

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY in the CITY OF NEW YORK



Guide to Forms for International Students

UNION

International Student Affairs
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F-1 STUDENT STATUS

Maintaining F-1 Student Status

According to the Department of Homeland Security regulations, you are fully responsible for abiding by the rules governing your F-1 student status. The Office of International Student Affairs will try to help you understand these rules but you are required to follow the *Rules and Responsibilities of F-1 Student Status* explained below:

Rules of F-1 Status

The Office of International Student Affairs is required to report to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in SEVIS when an F-1 student does not fulfill the following rules of status.

1. **Always be a full time student**

Enroll for and complete a full course of study every fall and spring term. If you do not believe you will be able to fulfill this requirement for any reason, contact our office before you withdraw or stop attending class. There are a few limited exceptions to the full time requirement for which you might qualify if you obtain permission in advance.

2. **Obtain permission to be less than full time before you drop, withdraw, or stop attending.**

If you do not believe you will be able to be full time for any reason, contact our office before you withdraw or stop attending class. There are a few limited exceptions to the full time requirement for which you might qualify if you obtain permission in advance.

3. **Only work as authorized.**

F-1 students may work on-campus up to 20 hours per week when school is in session and full-time during official school breaks. These 20 hours include the work you do for an assistantship or fellowship if you have one. In order to work off-campus, you must get permission from the Office of International Student Affairs and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Never work without authorization.

4. **Complete your program of study no later than the completion date on your Form I-20.**

You are required to complete your program of study by the completion date on your Form I-20. If you do not think you will be able to complete your program by the completion date on your Form I-20, you must apply for a program extension before the completion date expires and get an updated Form I-20.

If you expect to complete your program earlier than the I-20's program completion date, you must get an updated Form I-20 with the correct program completion date before you complete your program.

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5. **If you attend another U.S. school, obtain a SEVIS transfer.**
If you plan to attend another U.S. school, college, or university, you must notify the Office of International Student Affairs and be “Transferred Out” in SEVIS before your F-1 status ends.
6. **If you change or begin a new program of study, obtain a Change of Education Level.**
If you have been admitted to a new program of study at Union Theological Seminary or change your degree program while here, you must obtain a Form I-20 for your new program before you complete your current program.
7. **Do not remain in the U.S. more than 60 days after completing your program of study unless you have applied for Post-OPT employment, School Transfer, or Change of Education Level.**
If you have completed your program of study, you must depart the U.S. within 60 days, unless you have filed an application with USCIS for Post-OPT, requested a SEVIS School Transfer, or obtained a new Form I-20 to begin studies in a new education level or program.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES OF F-1 STUDENTS

1. **Keep your passport valid at all times.** If your passport will expire, contact your country’s embassy or consulate in the U.S. to renew it.
2. **Report any address or name changes** to the Office of International Student Affairs within 10 days of making the change.
3. **Get an updated Form I-20 when any of its information changes.**
Notify the Office of International Student Affairs if there are any changes in the information on your Form I-20, such as name, citizenship, degree level, major, or funding, and get an updated Form I-20.
4. **Get a travel endorsement on your Form I-20 every term in order to return to the U.S.**
When you want to travel outside the U.S., you need a travel endorsement from the Office of International Student Affairs for the current term to re-enter. Be sure to submit your request at least two weeks in advance of your trip.
5. **File a federal income tax form for every year you are in the U.S.,** even if you did not receive any income. See Tax Reporting Requirements for F-1 Students.

I understand these requirements and will sign a formal understanding of my responsibilities with this online form https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/f_1_responsibilities.

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VIOLATION OF F-1 STUDENT STATUS AND TERMINATION IN SEVIS

The following reasons are grounds for violation of immigration status. A violation of status must be reported to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, in accordance with U.S. law, resulting in the termination of your F-1 status in SEVIS and all of its benefits, including employment.

F-1 STATUS MAY BE TERMINATED BECAUSE:

- You are/were not a full-time student
- You did not attend school
- You did not complete the school transfer procedure by immigration's deadline.
- You did not complete the change of educational level procedure by immigration's deadline.
- You did not apply for a program extension to obtain more time to complete your program of study than was shown on your Form I-20.
- You violated the employment regulations.

