



Optional Practical Training Application Instructions

Under federal regulations governing F-1 students, you are not allowed to work off-campus without express authorization from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to your major field of study. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization before completing their academic studies (pre-completion) and/or after completing their academic studies (post-completion). However, all periods of pre-completion OPT will be deducted from the available period of post-completion OPT.

- **Pre-completion OPT (not recommended):** You may apply to participate in pre-completion OPT after enrollment on a full-time basis for **one full academic year**. If you are authorized to participate in pre-completion OPT, you must work part time (20 hours or less per week) while school is in session. You may work full time when school is not in session. If you participated in pre-completion OPT, USCIS will deduct that amount of time from your post-completion OPT authorization period. For example, if you participated in 10 months of pre-completion OPT; you would be eligible for only up to 2 months of post-completion OPT. If you have used the full 12 months of full-time CPT during your current course of study, you will not be able to apply for OPT. Therefore, we recommend that you use CPT or other forms of authorized employment prior to your graduation so you can then apply for OPT after graduation, which allows you to stay and work in the U.S. for an additional year after graduation.

To qualify for **optional practical training prior to graduation (not recommended)**:

- i. You can apply for OPT if the work you wish to do cannot be approved as Curricular Practical Training. Please consult the International Office Coordinator to see if it is worth your while to apply. The process is expensive and time-consuming. Therefore, OPT prior to graduation is not recommended.
- ii. You must complete all the steps below regarding post-completion OPT, including payment of the fee.
- iii. You must apply at least 80 days prior to the date when you wish to start the optional work.
- iv. Work is limited to 20 hours per week while classes are in session unless you have completed all your coursework. OPT may be full time during summer vacation. It is automatically canceled when you next enroll in classes.

- **Post-completion OPT:** You may apply to participate in post-completion OPT **after graduation**. If you are authorized for post-completion OPT, you must **at least work 20 hours per week**.

To qualify for and maintain **optional practical training for the year after graduation**, you must meet the following requirements (please consult with the HUIO for pre-completion OPT request):

A. Requirements:

- The proposed employment is in your field of study. (See attached qualifying employments).
- You do not need to have a job offer to apply for OPT. However, you must start work within 90 days of approval or lose your OPT and F-1 status. You may not be unemployed for more than 90 days during your OPT period.
- You have been enrolled as a full-time student for at least one full academic year prior to applying.
- You have not completed twelve months of full-time curricular practical training (CPT). If you have used a full twelve months of CPT during your current course of study, you will not be approved for OPT.
- You may not work until you receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS.
- You must apply within the period of 90 days prior to graduation or up to 60 days after graduation. The card will be valid for up to one year.
- You must keep the HU International Office informed of your address, any name change, and any changes in your employment situation throughout the period of OPT, or risk cancellation.
- You must read and sign the OPT Statement of Understanding (Waiver).

B. Application:

Step One: All of the following documents must be part of your file in the HU International Office:

1. Copy of your current and previous I-20s.
2. Copy of your passport.
3. Copy of your visa.
4. Copy of your most recent I-94
5. Your current addresses (Home Country, U.S. Physical, and U.S. Mailing addresses).
6. Your current phone number and personal e-mail address (as your HU email may be disconnected after graduation).

Step Two: In addition, you must submit to HUIO:

1. **The attached OPT Eligibility Form**, signed by your advisor or department chair explaining why the practical training is related to your field of study.
2. **The attached OPT Responsibilities Form**, initialed and signed by you.
3. **The attached OPT Travel Advise Acknowledgment**
4. **The attached OPT Statement of Understanding**
5. **A Job Offer Letter from your employer** stating the beginning and ending dates of the offer of employment, the address of the company for which you will be working, the number of hours per week, your position, unpaid or hourly rate, and your duties. The letter should be submitted on the company letterhead, with original signature. If you do not currently have an employment offer, please submit your job offer letter as soon as possible but no later than 10 days after beginning employment so we can update your SEVIS record as employed to stop your 90 days unemployment period.

