Post-completion Optional Practical Training
Online Tutorial
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The OPT Process

**Step 1:** Get familiar with this online post-completion OPT tutorial.

**Step 2:** Register for the OPT workshop

**Step 3:** Prepare all application materials

**Step 4:** Attend the workshop to prepare your OPT mailing packet

**Step 5:** Receive your new I-20 with OPT recommendation (5 business days after the workshop)

**Step 6:** Mail your application with a copy of the new I-20 to USCIS.

**Step 7:** Application processing with USCIS can take up to 90 days. Once you receive your OPT (EAD) card, you are eligible to begin working **on the start date** printed on the EAD card.
What is Post-completion OPT?

• OPT stands for “Optional Practical Training”
• It is maximum 12 months of temporary work authorization granted by US Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) for off-campus work directly related to your field of study
• OPT allows you to look for a job in your field of study **anywhere** in the U.S.
• Employment begins after graduation
• While on OPT, you are still an HCC F-1 student
• You have to apply for OPT
Who is Eligible for OPT?

You are eligible for OPT if you:

• Have attended and maintained your F-1 status on a full-time basis for at least one academic year

• Have applied for graduation with Associate Degree or a two-semester Certificate program with HCC

• Have not accrued 365 days of full-time curricular practical training (CPT)

• Have not been previously authorized for OPT at the same or higher program level

Note: You don’t need a job offer to apply for OPT

Students in the Intensive English Program are not eligible to apply for OPT
Employment Requirements

- All employment must be directly related to your program of study. Your confirmation of how the work is related to your program of study will be saved in your SEVIS record.
- Employment must be a minimum of 20 hours a week
- You may begin employment once you have your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and have reached the start date on your EAD.
- Review the acceptable employment while on OPT (next page)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Employment</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard full-time employer</td>
<td>Student can have one employer and work for that company on a full-time basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple employers</td>
<td>Student may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to student’s field of study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple short-term employers (performing artists)</td>
<td>Musicians or other performing artists may work for multiple short-term employers (i.e. gigs). Students should maintain a list of all gigs, including the dates and duration of the gigs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work for hire</td>
<td>Also commonly referred to as 1099 employment, the term “work for hire” describes a service based on a contractual agreement rather than an employment relationship. This means that the individual is performing a service.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Acceptable Type of Employment While on OPT (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Type</th>
<th>Notes/Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed business owner</td>
<td>Students on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. In this situation, students must work full-time. Students must be able to prove to DHS that they have the proper business licenses and are actively engaged in a business related to their degree program. OIS recommends that self-employed students seek consultation from a lawyer. Note: Have to close or transfer ownership of the business once the OPT is over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment through an employment agency or consulting firm</td>
<td>Students on post-completion OPT must be able to provide evidence that they worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid Jobs</td>
<td>Students may work on a volunteer basis or as unpaid interns, where this does not violate any US labor laws. Labor laws vary by state. Check with the company’s Human Resources office for restrictions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Before Applying for OPT……

- I already applied for graduation
- My G.P.A. will be 2.00 or higher
- I will not have dropped or failed courses at the end of this semester
- I am going to graduate on time!

Note: It is extremely difficult to cancel an OPT application once it is sent to USCIS

Contact your DSO immediately if you are not going to graduate on time!
When to Apply: Application Window of 150 days

OPT application can be submitted to USCIS within a 150-day window: **90 days prior** to program end date and **should be received with USCIS** no later than **60 days after** the program end date. However, OISS stops processing OPT applications on the **140th day** to ensure your OPT packet arrives at USCIS before the end of the 60-day grace period.

The application should be received at USCIS **within 30 days** the I-20 with the OPT recommendation was issued by the DSO.

**We encourage you to apply early.** Applications submitted after the program end day may result in reducing your employment authorization time. Remember, the processing time is up to 90 days and sometimes even longer.

USCIS OPT Application Processing Time: [https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/](https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/)

You can check the status of your I-765 application online [https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do](https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do)
OPT Timeline

- Graduation Date and/or Program end date in SEVIS I-20
- Student may start OPT
- Start OPT
- OPT Employment time
- End OPT End date in EAD CARD
- Grace Period

- Students may apply for OPT
- 90 days
- 60 days
- 12 months
- 60 days

See Employment requirements and Acceptable type of employment

See Options during 60 day grace period
OPT Start Date – How to Choose it?

Based on your preferences and employment availability, you can choose any date as your OPT start date within 60-day window after the program end date. Some recommendations:

- If you have a job offer, choose the job offer start date or a date at the beginning of the 60-day period.
- If you need more time to apply for a job and prepare for interviews, or if you are applying late - choose a day close to the end of the 60-day period.
- If you are not certain about your actions or future events, choose a day in the middle of the 60-day period.
- Avoid weekends and national holidays as OPT start date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduating Semester</th>
<th>Select your OPT start date between the following dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2018</td>
<td>December 19 – February 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2019</td>
<td>May 19 – July 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2019</td>
<td>August 15 – October 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OPT usually expires 12 months from the requested start date, if filed and approved on time.
International Travel and Re-entry to the U.S.