IF YOU THINK YOU ARE IN VIOLATION OF YOUR STATUS CONTACT US IMMEDIATELY!

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HOW TO APPLY FOR REINSTATEMENT TO F-1 STUDENT STATUS

1. COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING APPLICATION FORMS:

- a. **Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status (Form I-539)**. Complete this form electronically at the USCIS website (www.uscis.gov). You can either submit it electronically through USCIS ELIS or print it out and send it in.
 - i. If you want to use USCIS ELIS, we recommend that you save and print out a draft of the form and bring it to us to review before submitting it.
 - ii. If you want to submit it in paper form, you will need to print out the form and sign it in blue ink.
 - iii. Part 1:
 1. Address: If you want our office to help track the adjudication of your application, enter our office address as the “in care of” address instead of your own. Please note that we are simply helping you with your application and are not responsible for it.
 2. “Expires on:” Leave blank
 - iv. Part 3:
 1. Item 1: Leave blank.
 - v. Print the Form out and sign it in blue ink in Part 8.
- b. **Attachment to Form I-539 REQUEST FOR REINSTATEMENT TO F-1 STUDENT STATUS**
 - i. You are appealing to Immigration to permit you to continue your studies at Union Theological Seminary! You must write your request with that in mind. It is up to you to convince the Immigration Officer who will review your application that you deserve to have your F-1 status returned to you so you may continue your U.S. studies.
- c. **Form G-1145 E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance**. This form is only if you are going to submit your application in paper form. Go to www.uscis.gov, complete it, print it out, and sign it in blue ink.
- d. **Student’s Acknowledgement of Understanding**. Complete this form if you want our office to help you with your application

2. ATTACH THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS TO YOUR APPLICATION

- a. **Evidence**. Attach documents that prove your case.
- b. **Your new I-20 Form** from Union Theological Seminary (unless we are in the process of making it for you).

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- c. **Photocopies of all previous Form I-20** you have been issued by Union Theological Seminary and former schools.
- d. **Transcripts** (photocopies) from all schools you have attended including Union Theological Seminary.
- e. **Form I-94**. Original paper I-94 or electronic I-94 from [www.cbp.gov.I94](http://www.cbp.gov/I94)
- f. **\$290 Fee** in the form of a money order made payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- g. **Photocopy of your SEVIS Fee payment receipt** if you are required to repay it because you violated your status more than five months ago.

INFORMATION ABOUT APPLICATION PROCESSING

- If you are not submitting your application electronically through USCIS ELIS, make photocopies of your application and send it to USCIS at the Dallas Lockbox Facility at the address indicated on the I-539 instructions at www.uscis.gov. It must be sent through U.S. Certified mail or other verified courier service. If you have requested that our office help with your application, we recommend that you use our office address on your delivery receipt so we can help you with tracking its adjudication.
- USCIS may take two to five months to process your application. If you requested that our office help with your application, the response will be sent to us and we will contact you immediately. **YOU SHOULD CONTINUE YOUR FULL TIME STUDIES AS USUAL. IF YOU ALREADY HAVE AN ON-CAMPUS JOB, YOU MAY CONTINUE TO WORK WHILE YOUR APPLICATION IS BEING PROCESSED.**
- If you decide to travel before you receive an answer to your application, consult with our office first!

PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR NEED OUR ASSISTANCE.

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CHANGING TO F-1 STUDENT STATUS

We are happy to help you with applying to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for a change of your nonimmigrant status to F-1 Student. We can advise you about the pros and cons of changing status, as well as about the USCIS procedures you need to follow.

WHAT IS A CHANGE OF STATUS?

When you come to the United States you had a particular reason or purpose, maybe as a tourist, for business, or to accompany a family member. That purpose is called your “principal activity” or “status.” When you arrived at the airport, the Immigration inspector recorded your purpose (status) and a date to depart. Now, however, your purpose for being here may have changed. Your “principal activity” may be ending because you’re thinking about leaving your job and returning to school. If your principal activity, reason, or purpose for being in the U.S. has changed or ended, and you want to stay in the U.S. because you have a specific educational or professional objective you want to pursue full-time, you will need to change your status to F-1 Student to remain here lawfully.