To confirm approval of the optional practical training, a new I-20 will be prepared and endorsed for the specific OPT period. Note: it can take up to 10 business days to issue your new I-20.

Step Three: Requesting your EAD Card with USCIS:

IMPORTANT: Your I-765 Application must be received by USCIS within **30 days** from issuance of your new I-20 with your OPT request. If not, your OPT request will be denied. If you miss this deadline to apply with USCIS please notify the International Office so we can recommend OPT in SEVIS again if possible.

1. Go to <https://www.uscis.gov/file-online/forms-available-to-file-online> select I-765 Application for Employment Authorization and click on File Online.
2. Students are now permitted to request premium processing for OPT and STEM OPT applications. Premium processing is an optional service that allows USCIS to process an application within 30 calendar days from the day they receive the request for premium processing. There is a \$1500 fee to request premium processing. To do this you will need to submit a Form I-907 Request for Premium Processing via your USCIS online account.
3. Items to have ready when you are ready to submit your I-765 online:
 - A credit card, debit card, or your bank account information to pay fee online (currently \$410, subject to change).
 - Digital copy of your new I-20 with the OPT request endorsement (Note above: must be dated 30 days or less from the time the application is received).
 - Copy of your most recent Form I-94 (can be obtained online at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>).
 - A photo of yourself. Use this tool to check if your photo is acceptable: <https://tsg.phototool.state.gov/photo>
 - Any previous EAD that you have received (if applicable). FYI: The USCIS # on your EAD card is the A-number.
 - If you have never received an EAD card, you must submit copy of a government-issued identity document such as your passport and a visa issued by a foreign government.

C. After submitting your application:

- Please allow 2 to 5 months before receiving your EAD Card. To check the current USCIS time processing, visit <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>: select “Form I-765; Potomac Service Center.”
- If you change of address while your application is pending, you must update your new address within 10 days via <https://egov.uscis.gov/coa/displayCOAForm.do>. You must also inform HUIO of your change of address to update your SEVIS record.
- You should receive within 2-3 weeks after filing an email/text notification, and letter confirming your case receipt. This letter will contain your Receipt Number and with that you can check the status of your case online at <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>.
- Request for Evidence (RFE): USCIS may send you a document requesting additional information or evidence in order to process your application. You must respond to this request by the deadline indicated. If not, USCIS will cancel your case. See the International Office Inbound Immigration Specialist for assistance in responding to an RFE.
- Remember: you cannot start working until you receive your EAD Card.
- Remember: you cannot travel internationally after your I-20 expired and before receiving your EAD Card.

D. After approval:

- Notify the HU International Office and provide a copy of the EAD Card (front and back). If SEVIS has not updated your record to show that your OPT has been approved, the HUIO must make sure that is taken care of right away.
- If you change of address while your application is pending, you must update your new address within 10 days via <https://egov.uscis.gov/coa/displayCOAForm.do>. You must also inform HUIO of your change of address to update your SEVIS record.
- If you change of employer (or if your current employment terms changes, e.g. change of hours), you must report to HUIO as soon as possible but no later than 10 days after beginning employment so we can update your SEVIS record.
- If your employment ends, you must also inform HUIO no later than 10 days after termination. Remember: there is an allowance of a maximum of 90 days of unemployment under OPT.
- If you do not intend to carry out an entire year of your OPT because you plan to re-enroll in school in a graduate program, check with the HU International Office in how to cancel your OPT, and how this could affect any future post-completion OPT eligibility. Even though your OPT will automatically be canceled in SEVIS when you re-enroll for classes or on the date your records are transferred to another U.S. institution, it is important to inform USCIS of such change or risk of violation of status.
- If USCIS checks with SEVIS or your employer and finds records indicating that you are not employed or have been unemployed for more than 90 days, you will have to prove you were actually employed or out of the country on an approved leave, in order to avoid cancellation of OPT status.
- If you travel outside the U.S. while under OPT, you must: (1) obtain a travel endorsement from your DSO on your I-20; (2) have an unexpired visa (or re-apply for a visa while abroad); (3) have your unexpired EAD Card; (4) have your job offer letter from your current employer; (5) have an approved leave letter from your employer or travel-for-work letter to avoid the time out to be counted as unemployment. P.S.: If you do not have the proper documentation, U.S. Embassies can decline to renew your F-1 visa.

