

**Optional Practical Training (OPT):
Guidance for Filing and Mailing
Office of International Student Success | Hobart and William Smith Colleges**

To apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT), we will review your HWS OPT application and issue an updated I-20 with an OPT recommendation on it for inclusion with your OPT application to USCIS. In completing your applications, we offer the recommendations and best practices below. We have updated the process in consideration of COVID-19 protocols and the fact that students may not be on campus.

Note: Each student is ultimately responsible for filing their own accurate and complete application with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). You must be in the U.S. in F-1 student status to apply for OPT.

1. Compile your OPT Request

>>>MAKE ALL DOCUMENTS SINGLE SIDED TO ENSURE ACCURATE USCIS PROCESSING<<<

The USCIS I-765 and G-1145 forms are available at: <https://www.uscis.gov/forms>

- OPT Intake Form (For internal use only, not sent to USCIS)**
Completed and signed- found at the end of this document. We must have a month/day/year start date (and end date, if requesting pre- completion OPT. We will calculate the end date for post-completion.).
- Original USCIS Form G-1145 e-Notification of Application**
This USCIS form is optional, yet highly recommended if you want to receive an email or text that your application has been accepted at a USCIS Lockbox facility.
- Original USCIS Form I-765**
Completed, signed, with all items completed in black (typed or printed legibly).
TIP: typing the form provides greater clarity and accuracy on forms that will be scanned by USCIS.

To obtain the most current form, visit the [USCIS website](#). Use the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader. Read all USCIS instructions provided before completing the form. Additional guidance to complete Form I- 765 is included on pages 3-4 of this document.

TIP: *Filling it out on a PC computer is best (Students have encountered problems with date entries and other details when using a Mac).*

Note: *Even if you do not need all 7 pages of the application, you must submit all 7 pages to USCIS.*

- 1 Copy of Passport Identification Page**
This includes any additional pages that confirm the document's validity dates.
- 1 Copy of your most recent F-1 Visa** (if applicable).
- 1 Copy of your Electronic I-94 Record or Current I-94 Card** (front and back) if you have a hard copy card. Access this document using your passport ID page at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94> and print it.
TIP: *the travel history is not an acceptable alternative to the I-94 Record.*
- 1 Copy of your most recent F-1 Entry Stamp** for admission into the U.S. (if you have one).
- 1 copy of any previous EAD (Employment Authorization Document) cards** (front and back), if applicable. If you misplaced your EAD, write a short letter of explanation, including approved start and end dates.

- 1 copy of all previous I-20 Forms** (pages 1 and 2). **TIP:** instructions page may be excluded

You do not need to submit the 3 items below for review when submitting your OPT Request.

- Money order (preferred) or check for the appropriate fee amount made payable to:**

U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

TIP: Avoid a personal check if possible, since there have been reports of delays processing them recently. It is also highly advised not to use a credit or bank card due to reports of errors in processing payments.

- Confirm current filing fee at: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> before submitting your application.
- The money order/check must be from a U.S. based financial institution and payable in U.S. currency.
 - Money Orders may be obtained from a U.S. Post Office, Western Union, some grocery store Customer Service desks, and some banks.
 - Be sure to have the information provided here when obtaining the money order, as some require you to provide specific information to issue them.
- **Do not** write any abbreviations (such as DHS). The name must be spelled out in full.
- Make sure that your name, date of birth and the phrase "I-765 filing fee" appear on the document.
- Use the MONTH/DAY/YEAR (MM/DD/YYYY) format when dating checks.

TIP: Go to USCIS Filing Fee information page under "How to Write Your Check" (useful guidance for money orders, also) for specific instructions - <https://www.uscis.gov/forms/filing-fees>

- 2 Photos, USCIS PHOTO SPECIFICATIONS: you must submit two identical color, 2x2 inch, passport-style photographs, taken recently (ideally within the past 30 days).**

For specific details, please refer to the [Form I-765 Instructions](#).

Using pencil, lightly print your name and SEVIS ID# on the back of each photo.

TIP: do not press firmly when writing or it may interfere with the photo and be deemed unusable.

- Photos can be obtained locally at the US Postal Service, Walgreens, and Walmart.

- For students who have not been in continuous F-1 status for a full year and will complete the 1-year requirement based on your F-1 status now and a previous valid nonimmigrant status:** You must include evidence of having been lawfully enrolled as a student on a full-time basis in the prior status as well as any proof of a change of status to F-1.

2. Submit your complete OPT Request for review

Submit the OPT Request, I-765, and all supporting documents for review. We will review and process your request.

