

Graduate College Policy and Procedure for International Students Applying for Optional Practical Training (OPT) or H1B Visa

Policy for Graduate Assistants Requesting OPT

International graduate students may request Optional Practical Training (OPT) after their graduate education. Any graduate assistant (GA) requesting OPT must meet with a representative from International Student Services in the Office of Admissions and Records early in the semester (term) of planned graduation (allow 90 days for OPT to be granted) for counseling on the ramifications of selecting a final semester and choosing a specific date to begin OPT.

Important Note Regarding Final Semester Verification Form and OPT Start Date:

SEVIS counts the last day of Finals Week as the last day of the semester or term. University stipend payments are required by law to cease on the last day of term (the date is found on the academic calendar on the Admissions and Records website at <http://www.ouhsc.edu/admissions/>).

Payment for a professional position cannot begin until the first day of approved OPT. If you are planning a defense between academic terms, please consult International Student Services to discuss ramifications of the defense date selection and OPT start date.

Procedure:

1. Student meets with International Student Services representative in the Office of Admissions and Records.
2. The Final Semester Verification form is provided at this meeting. The form must be signed by the doctoral committee chair attesting that the student will defend during a specific academic term by the end of Finals Week. An email from the student's mentor stating they support the student's ability to complete by the end of Finals Week should be sent to the Dean of the Graduate College.
3. Student brings form to Graduate College Dean or Associate Dean for signature.
4. Return form to Admissions and Records for processing of OPT request.

Policy for Graduate Assistants Starting OPT Prior to Completing Degree Requirements

Graduate students are *highly* discouraged from starting Optional Practical Training (OPT) prior to completing their degree requirement.

If this does occur, students are prohibited by OPT status from any type of student employment with OUHSC; therefore, a graduate student with OPT status may **not** hold a graduate assistant position and will no longer be eligible to receive a stipend. In addition, once a graduate student has OPT status, the graduate mentor is no longer required to pay the student's tuition, fees, or health insurance. In addition, the student will no longer be eligible for a non-resident tuition waiver and must pay tuition at the non-resident rate.

OPT allows a student to hold a professional position; however, any appointment to a professional position must follow Graduate College regulations and be approved by the degree-granting graduate program and the Graduate College.

Policy For Graduate Assistants Requesting An H1B Visa

International graduate students may request an H1B Visa to be effective after their graduate education through the institution that will be employing them. Any graduate assistant requesting an H1B Visa must meet with a member of the Office of International Student Services before submitting the H1B Visa application; this meeting must include their dissertation mentor. This meeting will discuss the ramifications of choosing a specific date for the student to start their H1B Visa.