E. Extension of OPT:

- STEM OPT Extension: OPT recipients with diplomas in STEM fields who are employed by approved employers may apply for a renewal of their OPT for up to 24 months.
- Cap-Gap Extension: OPT recipients who have a pending H-1B cap petition filed on April 1, with an approval start date of October 1, will have their status extended until their H-1B start date (however, you cannot continue working until your H-1B start date).
- All other OPT recipients have a 60-day grace period after expiration of their EAD card in which they can either (1) leave the country; (2) re-enroll in school, or (3) adjust status to another immigration status. Note: you cannot work during your grace period. In addition, if you leave the U.S. during your grace period, you cannot reenter (unless you reapply for a visa, or re-enroll in school.)



Optional Practical Training Eligibility Form

SECTION A (TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT):

1. First Name: _____ Last Name: _____
2. SEVIS #: _____ HUID: _____ Phone No.: _____
3. Personal E-mail: _____ HU E-mail: _____
4. Level: ☐ Bachelor ☐ Master ☐ Ph.D. Major: _____
5. Expected Graduation Date: _____
6. Has this above information changed since your last I-20? ☐ Yes ☐ No.
7. Type of OPT requested: ☐ Pre-Completion ☐ Post-Completion
8. Period of time requested: ☐ Spring semester ☐ Summer semester ☐ Fall semester ☐ Entire Year (12 months)
9. Employment Start Date: _____ Employment End Date: _____
10. This OPT is: ☐ 20 hours or less/week ☐ 20 hours or more/week.
11. Do you currently have a job offer? ☐ Yes ☐ No. (Please be aware of the 90 days unemployment rule).
12. If yes: Employer's Name: _____ EIN: _____
 Employer's Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
 Supervisor's Name: _____ Supervisor's E-mail: _____
 Supervisor's Phone No.: _____ Your Position: _____
 How this optional training is related to your program of study:

I agree to keep my address and employment information updated throughout my OPT.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

SECTION B: TO BE COMPLETED BY ACADEMIC ADVISOR):

1. Please confirm the student's major program and expected graduation date: _____
 2. If prior to graduation, how many hours per week will the student work? _____
- Academic Advisor's Name: _____ Phone No.: _____ E-mail: _____
- Academic Advisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

This form must be submitted to Hampton University International Office for approval.



OPT RESPONSIBILITIES FORM

Optional Practical Training (OPT) applicants must ensure they have met all immigration-mandated responsibilities to maintain their status. Please INITIAL EACH SECTION in the space provided to indicate your understanding of the items below. **I understand:**

PRE-REQUISITE ENROLLMENT: I must have completed one academic year before being eligible to do OPT. ____

RELATED FIELD OF STUDY: The proposed employment is in my field of study. I can work for any employer, as long as the training relates to my major course of study. ____

WORKING HOURS: I am allowed to work either part-time (at least 20 hours per week) or full-time (40 hours per week) under post-completion OPT. For pre-completion OPT, I must work part-time (20 hours a week or less) when school is in session. ____

PRIOR FULL-TIME CPT: Any full-time CPT period I engaged during my program will subtract from the year of full-time post-completion OPT for which I may be eligible. ____

OPT EMPLOYMENT DATES: For pre-completion OPT, the earliest possible start date is the first day of classes and the latest possible end date is the last day of exams. For post-completion OPT, the earliest possible start date is the day after graduation (program end date listed on my I-20), and the latest possible end date is 12 months after my start date. ____

OPT APPLICATION: I must send my OPT application with USCIS within the period of 90 days prior to graduation or up to 60 days after graduation. My I-20 with the OPT request must be dated no more than 30 days from the time USCIS receives my application. The EAD card will be valid for up to one year. ____