TIP: if possible, submit the documents as one pdf document

3. Book an OPT Advising Appointment

Schedule a meeting to review the application, answer any questions you may have, review the mailing instructions, how to assemble the documents for mailing, and review the I-20 recommending OPT with you. To book your appointment: https://calendly.com/mariah_jiang

TIP: indicate OPT application in the appointment booking.

5. Mailing of updated Form I-20 with OPT Recommendation.

We will send you an email when your I-20 with the OPT recommendation is ready. Depending if you are on campus or at another location, will determine how you will be instructed. The email will provide specific instructions based upon your circumstances. The follow steps are VERY IMPORTANT when you receive the new I-20:

- a) Sign and date (MM/DD/YYYY) the student attestation section on page 1.
- b) Confirm the OPT requested dates on page 2 – these cannot be changed once submitted to USCIS.
- c) Include a copy of the updated I-20 (be sure to make a copy AFTER signing and confirming the correct dates) in your application.
- d) Keep the original Form I-20 with the OPT recommendation as your most current I-20.

6. **ASSEMBLE THE OPT APPLICATION DOCUMENTS** before mailing. See page 7.

TIP: *This really can make a difference, so please take heed.*

7. **Carefully read page 8 for Next Steps After Mailing.**

Additional Form I-765 Filing Guidance

PART 1)

>> REASON FOR APPLYING

See the USCIS Form I-765 instructions for how to complete the form based on the Foreign Students Category.

PART 2)

>> YOUR FULL LEGAL NAME

List your full legal name instead of any preferred names.

>> YOUR U.S. MAILING ADDRESS

Use a valid, U.S. address as this is where USCIS will send notices, the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and Social Security Number (SSN) (if requested). Many students use the campus address as it is permanent.

TIP: *Using the campus address is a very safe option, as mail is always received here and regularly processed. If you move or are traveling, it also ensures a timely receipt of these very important documents. We can also review the documents for errors or discrepancies on your behalf.*

5a: Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

5b: 300 Pulteney St

5c:

5d: Geneva

5e: NY 5f: 14456

6: No

****** *If you use the campus mailing address and want to change your address on record with USCIS afterwards, please contact us first before taking action so that you have a clear understanding of the implications of this action.*

>> YOUR U.S. PHYSICAL ADDRESS

Use a valid, U.S. address for where you are physically living. If you live on campus, use:

7a: 300 Pulteney St. XXXX (insert your box number)

7b: Leave blank

7c: Geneva

7d: NY 7e: 14456

>> OTHER INFORMATION

Question 8: If you have applied for a USCIS benefit before (such as pre-completion OPT), then you may have an A-Number. If you have one, you will find it at the top of your EAD card mailer or located under the USCIS # heading on your EAD card.) If you have not, then you can leave this question blank.

Question 9: If you have never created a USCIS On-line account number (most Hobart and William Smith undergraduates probably have not), then you can leave this question blank.

Question 12: If you have applied for employment authorization in the past, select YES. Provide copies of all previous EADs, front and backside. (You will also have to provide additional information in PART 6.)

Question 13a: Everyone must answer question 13a. It asks if the Social Security Administration (SSA) has ever officially issued you a Social Security Number. **TIP:** *If you were ever issued an SSN, even if you don't think you need it or have the card, you must enter it here.*

Question 14: If you answer No, you can skip ahead to Part 2, Question 18a.

Via this form, you have the option of applying for an SSN or requesting a replacement SSN if your original card was lost or stolen. If so, you should receive your SSN within 2 weeks after your I-765 application is approved. **TIP:** *due to COVID-19, there are reports of slight delays in the issuance of the SSN beyond 2 weeks.*

>> YOUR COUNTRY OR COUNTRIES OF CITIZENSHIP

- If you are stateless, use the name of the country where you were last a citizen or national.
- If you are a citizen or national of more than one country, use the name of the foreign country that issued your last passport and that matches what is referenced in SEVIS on your I-20.

>> INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR LAST ARRIVAL IN THE U.S.

Question 21a: Use your I-94 number and travel history on the I-94 website at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/>.

Question 21b: Use your passport information.

Question 21c: Most of you will be able to answer 21b with your passport information. In this case, you can write NONE for 21c. This is only to be used if you have a travel document other than a passport.

>> INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY

Question 27: The **pre-completion** category is **C 3 A**.

The **post-completion** category is **C 3 B**.

- **You do not need to complete numbers 28 through 31 (this is only for STEM).**

TIP: *Graduating students who may be eligible for STEM, will NOT indicate STEM in this box; the STEM extension application is done later in your post-completion period.*

PART 3)

>> APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

Select the appropriate box. Most students will choose 1a.