Travel with Pending OPT Application

You are strongly advised to wait for your EAD if traveling internationally after the end of your program.

Travel with Approved OPT Application (required documents)

• Valid passport
• Valid F-1 visa
• OPT I-20 (signed for travel by DSO; the travel signature is valid for 6 months)
• Employment verification letter, employment offer letter, or interview schedule
• Valid OPT EAD (EAD card alone does not suffice for re-entry to the U.S. It is “Not Valid for Re-entry”, hence the requirement of the supporting employment documents)
Employment Authorization Document (EAD)

Once the OPT application is approved by USCIS, students will receive the Approval Notice in the mail. A few days later, the EAD will also arrive by mail.

A valid passport, I-94, OPT I-20, and OPT EAD will satisfy employer’s request for proof of work authorization.
Reporting Requirements During OPT

OPT is a benefit of F-1 status. All F-1 regulations apply to you:

• Submit a copy of your EAD card to oiss.international@hccs.edu. Write OPT and your HCC ID in the subject line
• Report any changes to your employment situation (i.e. start a new job, quit current job, laid off from current job)
• Report changes to your US address and telephone information
• All changes must be reported via the online SEVP Portal within 10 days.

For step-by-step instructions on how to use the SEVP Portal, please visit SEVP Portal Help. An email with instructions on how to create an SEVP Portal account will be sent from do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov on or after the approved OPT start date. Once you have reported your information, you do not need to confirm with OISS that it has been updated.
Post-completion OPT and 90-Day Unemployment Rule

While students are not required to have an employer when OPT is requested in SEVIS, students authorized for post-completion OPT are expected to be employed. **A student on post-completion OPT can be unemployed for a total of 90 days.**

The 90-day “clock” begins on the start date printed on the Employment Authorization Document (EAD)

If students accrue 90 days of unemployment, it is considered a violation of F-1 status and Student and Exchange Visitor Programs (SEVP) may audit SEVIS data for students on OPT and terminate students’ records if there is no employment information updated in SEVIS

Students who are unemployed should select one of the following solutions before their 90th day of unemployment:

- Begin a new degree program at HCC
- Transfer to another SEVP certified school
- Change visa status
- Depart the United States
Recordkeeping

• It is your responsibility to keep track of all your employment records
• Keep copies of all I-20s and EADs – Students who apply for future immigration benefits in the US will be asked to provide evidence of all previous EADs and I-20s
• Keep original EAD in a safe place. Lost or stolen EAD will be replaced at the student’s expense
What are my Options after OPT ends?

You are allowed to remain in the US for up to 60 days after the OPT end date. During this time, you may not work and cannot leave and reenter the US as F-1 student.

### Options after OPT ends (60 Day Grace Period)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Begin a new program of study at HCC</td>
<td>Students must apply for a Change of Educational level at HCC and be issued a new I-20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer to another institution</td>
<td>Students must request the transfer of their SEVIS record to that institution before the end of the 60 days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return home</td>
<td>Students can return to their home country or depart the US before the end of the grace period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change visa status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Request for Evidence (RFE) - Enrollment on OPT - OPT Cancellation

Request for Evidence (RFE)

If there are errors or omissions in the application packet, USCIS may issue a RFE. The RFE will explain which additional documents are required along with return mailing instructions. Submit a copy of your RFE to your DSO and respond to the RFE by the stated deadline; otherwise, you risk having your request for OPT significantly delayed or denied.

Enrollment

You cannot be enrolled in a degree program while on OPT. You may take up to 6 credits of classes that are avocational and recreational in nature that are incidental to the job.

OPT Cancellation

If you wish to cancel your OPT and return to your home country, you must notify OISS so that your SEVIS records can be closed out. Failure to report departure information to OISS can result in the automatic termination of your SEVIS record as a result of excessive unemployment days.
Social Security Number (SSN)

- SSN is a 9-digit number issued to US citizens, permanent residents, and temporary (working) non-residents (i.e. F-1 students on OPT) by the Social Security Administration (SSA) Office.
- Its primary purpose is to track individuals for taxation purposes; it is not intended to be used for identification purposes.
- Students who had paid employment in the US prior to OPT should already have a social security number, so they do NOT need to apply for another one.
- Students who have never worked for pay in the US and therefore need a social security number may apply for one using the OPT I-765 application.
Driver’s License

Documentation required by Texas Department of Safety:

• EAD card
• OPT endorsed I-20
• Printout of I-94 Departure/Arrival form
• Passport (valid at least 6 months ahead)

https://www.dps.texas.gov/

Note: Most likely, you won’t be able to renew your Driver’s license until your OPT is approved. It is recommended to apply early to avoid having a gap in your driver license validity.
Complete List of Documents Required for OPT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents required for OPT SEVIS Form I-20</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>F-1 Student Program Completion Verification Form</strong></td>
<td>Request by email from your <a href="#">Academic Advisor</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OPT Commitment Letter</strong></td>
<td>Type and sign the document (see page 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OPT Mailing List for USCIS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form I-765 (typed, not handwritten)</td>
<td><a href="https://www.uscis.gov/i-765">https://www.uscis.gov/i-765</a> (see pages 24-25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Copy of OPT Form I-20</strong></td>
<td>Signed by DSO and student. * Will be issued by DSO after review of the documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form G-1145 (typed, not handwritten)</td>
<td><a href="https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145">https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two (2) recent U.S. Style Passport Photos</td>
<td><a href="http://travel.state.gov">http://travel.state.gov</a> Can be obtained at any local CVS or Walgreens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photocopy of Passport</td>
<td>page that includes photo, passport number and expiration date; must be valid for 6 months from application date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-94 Arrival/Departure form</td>
<td><a href="https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home">https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check or Money Order for $410</td>
<td>payable to US Department of Homeland Security ( do not abbreviate to DHS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photocopies of all previously used EAD cards (if any)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Commitment Letter Sample

Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)
Regulatory obligations for F1 students

Any OPT related correspondence sent by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will be delivered to your personal address. You must submit a copy of any communication received to the Office of International Student Services (OISS) such as approvals (OPT card), denials or request for additional evidence, and most importantly - your employment information - in order for us to maintain your SEVIS I-20 Form accordingly.

Please send any of this information within 10 days of such changes by submitting the OPT Employment Information form via e-mail (oiss.international@hccs.edu) or fax (713) 718-2112 to the Office of International Student Services.

Requested OPT Start Date: __/____/____ (DD/MM/YY)

☐ I confirm I have applied for graduation.

I acknowledge I have to report immediately on the following:
- Failure to graduate
- Change of legal name
- Change of contact information (address, telephone, email address)
I-765 Application Completion

Download and type the information
Print all 7 pages
Sign the Form

Application For Employment Authorization

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

For USCIS Use Only

Authorization/Extension Valid From

Authorization/Extension Valid Through

Alien Registration Number

Remarks

Action Block

To be completed by an attorney or Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA)-accredited representative (if any).

Select this box if Form G-28 is attached.

Attorney or Accredited Representative
USCIS Online Account Number (if any)

START HERE - Type or print in black ink.

Part 1. Reason for Applying

I am applying for (select only one box):

1.a. Initial permission to accept employment. [X]

1.b. Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document, or correction of my employment authorization document NOT DUE to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Other Names Used

Provide all other names you have ever used, including aliases, maiden name, and nicknames. If you need extra space to complete this section, use the space provided in Part 6.

Additional Information.

2.a. Family Name (Last Name)
I-765 Application Completion

Use the latest form from https://www.uscis.gov/i-765

Field 1.a. Mark “Initial permission to accept employment”.
Field 13.a. If you answer “No” to Item 13.a., skip to Item 14.
Field 14. “Do you want the SSA to issue you a Social Security Card?” mark “Yes” box and answer “Yes” to Item 15
Field 27. (c) (3) (B) (small c, number 3, capital B)

Part 3. Fields 7a-7b. Sign and date the form. Use black ink to sign name in the signature box. Ensure the signature stays within the box.

Mail all 7 pages of the Form I-765 to USCIS with your OPT application packet. For more detailed instructions, visit Instructions for I-765
We strongly advise you not to move or change your mailing address while your OPT application is pending with USCIS.

If you are no longer residing at the address listed on the I-765, the EAD card will be returned to USCIS.

The U.S. Postal Service does not forward mail from USCIS.

You will not be notified if your EAD card is returned to USCIS.
Photo Requirements

Follow the passport photo guidelines on [http://travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov)

Write you name and I-94 number at the back of the photo: I-94#

Do not use photos from your home country

Use recent photos, US passport style, 2” X 2”
I-765 Application Fee Payment

$410 non-refundable fee

Payment methods (choose one):

- **Money order is the preferred method of payment**
  - Pay to the order of: *US Department of Homeland Security*
  - Include your I-94# in the memo (For) section

- **Check from U.S. bank**
  - Pay to the order of: *US Department of Homeland Security*
  - The sum of (amount): *Four hundred ten dollars*
  - Checks must have imprinted name and address on the upper left corner
  - Include your I-94# in the memo (For) section
  - Do not write or sign on the back of the check.

- **Credit card**
  - Use [Form G-1450](#) for credit card payment. Place the completed form on top of your application.
Mailing Instructions

- Make copies of the entire application for your records. (see USCIS mailing checklist on page 22)
- Mail application packet by certified US mail.
- Applications must be received by USCIS before the 60-day grace period expires and within 30 days of the issuance of the I-20 - refer to the “Date Issued” listed on section #10 on page 1 of the I-20.

For US Postal Services (USPS) Deliveries

| USCIS |
| PO Box 660867 |
| Dallas, TX 75266 |

For Express Mail and Courier Deliveries

| USCIS |
| Attn: NFB AOS |
| 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business |
| Suite 400 |
| Lewisville, TX 75067 |