PROCESSING TIME: Processing time for my EAD card may take up to 5 months. I cannot start working until I receive my EAD Card. If I report to my employment site before I have my EAD Card in-hand, I am in violation of F-1 regulations and may be subject to losing my status, including OPT. ____

REQUEST FOR EVIDENCE (RFE): USCIS may send me a document requesting additional information or evidence in order to process my application. I must respond to this request by the deadline indicated or my case will be cancelled. ____

EMPLOYMENT UPDATES: If I change of employer (or if my current employment terms changes, e.g. change of hours), I must report it to my SEVP Portal, or to HUIO, no later than 10 days after beginning employment, to update my SEVIS record. ____

UNEMPLOYMENT: I am only allowed up to 90 days of unemployment under OPT. I must start work within 90 days of approval or lose my OPT and F-1 status. If my employment is terminated, I must report it to my SEVP Portal, or to HUIO, no later than 10 days after termination to update my SEVIS record. ____

ADDRESS UPDATES: I must report to my SEVP Portal, or to HUIO, any changes of address (U.S. Physical Address, U.S. Mailing Address, and Home Country Address), email address, or phone number changes within 10 days. Out-of-date addresses are a violation of my status. I must also submit any address changes (U.S. Physical and U.S. Mailing addresses) to USCIS within 10 days. ____

SEVP PORTAL: I can report any changes of address, phone number, and changes to my employment on the SEVP Portal directly to meet my legal reporting requirements, or ask my DSO to report it for me in SEVIS. If I report the changes myself on SEVP, I must still inform my DSO of any changes, as well as to obtain a new I-20 with updated employment information. ____

TRAVEL WHILE ON OPT: I understand the "Travel While on OPT Chart" and signed the Travel Advice Form from HUIO. ____

RE-ENROLLMENT IN SCHOOL: If I decide to re-enroll in school while on OPT, I must consult with HUIO on how to cancel my EAD Card. I am eligible for a new 12 months OPT authorization if I change to a higher education level. ____

POLICY UPDATES: This responsibilities form is valid for current HUIO policies and U.S. Immigration regulations. I will follow any updates in policies by contacting HUIO and/or visiting the USCIS website directly. ____

I have read and agree to follow these regulations, policies and procedures.

Student's Name: _____ Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____



Optional Practical Training (OPT) Statement of Understanding

I, _____, acknowledge that I have read and understood Hampton University's protocol concerning Optional Practical Training (OPT). I understand that OPT is not guaranteed to me and that the application fees to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) are non-refundable. I will not hold Hampton University or any of its affiliates liable, should USCIS deny me to participate in OPT.

Should I refuse to sign this document, I understand that Hampton University is going to uphold the approval or denial decision made by USCIS, concerning my OPT application and that no contestation will be made on my behalf.

Signature

Student ID Number

Date



HAMPTON UNIVERSITY - INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Armstrong-Slater Building, First Floor

200 William R. Harvey Way, Hampton, VA 23668

Phone: 757-728-6914

Email: INTERNATIONALOFFICE@HAMPTONU.EDU

OPT TRAVEL ADVICE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I, _____, acknowledge that the International Office has advised me not to travel internationally while awaiting approval for Optional Practical Training (OPT). By signing this form, I also acknowledge that if I choose to leave the country, I am traveling at my own risk and may potentially be unable to re-enter the country.

