

## Optional Practical Training

Office of International Programs, 1908 Avenue J, Box 2150, Huntsville, TX 77341-2150

Fax: (936) 294-4620 – Email: oip@shsu.edu

**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:

As an F-1 student, you may apply to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for authorization for 12 months (up to 36) of temporary employment for Optional Practical Training (OPT). The employment should be directly related to your major area of study. To be eligible for OPT, you must be in legal F-1 status at the time of application and have completed one academic year as a full-time student (not necessarily in F-1 status). OPT can be authorized for the following:

- **Post-Completion:** After completion of your studies (most students choose this option)  
**IMPORTANT!** If choosing this option, your OPT application must be received by the DHS service center **no later than** 60 days after your program completion date. However, it is strongly recommended to apply before you complete your studies.

OR

- **Pre-Completion:** Before completion of your studies in one of the following three situations: Part-time (20 hours a week or less) during the fall or spring semesters, full or part-time during summer vacation if you are currently enrolled and intend to register for the following semester, full-time during fall or spring if you have completed all coursework and are in the thesis, dissertation or comprehensive exams only phase of your degree

Preconditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 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.</li></ul>
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Students may engage in OPT for any employer for the duration of OPT authorization, as long as the employment qualifies under OPT standards.</li></ul>
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Standard OPT is available for a cumulative maximum of 12 months per educational level.</li><li>● A one-time extension of 17 months (for a total of 29 months) is available to certain STEM degree recipients who are employed by an employer registered with E-Verify.</li><li>● 20 hours/week limit for pre-completion OPT done while school is in session and student still has coursework to complete.</li></ul>
Hours per week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 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.</li><li>● For post-completion OPT, according to SEVP guidance a student must be adequately employed to avoid limits on unemployment</li></ul>
Field of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Must be directly related to the student's course of study.</li><li>● No offer of employment is required to apply for standard OPT, but the student is expected to work during the OPT EAD validity period. <b>Students on post-completion OPT are limited to a maximum of 90 days of unemployment.</b></li></ul>
Offer of employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● To apply for a 17-month STEM extension, student must have an offer of employment from an employer registered with E-Verify.</li></ul>
Effect on other work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Prior use of full-time Curricular Practical Training for one year or more eliminates eligibility for Optional Practical Training</b></li></ul>
Approval process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● DSO recommends OPT in SEVIS.</li><li>● Student files I-765 application for EAD with USCIS Lockbox Facility.</li><li>● <b>Work can begin only after receiving EAD issued by USCIS, and on or after the start date on the EAD.</b></li><li>● Special rules govern applications for the 17-month STEM OPT extension.</li></ul>
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● If doing pre-completion OPT, must maintain a full course of study during the period of employment (unless done during school breaks).</li><li>● Degree candidates that have completed all coursework must continue to make normal progress towards completing the thesis or dissertation required for their degree.</li></ul>

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### 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 studies and no later than 60 days after completion of studies, 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

- The Statement of Responsibility Form signed and dated by you
- The Completion of Degree Form signed by your department
- Copy of receipt showing the OIP OPT Fee (\$75) has been paid.
- A completed Form I-765 (You may [download](#) an electronic version.)
- Write “None” or “N/A” (Not Applicable) as needed, **DO NOT leave any questions unanswered.**
  - Question #3, **DO NOT fill in your address.** We will use our office address.
  - Question #16 should be coded:
    - Pre-completion OPT: (c)(3)(A)
    - Post-completion OPT: (c)(3)(B)
    - STEM extension OPT: (c)(3)(c)
- Passport and VISA copies, valid for at least the next six months
- Original entry I-94
- Photocopy of previous I-20s issued
- Money order made payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security” for \$410.00
- 2 passport style photos
- Any previously issued OPT EAD card (if applicable)
- G-1145 Form

#### 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

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### 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 begin until** you have received your I-766 Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) **and** the start date on the card has been reached.
- If you do not complete all coursework by your expected completion date,** you may not work more than 20 hours a week (part-time), until all coursework has been completed.
- During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment.** During any initial 12-month period of post-completion OPT, **no student may be unemployed for an aggregate of more than 90 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 one year 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.
- For students with a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) degree who are eligible for the 24-month extension:** To apply for the OPT extension, you must be employed by an employer who is registered for E-Verify and apply before your current OPT expires.
- Please give us your preferred beginning and end dates for your OPT.** The OPT card is issued for a specific time period (maximum of 12 months per education level). If you are unsure, you can discuss your options during your OPT appointment with the international advisor.

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

### Statement of Responsibility:

I have read the content of this handout and understand the regulations associated with OPT.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail (provide school and personal) \_\_\_\_\_

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### SECTION A: Instructions for Student

Please fill out this section and take this form to your department for the required signature. This form needs to be signed by your Academic Advisor, Dissertation/Thesis Advisor, Chair, or Dean.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ SamID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Major: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION B: Instructions for College/School/Department

F-1 international students may qualify for Optional Practical Training (OPT), which allows them to engage in temporary employment for up to one year to gain practical experience in their field of study. The above-named student is applying for OPT. In order for the International Office to be able to recommend this student for this training, we need to know his/her expected date of completion. If you have any questions, please call (936) 294-4737 and ask to speak with an international student advisor.

Please choose the category below that reflects this student's situation regarding the completion of their degree requirements. Then please sign below and return the form to the student.

- This student is currently enrolled in classes and expected to complete all requirements for their degree in the following semester:  Spring 20\_\_  Summer 20\_\_  Fall 20\_\_
- A graduate student who only has their thesis, dissertation or comprehensive exams remaining may apply for OPT while completing their thesis/dissertation/ comprehensive exams. This graduate student has completed, or will complete, all course requirements excluding their thesis, dissertation, or comprehensive exams. Their required coursework was completed, or will be completed, in the following semester:  Spring 20\_\_  Summer 20\_\_  Fall 20\_\_
- The student has completed all degree requirements:  Spring 20\_\_  Summer 20\_\_  Fall 20\_\_

Name of Advisor, Chair, or Dean: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_