

Post Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Preparation Checklist

- Complete the attached forms on pages 2 & 3, including the required signature from your department (engineering students require additional signature). You **must** complete this step prior to attending an OPT group appointment.
- Obtain 2 color “passport type” photographs (directions on separate page).
✓ *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

All appointments will be virtual due to the pandemic

- Current I-20, passport(s) that is valid for six months into the future and most recent visa page, and I-94 printout.
- Have the attached “Academic Verification” form signed.
- Complete form I-765 and G-1145. These forms can be downloaded at <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
- Prepare a check or money order payable to “University of Houston” in the amount of \$100 and mail to ISSSO office with completed [Payment Coupon](#)

Question 27 should be coded (c) (3) (B).

ISSSO does the following:

- Requests a new I-20 from SEVIS with a recommendation for OPT and email it to you.
- Reviews application for accuracy and answers any questions during the OPT session.
- Provide you the mailing address to mail your completed application to USCIS.

Mailing Checklist

Note: *You are responsible for mailing your application to USCIS in a timely manner. Your application must arrive at the Service Center **WITHIN 30 DAYS** of your OPT appointment or before the end of your grace period, whichever occurs sooner.*

- Due to the COVID-19, you should receive your new I-20 with OPT recommendation through the email address reported to SEVIS
- Mail the following documents to [USCIS](#):
 - 1) G-1145 Delivery Confirmation form
 - 2) I-765 application form
 - Check or money order for **\$410** payable to **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**
 - Passport photos in plastic envelope, stapled to I-765 with the check.
 - 3) Printout of electronic I-94 (or copy of the front and back of I-94 card).
 - 4) **Photocopy** of new I-20 with OPT recommendation on p. 2.
 - 5) Photocopy of passport photo page including expiration date and most recent visa page.
 - 6) CPT screenshot (if you did CPT during degree program)
 - 7) I-797 Change of status approval notice (if you changed status in U.S.)
- 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 (i.e. SRC or YSC #) on this form can be used to track the progress of your case 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
- You are required by law to report any biographical or employment changes within 10 days on the SEVP Portal.**
 - ✓ Continue to update your SEVIS address in PeopleSoft and submit changes in the SEVP Portal.
- Once your OPT ends you have a 60 day grace period to file for a change of status, a new I-20, 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: 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 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 completed 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 #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 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 usually 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 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 before signing below.-

- If I withdraw my OPT application, I must notify ISSSO in writing. I am responsible for checking my OPT application status on USCIS website: <http://www.uscis.gov>, and to verify the information on my OPT (EAD) card.
- I will **not** work until you receive the Employment Authorization Card (EAD).
- Under no circumstances will I work **before or after** the start and ending dates on the EAD.
- I understand that my packet for OPT must be properly filed with USCIS within 30 days from the signature on the OPT recommendation I-20 or before the last day of the grace period, whichever comes sooner.
- I will only work in the **field related to my major**.
- I will not attend school part-time or full-time in a degree seeking program while on OPT.
- If I do not finish the 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 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 need to request my SEVIS record to be released from UH.
- **If I want to travel** outside the U.S. and reenter, I should have a valid I-20 travel endorsement no older than 6 months, but cannot exceed 1 year, a valid visa, valid passport, EAD card, and a letter from my employer verifying the employment.
- 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 **change or adjustment of status** or **plans to depart** the U.S. permanently.

OPT Self Report

According to the federal regulations [8 CFR 214.(f)], F-1 students are responsible for reporting any changes in personal address, employer's name and address, and any periods of employment and unemployment while on OPT. These changes have to be reported 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 link to the SEVP portal is: <https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/>. As part of your responsibilities, you will need to send ISSSO a clear copy of your EAD Card (front + back) and any I-797 notices you may have received to sevis@central.uh.edu.

Acknowledgement of Responsibility

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

“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. 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.

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 24 month extension to their OPT. There are additional requirements and qualifications for this extension. More information can be found on our website on how to apply.

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 your EAD card, applying early is recommended. Your application must be properly filed with USCIS 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.

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

There may be options if your EAD card has been pending longer than 75 days with USCIS. Contact ISSS counselor for more information if this will pertain to you.

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 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.

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

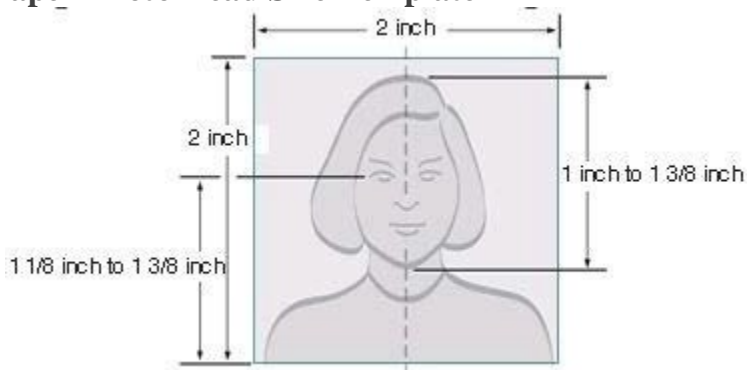
You should report immediately to our office. You may need to do a program extension, possibly apply for reinstatement for violation of status (if you were authorized for a reduced course load for your final semester), and/or cancel your OPT.

Photo Composition Template

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

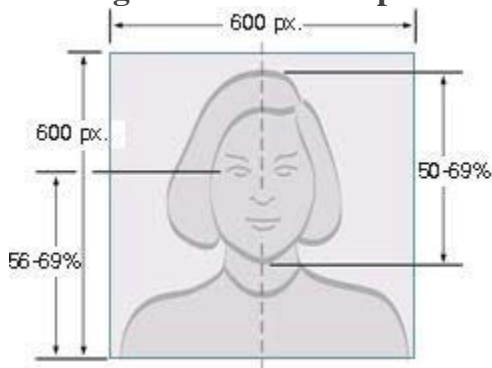
- Make sure the photo presents the full head from the top of the hair to the bottom of the chin
- Center the head with the frame
- The person in the photo should have a neutral expression and be facing the camera

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).