International Student Signature

Date

SEVIS ID NUMBER

HU ID NUMBER

Travel While on OPT

Status	Travel Recommended?	Travel Risk Level	What You Will Need
Applied for OPT. Application is pending and you are still a student (the program end date on page one of your I-20 has not yet been reached)	Yes	None, as long as you re-enter the country at least a couple of weeks before the end date on your I-20.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Travel endorsement on your I-20• Valid passport & visa
Applied for OPT. Application is pending and you are no longer a student (the program end date on page one of your I-20 has been reached)	No	Moderate to high, if OPT application is approved while you are away you may be denied re-entry to the country	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Travel endorsement on your I-20• Valid passport & visa
Application for OPT is approved, you have your EAD card, but you do not have a job offer	No	High, if you decide to travel you should have proof that you are actively looking for a position (proof that you submitted resumes, e-mail correspondence, upcoming interviews, etc.) Even if you have proof, you may be denied re-entry into the country	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Travel endorsement on your I-20• Valid passport & visa• EAD Card• Proof that you are actively looking for a job
Application for OPT is approved, you have your EAD card, and your job offer but have not begun to work	Yes	Moderate to low, if you decide to travel make sure that you take your job offer letter on office letterhead and that it includes your expected start date	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Travel endorsement on your I-20• Valid passport & visa• EAD Card• Job offer letter on official letterhead
Application for OPT is approved, you have your EAD card, and you have begun to work	Yes	Very low, if you decide to travel request a letter from your employer indicating that they approve your travel and list the date that they expect you to come back to work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Travel endorsement on your I-20• Valid passport & visa• EAD Card• Job offer letter on official letterhead• Letter from your employer authorizing travel
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We do not recommend travel if you do not have active employment• We do advise that you keep a file with your pay stubs, bank statements, and W-2 tax forms during your time on OPT!			



WHAT TYPE OF WORK CONSTITUTES EMPLOYMENT UNDER OPT?

Government Links: https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/opt_policy_guidance_042010.pdf
<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2018/bcm-1805-01.pdf>

(1) How many hours does a student need to work per week during post-completion OPT to be considered employed?

A student must work at least 20 hours per week in a qualifying position to be considered employed. If a student has a variable schedule, within a month, it should average out to at least 20 hours per week.

(2) What types of employment are allowed for regular pre- and post-completion OPT?

All OPT employment, including post-completion OPT, must be in a job that is related to the student's degree program. This employment may include:

- **Paid employment.** A student may work part time (at least 20 hours per week when on post-completion OPT) or full time.
- **Multiple employers.** A student may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the student's degree program.
- **Short-term multiple employers (performing artists).** A student, such as a musician or other type of performing artist, may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration.
- **Work for hire.** This is also commonly referred to as 1099 employment, where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. If requested by DHS, the student must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract period and the name and address of the contracting company.
- **Self-employed business owner.** A student on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. The student must be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to the student's degree program.
- **Employment through an agency or consulting firm.** A student on post-completion OPT must be able to provide evidence showing he or she worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.
- **Unpaid employment.** A student may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, where this practice does not violate any labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week for a student on post-completion OPT. A student must be able to provide evidence acquired from the student's employer to verify that the student worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment. Volunteer positions that are not directly related to your course of study do not qualify as optional practical training (OPT) and must not be listed as OPT employment. Reporting non-qualifying volunteer opportunities as OPT employment will be deemed a violation of your reporting requirements and subject you to removal from the United States. Non-qualifying volunteer positions do not stop the accrual of unemployment which is limited to a total of 90 days during OPT. Accordingly, if you have been unemployed for more than 90 days, you must leave the United States or be subject to removal even if you have volunteered while unemployed.

(3) How does travel outside the U.S impact the period of unemployment?

Time spent outside the United States during post-completion OPT counts as unemployment against the 90 days limit, unless the student is either:

- Employed during a period of leave authorized by an employer; or
- Traveling as part of his or her employment.

(4) What is the effect on a student's status if the student exceeds the period of unemployment?

A student who has exceeded the period of unemployment while on post-completion OPT has violated his or her status unless he or she has taken one of the following actions:

- Applied to continue his or her education by a change of education level or transferring to another SEVP-certified school;
- Departed the United States; or
- Taken action to otherwise maintain legal status.

A student may be denied future immigration benefits that rely on the student's valid F-1 status if DHS determines that the student exceeded the limitations on unemployment. Additionally, ICE/SEVP may examine SEVIS data and terminate a student's record if it fails to show that the student maintained the proper period of employment.