WHAT ARE THE RULES?

You must have a status that the law allows you to change. U.S. law does not allow persons who hold the following statuses to change status to F-1: C, D, some J’s, K, M-1, N, S, WB, Wt. A and G statuses must first complete a Form I-566 and get approval from the Department of State before a change of status can be sent to USCIS.

You must be here lawfully. Your current immigration status may not end more than 30 days before the start date of your program of study. That means both the period of time you were given to be in the U.S. as indicated in the admission stamp in your passport and your authorized activities here may not have expired. You will be required to present evidence to prove that activity has not ended.

B visitors must prove they have not begun a course of study prior to applying for a change to F-1 Student status.

F-2 dependents who pursued post-secondary study are not eligible for a change of status unless they can prove such study was recreational or casual.

You must be accepted for a full course of study and have the financial ability to support the costs of living and studying in the U.S. For more information about the requirements for getting a Form I-20, [click here](#), and call our office.

B Statuses must show that they did not intentionally apply for the wrong visa or deliberately enter the

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U.S. in the wrong status. If you knew that you were going to go to school when you applied for the visa or entered the U.S. you will not qualify to change to F-1 status.

You must be able to prove that you have a permanent residence in your home country that you do not intend to abandon.

A CHANGE OF STATUS IS NOT A VISA!

A change of status is not a change of visa. You can only get a visa at the American embassy or consulate in your home country.

If USCIS approves your application, you may stay in the U.S. and stay as long as you follow the F-1 rules, the most important of which is to study full-time every term. The next time you want to go home you will need to get an F-1 visa to re-enter the U.S.

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ACADEMIC CHANGES TO F-1 STATUS

F-1 REDUCED COURSE LOAD

F-1 international students are required by U.S. Department of Homeland Security regulations to pursue a full course of study each fall and spring semester. A full course of study is defined as carrying 12 credits at the undergraduate level or 9 credits at the graduate level (or the equivalent as approved by your academic advisor/dean on the Full-Time Equivalency Form). Under certain academic circumstances, you may qualify for a reduced course load (RCL) of 6 credits or less for an illness or medical condition. To apply you must:

1. **Still be enrolled full time.** If you have already dropped before, you do not qualify.
2. **Have your academic advisor complete this form** explaining the academic difficulties that you are experiencing. Academic difficulties are restricted to initial difficulties with English or reading requirements, unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods, or improper course level placement.
3. **If you are suffering from an illness or medical condition,** you must provide us with documentation from a licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist describing the nature of your illness or condition.
4. **Complete this form and submit it** to the Office of International Student Affairs before taking any action to reduce your course load.
https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/app_for_reduced_course_load

Your application will be reviewed by the Office of International Student Affairs and, if approved, you will be given authorization to reduce your course load for a specific period of time. A reduced course load based on academic difficulties may only be authorized for one term during your program of study. A reduced course load warranted by an illness or medical condition may be extended if there are serious circumstances necessitating such an extension.

You are required to resume a full course of study in the semester immediately following your RCL authorization (excluding summer). A “hold” will be placed on your registration for the next semester which will be removed when you report to the Office of International Student Affairs with your registration form and obtain an advisor’s release.

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F-1 PROGRAM EXTENSION

U.S. Department of Homeland Security regulations require you to file for more time to complete your program of study if you do not expect to be finished by the date that appears on your current Form I-20.

If you will not complete your program in time, you must apply for a Program Extension and be issued a new Form I-20 before your current Form I-20 expires.

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THIS REQUIREMENT RESULTS IN THE TERMINATION OF YOUR F-1 STUDENT STATUS. UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IS REQUIRED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY TO REPORT THIS INFORMATION IN SEVIS.

HOW TO QUALIFY FOR A PROGRAM EXTENSION

1. Your current Form I-20 has not expired.
2. You have sufficient financial support for the remainder of your program.
3. One of the following caused the delay in completing your program:
 - a. An important academic reason, such as needing more developmental English than you expected, a change of concentration, a change of research topic, or unexpected research problem.
 - b. A documented medical reason. Attach medical evidence from a licensed medical doctor or psychologist on official letterhead that states the nature of the illness and the period of time you were ill (if not already on file in our office).

