

Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application

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 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 Pre-Completion 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 Pre-OPT recommendation I-20.*

- Wait to receive your updated I-20 with the Pre-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.

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: _____ PS ID: _____ 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 for processing. 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 all degree requirements on ____/____/____.

(This date is 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 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.

"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 Majors 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.
- You cannot retrieve any unused time on your Pre-OPT EAD card and use it 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 you do with ISSSO by emailing sevis@central.uh.edu within 10 days of starting a job.
- 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 period.
- 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 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 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).

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.

When should I apply for Pre-Completion OPT?

You may apply for Pre-OPT 90 days before completing one full academic year in the U.S. Your start date cannot be before the completion of the one academic year, but 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 should be submitted online and be receipted before the 30 day recommendation period on your I-20 for pre-completion OPT expires.

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 pre-OPT, you must choose a start and ending date. If you are not approved by the date you requested, then you will receive the EAD card with a start date based on when USCIS approves your application. The end date will remain the same.

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

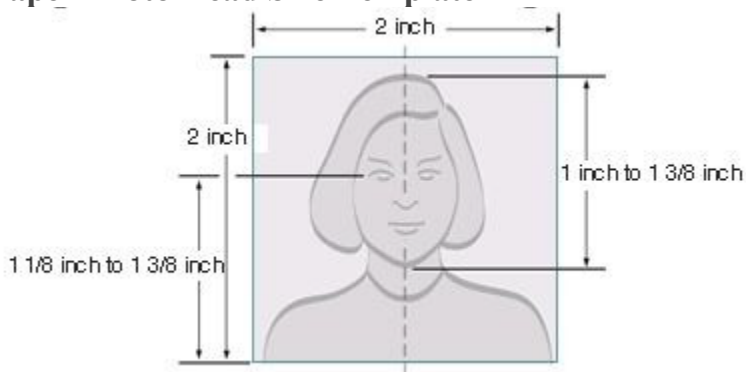
With Pre-OPT, the student receives an Employment Authorization Card from the Department of Homeland Security. With CPT, the authorization is granted by a Designated School Official (i.e. International Student Counselor at ISSSO) and is indicated on page 2 of the student’s I-20. Participation in CPT does 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 at 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.

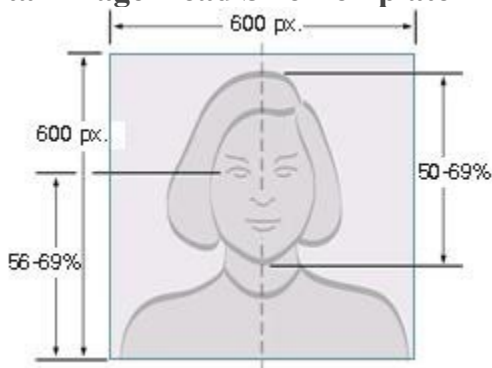
- Make sure the photo presents the full head from the top of the hair to the bottom of the chin
- Center the head with the frame
- The person in the photo should have a neutral expression and be facing the camera

Paper Photo Head Size Template

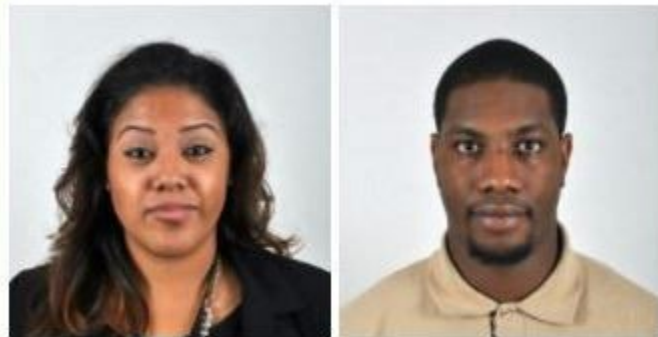


- Photo must be 2 inches by 2 inches
- The height of the head (top of hair to bottom of chin) should measure 1 inch to 1 3/8 inches (25 mm - 35 mm)
- Make sure the eye height is between 1 1/8 inches to 1 3/8 inches (28 mm – 35 mm) from the bottom of the photo

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).