Composition Template

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

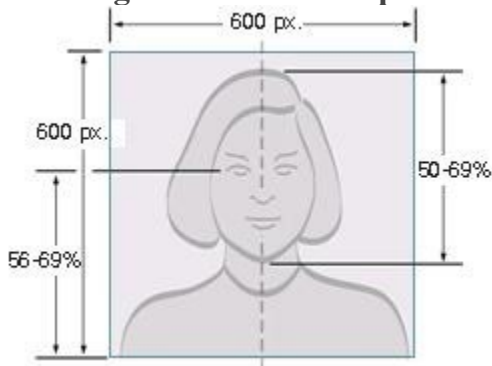
- Make sure the photo presents the full head from the top of the hair to the bottom of the chin
- Center the head with the frame
- The person in the photo should have a neutral expression and be facing the camera

Paper Photo Head Size Template

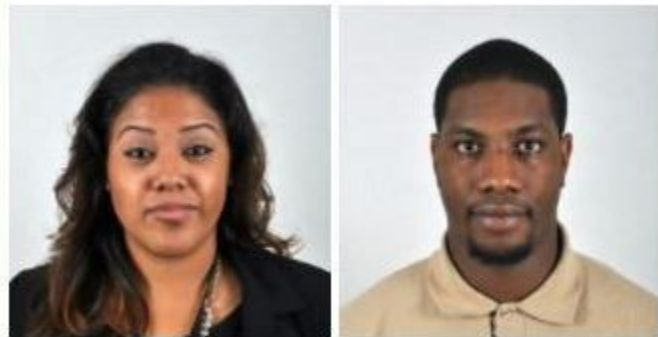


- Photo must be 2 inches by 2 inches
- The height of the head (top of hair to bottom of chin) should measure 1 inch to 1 3/8 inches (25 mm - 35 mm)
- Make sure the eye height is between 1 1/8 inches to 1 3/8 inches (28 mm – 35 mm) from the bottom of the photo

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).