>> APPLICANT'S CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions 3 to 5, use your contact information. If you do not have a phone number for question 3, work with DSO to identify an appropriate number.

>> APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE

Sign your name in the box (black ink) for 7a and **make sure that your signature fits within the box**. USCIS will not accept a stamped or typewritten name in place of a signature. **TIP:** *it is imperative to use black ink*

DO NOT COMPLETE PARTS 4 OR 5. These are only used if the applicant uses an interpreter or preparer (attorney).

TIP: *draw a diagonal line (using black ink) through each page (from the upper corner to the opposite bottom corner) and write N / A across the middle of the page; this will ensure you left the pages blank intentionally. (N/A = not applicable)*

PART 6)

**** FOR ANYONE FILING A RENEWAL** (i.e. a second request for employment at the same educational level):

List all previously issued SEVIS numbers (the N number found on your Form I-20s), all periods of CPT and all periods of OPT as well as the educational level at which they were authorized.

1. Family Name, Given Name, Middle Name (as listed in your passport and on the I-765)
2. A-Number (if any)—you can find it under the USCIS # on your EAD card or at the top of the EAD card mailer.

3a. Page Number: 2 3b. Part Number: 2 3c. Item Number: 12

3d. (provide the additional information): SEVIS ID N000000000000 (use your specific number)

Since there are no clear USCIS instructions on how to list this information, consider the following method:

MM/DD/YYYY to MM/DD/YYYY

Bachelors Level

Pre-completion OPT (or if CPT, list that as the type of employment authorization)

TIP: *Students who may have submitted OPT previously and withdrew the application successfully (received a confirmation of withdrawal), please indicate this on the HWS Intake form so you may receive additional assistance in representing that here appropriately.*

FINAL REMINDER:

Answer all questions fully and accurately. If a question does not apply to you, leave it blank. In some cases, you may be advised to type "N/A" or "Not Applicable" in certain questions; you will be advised if needed.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR MORE IMPORTANT INFORMATION

MAILING INSTRUCTIONS FOR OPT I-765 APPLICATIONS

1. ASSEMBLE THE OPT APPLICATION DOCUMENTS before mailing:

Refer to the [USCIS website regarding the filing of the I-765](#). Review the [Checklist](#). Follow the *General Requirements* as well as the *Student Seeking Pre- or Post-Completion* guidance on the list.

As of November 18, 2020, according to USCIS, you should submit your documents as follows:

TIP: Use a *paper clip* instead of staples to attach documents together.

>> MAKE ALL DOCUMENTS SINGLE SIDED TO ENSURE ACCURATE USCIS PROCESSING <<

- Money Order for **Filing Fee**,
- **2 Photos** that meet USCIS requirements (see page 2)
- Original **Form G-1145** (if you want USCIS to notify you electronically)—properly signed and dated
- Original **Form I-765 Application**-- properly signed and dated
- **Copy of new I-20 with DSO recommendation of OPT**—signed and dated by you and HWS DSO
- Copy of **previous EAD cards** (if you used OPT before)—both sides
- Printout of **most recent I-94 record**
- Copy of **passport ID page(s)**, including validity dates, and **most recent entry stamp**, if available
- Copy of your **F-1 visa** (not required for citizens of Bermuda or Canada)
- Copies of **all previous I-20s**, both sides (instruction page may be excluded)

2. BEFORE mailing, make a copy or SCAN of your entire OPT packet (I-765 and supportive materials).

Keep this duplicate packet for your personal records, as you may need to refer to it in the future. **TIP:** *include scan/copy of payment method and photos as proof of submission with I-765 and supportive documents.*

3. Mail the completed OPT application to the applicable USCIS Lockbox

- Mailing addresses for I-765 can change without notice. So, before mailing, verify the address on the USCIS website: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> under “Where to File.”
- You will be using two separate envelopes: one to place your documents in to secure them and a second that will be provided by the express mailing service you choose. The former will go inside the latter.

