**STOP: *Before you apply for Optional Practical Training, you must read this form in its entirety and sign in the box at the bottom of OPT Statement of Responsibility.***

**Basic Description:**

The STEM OPT extension allows some students with science, technology, engineering, or math degrees to apply to extend their post-completion OPT authorization. Students with STEM degrees and currently in their 12-month OPT period should review the eligibility requirements, application timeline, and instructions below. The employment should be directly related to your major area of study.

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| Preconditions | • | Student must have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis at a DHS-approved school for one full academic year before being eligible for OPT. Students in English language training programs are not eligible for OPT. |
| Location | • | Students may engage in OPT for any employer for the duration of OPT authorization, as long as the employment qualifies under OPT standards. |
| Duration | •  • | Standard OPT is available for a cumulative maximum of 12 months per educational level. A one-time extension of 24 months (for a total of 36 months) is available to certain STEM degree recipients who are employed by an employer registered with E-Verify. |
| Hours per week | •  • | 20 hours/week limit for pre-completion OPT done while school is in session and student still has coursework to complete.  Full-time employment can be requested for pre-completion OPT done during official school breaks, and for students who have completed all requirements for their degree except for thesis or dissertation. |
|  | • | For post-completion OPT, according to SEVP guidance a student must be adequately employed to avoid limits on unemployment |
| Field of work | • | Must be directly related to the student's course of study. |
| Offer of  employment | •  • | No offer of employment is required to apply for OPT, but the student is expected to work during the OPT EAD validity period. **Students on STEM OPT are limited to a maximum of 150 days of unemployment (90 day for standard OPT plus 60 days for STEM).**  To apply for a 24-month STEM extension, student must have an offer of employment from an employer registered with E-Verify. |
| Effect on other work | • | **Exceeding 90 days of unemployment may disqualify you for the STEM extension.** |
| Approval process | •  •  • | DSO recommends OPT in SEVIS.  Student files I-765 application for EAD with USCIS Lockbox Facility.  **Work can begin only after receiving EAD issued by USCIS, and on or after the start date on the EAD.** |
|  | • | Special rules govern applications for the 24-month STEM OPT extension. |
| Miscellaneous | • | Degree candidates that have completed all coursework must continue to make normal progress towards completing the thesis or dissertation required for their degree. |

# Application Procedure

**How to Apply:**

You apply for OPT to DHS by first making a request for the authorization to a Designated School Official (DSO) in the Sam Houston State University International Office. The DSO will make a new I-20 which must be signed and dated by you that certifies you as eligible for OPT. You may apply as early as 90 days before completion of your standard OPT, and since DHS processing times may be lengthy, we recommend that you apply early. Before meeting with the DSO, you will need to prepare for the appointment. (see below)

**Appointment Checklist**

Please bring the following documents to your appointment

\_\_\_\_\_ Complete Form I-765 (www.uscis.gov)

\_\_\_\_\_ Form I-983 Training Plan for STEM OPT (submitted to OIP)

\_\_\_\_\_ I-20 with the DSO’s recommendation\*

\_\_\_\_\_ Photocopy of previous I-20s held by the student

\_\_\_\_\_ Copy of previously issued OPT I-20. \*One-sided copies only

\_\_\_\_\_ Photocopies of Passport, VISA, and I-94

\_\_\_\_\_ Two Passport-style photographs sealed in plastic bag

\_\_\_\_\_ Receipt showing payment of OIP OPT Fee ($75)

\_\_\_\_\_ Bank or money order payable to “Department of Homeland Security” for $410.00

\_\_\_\_\_ Copy of your Degree – submit one of the following with a copy of diploma - official

transcript or unofficial transcript.

\_\_\_\_\_ Photocopies of any previous EAD card(s)

\_\_\_\_\_ Form G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance

**OPT Application Package:**

The International Office will mail the packet for you, however, if you prefer to mail it yourself, mail to: (I-765 EAD)

USCIS

P. O. Box 660867

Dallas, TX 75266

Use this address to mail your application using a courier service **(FedEx, UPS, DHL)**  USCIS

Attn: AOS

2501 S. State Hwy. 121, Business

Suite 400

Lewisville, TX 75067

**OPT Statement of Responsibility**

**VERY IMPORTANT:** While on OPT under your SHSU I-20 **you are required to continue to report any changes on your official name, address, and status of employment including any changes of employer name or address** information to the SHSU Office of International Programs.

**Give OIP permission to view, copy, and file mail from USCIS pertaining OPT for students who use OIP’s mailing address.** USCIS will mail OPT updates including receipts, notice of actions, approvals, and EAD cards. OIP will review the mail to assist students with throughout the process within a timely manner.

**Employment cannot continue working** if your initial OPT date has ended. You must have received your STEM-Extension (EAD card) **and** the start date on the card has been reached to continue working. It is recommended that your apply for STEM-OPT 90 days before the end date of your initial OPT.

**During STEM-OPT OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment.** During any initial 36-month period of post-completion STEM OPT, **no student may be unemployed for an aggregate of more than 150 days.** Employment during this period can be traditional paid employment, volunteer work, and an unpaid or paid internship over 20 hours a week.

**If you transfer to another school or begin study at another educational level**, your authorization to engage in OPT employment is automatically terminated upon the transfer date.

**If you travel outside the United States during your OPT period**, upon reentry you must present a valid passport, valid F-1 visa, your I-766 EAD card, and your Form I-20 properly endorsed for travel within six months by a DSO from the Office of International Programs. In addition, you will need a letter from your employer or prospective employer indicating that you are returning to resume employment or will begin employment. Students who do not meet these requirements may not be allowed to reenter the United States. Travel following completion of studies and before the EAD is received is **not** recommended.

**You are allowed 36 months of OPT per degree level during your time as an F-1 student.**  You become eligible for another 12 months of OPT if you change to a higher educational level.

**Please give us your preferred beginning and end dates for your OPT.** The OPT card is issued for a specific time period. If you are unsure, you can discuss your options during your OPT appointment with the international advisor.

**Beginning date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ End Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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| **Statement of Responsibility:**  I have read the content of this handout and understand the regulations associated with OPT.    Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    **Optional Practical Training Completion of Degree Form** E-mail (provide school and personal) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |