



OPT/Applying for authorization to work off campus

I. To qualify for and maintain **optional practical training** for the year after graduation, you must meet the following requirements:

A. Requirements:

- The proposed employment is in your field of training
- 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 the US CIS.
- You must apply within the period of 90 days prior to graduation up to 60 days after graduation. The card will be valid for up to one year. If you plan to use only part of a year (i.e. prior to graduation or prior to beginning studies at another university), please see H below.
- 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 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.
- Applicants in certain degree programs in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics may extend their OPT for an additional 17 months.

B. Update your file: Before beginning your application, you must check with the HU International Office to make sure that your file is up to date. Federal regulations require the HU International Office to have the following items on file:

- a. Photocopies of the front and back of your current I-94
- b. Photocopies of all the I-20s you have been issued
- c. Photocopies of the dates of validity and visa page of your passport
- d. Your current address and phone number. If you are graduating, you should also provide an unchanging U.S. address to which your new EAD and any other INS documents can be mailed for several months after you graduate. It may be the address of a relative, trusted friend or advisor who will alert you when any mail from the USCIS is received. Please be advised that the U.S. post office does not forward government documents.

Heads Up: You will be required to keep your address and employment information updated throughout the period of OPT. Failure to do so could result in revocation of your OPT, which puts you out of status and requires you to leave the country immediately.

C. Application procedure:

a. Electronic filing:

1. Log on to <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis> and click on Immigration Forms. Download the current instructions for filing the I-765 and the form itself. You may file your application electronically and pay the fee online using a credit card. Be sure to provide a U.S. mailing address that will be valid for several months after you graduate, to which any correspondence from the USCIS, and the EAD,

can be mailed (once again, the US Post Office will not forward government documents).

2. Print out the receipt.
 3. Bring the following supporting documentation to the International Office Coordinator:
 - A signed statement from your dean or advisor stating that the optional practical training is necessary training in your field of study (please use the accompanying form).
 - The receipt for on-line payment of the application fee.
 - Photocopies of the front and back of your I-94 (see above)
 - Two photos, taken in accordance with the instructions for filing the I-765.
 - Any previous EAD that you have received.
- b. Paper filing:
1. Log on to <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis> and click on Immigration Forms. Download the current instructions for filing the I-765 and the form itself.
 2. Print out and complete the application form (I-765). Be sure to provide a U.S. mailing address that will be valid for several months after you graduate, to which any correspondence from the USCIS, and the EAD, can be mailed (once again, the US Post Office will not forward government documents).
 3. Bring the form with the following supporting documentation to the International Office Coordinator:
 - A signed statement from your dean or advisor stating that the optional practical training is necessary training in your field of study (please use the accompanying form).
 - The completed application form (I-765).
 - A check or money order for the application fee, made out to US Department of Homeland Security.
 - Photocopies of the front and back of your I-94 (see above)
 - Two photos, taken in accordance with the instructions for filing the I-765.
 - Any previous EAD that you have received.
 - A new I-20 will be issued for you and signed by the International Office coordinator. **You must also sign the I-20 in blue ink.** You must mail all documents to USCIS Vermont Center
 - Please allow at least 80 days for processing. If you file electronically, you will already have your receipt number. If you file a paper application and pay by check, US CIS will send you a receipt number (it will also appear on the canceled check) and may follow up with a request for additional information.
 - Did you remember to provide an address that will be valid after you graduate and move out of the residence halls, so that someone will be available to receive the mail and immediately alert you to its arrival?

D. After submitting the application:

- Request for Additional Information (RFI): the DHS may send a document requesting additional information with a deadline by which all requested documentation must be returned to them. See the International Office Coordinator for assistance in responding to the RFI.
- To check on the status of your application, provide the EAC (receipt number) to the HU International Office so that your file can be traced. Using the EAC number, you may also check online for the status of your application.

E. After approval:

- Notify the HU International Office and provide a copy of the EAD or any RFI as soon as it is received. If SEVIS has not updated your record to show that the OPT was approved, the HU International Office must make sure that is taken care of right away.
- **Within 10 days of any change, notify the HU International Office of your new name, address and employment status to ensure continuation of your OPT status.**
- If you do not intend to carry out an entire year of OPT because you plan to begin graduate studies, check with the HU International Office to see how this will affect the duration of your OPT.
- OPT is automatically canceled when the HU International Office next registers you for classes, on the date when your records are transferred to another U.S. institution.
- If the 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 in order to avoid cancellation of OPT status.

F. Extension of OPT:

- OPT recipients with diplomas in STEM fields who are employed by approved employers may apply for renewal of their OPT for up to 17 months. Contact the HU International Office for details on this regulation and procedures to apply for the extension.
- All other OPT recipients must apply for a change of status at least 60 days before the end of F-1 status, or transfer to another degree program.
- Those who do not change status or transfer must leave the country within 60 days after expiration of OPT. F-1 status expires 60 days after the expiration of OPT.
- OPT recipients whose employers are applying to change their status to H 1-B may be eligible for an extension of F-1 status until the H 1-B goes through. Contact the HU International Office for information about reporting requirements and responsibilities during that period.

Important Do's and Don'ts for the period after you submit your application:

1. Do not travel outside the country with an expired visa while waiting for your EAD to arrive. Visa officials may decline to renew your F-1 visa if you do not have an EAD and offer of employment.
2. While waiting for the EAD, do not travel to locations where you cannot be reached by the person responsible for accepting your mail. If the USCIS sends a request for further information, you must respond by the deadline or lose your opportunity for OPT.
3. Notify the HU International Office:
 - a. of any change in your mailing address, phone and email.
 - b. of the EAC receipt number as soon as you receive the receipt from the US CIS
 - c. Provide a copy of the EAD as soon as it arrives so that we can make sure the SEVIS record is updated properly. Failure to do this might result in problems if you later apply for a change of status.
 - d. Within 90 days, provide employment information or risk cancellation of your OPT.
4. You may look for work while waiting for the EAD, but you may not begin work until your EAD has arrived.
5. **Make photocopies of the EAD and keep the original among your important papers even after it has expired. It may be requested by the immigration authorities in the future.**

II. To apply for **optional practical training prior to graduation (not recommended)**:

- A. You must 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.
- B. You must complete all the steps above including payment of the fee.
- C. You must apply at least 80 days prior to the date when you wish to start the optional work.
- D. 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.

III. **Curricular practical training prior** to graduation:

Curricular Practical Training is work for which you will earn credit (i.e. an internship or work study program, or a stated requirement for your degree). The application process is simpler and there is no charge. For further information, please make an appointment to see the International Office Coordinator and request a copy of the Curricular Practical Training information and application.

IV. **Severe Financial Hardship**

If you need to work because of an unforeseen event that severely restricts your ability to cover your expenses, please see the HU International Office for information and instructions about applying for an EAD for severe financial hardship. Please note: you must document the circumstances that have restricted your financial resources, the application procedure takes a minimum of 80 days and the immigration authorities charge a fee to review your application.

Optional Practical Training Eligibility Form

Section A. (To be completed by all applicants)

Student Name: _____ Phone: _____

2. Period of time requested: spring/ summer/ fall/ entire year 2_____ to 2_____

3. Personal Email: _____ Pipeline email: _____

4. Degree Program: _____

5. Expected Graduation Date: _____

6. Has this information changed since your last I-20 was issued? _____

7. Dates of employment (mm/dd/yyyy) from _____ to _____.

- Full time (more than 20 hrs/ week) or part time (20 hrs/ week or less): _____
- Employer name (if available): _____
- Employer full address (if available): _____

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. How is the optional employment related to the student's academic program? (i.e. is it necessary for certification or licensing? Is it valuable practical experience?)

3. If prior to graduation, how many hours per week will the student work? _____

Academic advisor name: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Academic Advisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

This form must be returned to the student.

If you have questions regarding this form, please contact:

HU International

Tel: 757-728-6914 Fax: 757-637-2100