On the front of the envelope, you place your documents inside, you will write: **I-765 - OPT APPLICATION.**

TIP: *write this in the center of the envelope using all large block letters (as shown above)*

- For I-765 mailing information, see: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses> (select “Foreign students”)
- For the specific lockbox address you should use, see:

For FedEx, UPS and DHL express mail Deliveries:

USCIS
Attn: I-765 C03
131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor Chicago, IL 60603-5517

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries

USCIS
PO Box 805373
Chicago, IL 60680

→ **USCIS must receive your OPT application, along with Form I-765, within 30 days of the date that your DSO enters the recommendation in your SEVIS record. Be sure to submit to USCIS within 30 days.**

TIP: Submit application by an **express mail service** such as UPS or FedEx that offer package tracking. If choose US Postal Service (USPS), be sure to request a method with a tracking number. **DO NOT** use a “signature upon delivery” option because USCIS may not “sign” for the package. **ATTENTION: UPS and USPS are two different entities!**

Next Steps After Mailing

Receipt Notice

Within a few weeks, USCIS will send an I-797 “Notice of Action” to confirm receipt of your application. With your case number from the receipt, you can check the status of your case online at www.uscis.gov. USCIS only updates the site when action is taken. We will notify you by email when we receive your receipt notice (if used our mailing address). **Update as of 1/8/2021: Major delays with the issuance of the Receipt Notice; read here for more information - <https://www.uscis.gov/news/alerts/uscis-lockbox-updates>**

Approval Notice/Employment Authorization Card

OPT applications can take a significant amount of time for USCIS to process, please see their website for current estimated processing times. Your Employment Authorization Card (EAC) will be mailed to HWS (if used our mailing address). We will email you a notification along with instructions on how to get the EAC to you. Once you receive your EAC, double check it for any errors. Please notify us immediately if you notice any errors on your EAC. Additionally, upon OPT approval, USCIS will email you a link to activate your **SEVIS Portal Account**. If you add the USCIS email address do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov to your contacts, important messages from them will not be filtered into your spam or junk mail.

Travel Advice

We recommends that you **do not travel** outside of the U.S. while your OPT application is **pending approval**. If you must travel, please discuss this with us **before** departing the U.S.

Once your OPT has been approved, you may travel outside of the U.S. before and during your OPT period. You must present the following documents at the U.S. port of entry upon your return:

- Form I-20 endorsed for OPT on page 2 with a valid travel signature from ISES (within 6 months)
- Valid F-1 visa (not required for citizens of Bermuda and Canada)
- Valid Passport (for at least six months into the future)
- Valid Employment Authorization Card (EAC) – (not required, yet highly recommended)
- Proof of employment/Employer letter

If your F-1 visa has expired, you will need to apply for a new F-1 visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your passport country to use for re-entry to the U.S. You may be required to show documentation that you have a job to return to and sufficient income or funds to cover your living expenses.

Please do not enter the US in any other visa category. If you re-enter the United States through the Visa Waiver program or with a tourist visa, or any other visa status, you will not be authorized to work even if you have a valid EAC. **You must be in F-1 status for this card and your authorization to remain valid.** Your I-94 record is proof that you have arrived in the U.S. in a specific status.

Hobart and William Smith Colleges
International Student Success Coordinator
Mariah Jiang
315-781-3734
jiang@hws.edu

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Intake Form

Hobart and William Smith Colleges • International Student Enrollment and Success

Name _____ HWS ID# _____ Graduation Date _____
Phone number _____ Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY) _____
Non-HWS Email address _____

(When approval for Post-Completion OPT by USCIS occurs, they will email you instructions for setting up your SEVP Portal log-in. Because your hws.edu will deactivate 6 months after you graduate, it is important to have a non-HWS email address in your SEVIS record that will be used as your log-in and communication with SEVP.)

Have you been in lawful F-1 status for a minimum of one full academic year: _____

List all dates of *previously* authorized employment for practical training (CPT & OPT) if applicable:

A. Curricular Practical Training (CPT)	B. Optional Practical Training (OPT)

OPT start date requested: _____

OPT end date requested: _____

Full-time or part-time? _____ (Post-Completion OPT must be at least 20 hours/week.)

Place of employment (if known) _____

Major #1

Major #2

Minor #1

By signing below, I agree to the following terms:

- It is my responsibility to review the USCIS filing instructions for Form I-765 and provide a complete application for employment authorization to USCIS, including the Form I-765, filing fee and supporting documents.
- It is my responsibility to keep copies of all documents for my personal records.
- It is my responsibility to report any changes in employment, name or address to HWS or via the SEVIS Student Portal (if applicable) within 10 days of these changes occurring. Failure to do so could result in the termination of my SEVIS record. I understand that accruing an aggregate of 90 days of unemployment will result in the termination of my SEVIS record.

Signature: _____

Last Updated 2/18/2021 MK

(For Office Use Only)

Date received: _____ Processed: _____ *Picked up: _____

Peoplesoft: Major(s)/Minor(s) _____ Curr. Enr./9 mos. in Status _____ SR Reqs. Met _____

**Student signs I-20; make 1 copy of I-20 for Student's OPT Application to USCIS and one copy for HWS records*