A delay due to academic probation or suspension is NOT an acceptable reason for a program extension according to Immigration regulations.

If you need to extend your program but do not meet these qualifications, please make an appointment to meet with our office to discuss your options.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A PROGRAM EXTENSION

Complete the Request for Program Extension form here https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/f_1_program_extension_app. If the reason for your extension is academic, your academic advisor will receive a link to certify the form. If the reason is medical, attach documentation of the illness or medical condition.

If your evidence of financial support is more than one year old, complete an Application for a Form I-20 here, https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/app_form_i20, and attach the required

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documentary evidence of financial capability for the remainder of the time you will need to complete your program of study.

INFORMATION ABOUT APPLICATION PROCESSING

We will review your Request for Program Extension. If the reason for the delay in completing your program meets Immigration's requirements, your program will be extended and a new Form I-20 will be issued to you.

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F-1 TRANSFER OUT REQUEST

In the event that you should choose to transfer from Union Theological Seminary to a different school during your study in the U.S., you must follow the guidelines below and submit a transfer-out request online here.

Transfer Policies and Responsibilities

1. On the release date, the responsibility for the SEVIS record transfers to the new school. Union Theological Seminary cannot access your SEVIS record after that date.
2. Should your plans change, you must contact Union Theological Seminary prior to the release date, or the new school if after your release date.
3. If you are engaging in Post-Optional Practical Training (OPT), your work authorization ends on the date your SEVIS record is released to the new school regardless of the dates indicated on the EAD (Employment Authorization Document). Should you continue to be employed on Post-OPT after the release date, it will violate your F-1 status.
4. You must pay any remaining tuition balance to Union Theological Seminary before you can receive an official transcript.
5. You must obtain a new Form I-20 from the new school as soon as possible after your release date. The old I-20s must be retained as records. Should you leave the U.S. for travel, you must use the new school's I-20 to reenter the U.S.
6. You are required to report to the Designated School Official (DSO) at the new school no later than 15 days after the program start date.
7. You are required to enroll full time at the new school by the program start date on the new Form I-20 and obtain the "Transfer Completed Form I-20" no more than 30 days later.

Upon request submission, the international admissions advisor, international student advisor or designated school official at the Transfer-In school will receive a link to confirm the status of the student's application and/or admission. The international student must provide an accurate, active email address for the school official at the new school.

https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/f_1_transfer_out_request

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EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) defines Curricular Practical Training (CPT) as employment which is an integral part of an established curriculum, including: “alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education, field education, or any other type of required internship or practicum which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school.” [8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(i)]. CPT is available only prior to the completion of your degree program and you must have a job offer at the time of application. This is different than the requirements for OPT.

There are two types of CPT:

1. **Required part of the program**– the program requires employment in the field of study to graduate;
2. **Non-required part of program**–the practical experience is for credit and directly related to your field of study. You must be enrolled for the course while engaging in this type of CPT.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To apply, USCIS requirements state that you must:

1. Have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for at least one academic year;
2. Be in lawful F-1 status at the time of applying for CPT;
3. Have a job offer.

PART-TIME CPT VS. FULL-TIME CPT

Part-time CPT: Employment for 20 hours or less per week is considered “part-time” CPT. Though there is no limitation upon the length of time you may participate in part-time CPT, you must be simultaneously enrolled full-time in order to maintain lawful F-1 status.

Full-time CPT: Employment for more than 20 hours per week is considered “full-time” CPT. Please be aware that 12 months or more of full-time CPT will cancel your eligibility of Optional Practical Training (OPT).

PROCEDURES FOR APPLICATION

Contact the Office of International Student Affairs to set up an appointment in advance. At your scheduled appointment, you must bring the following:

1. A copy of the course description as it appears in the Union Theological Seminary Course Catalog;

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2. The completed “Supervising Department Chair Recommendation for CPT”;
https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/supervisor_cpt
For non-required CPT, the Office of International Student Affairs will be checking the database to determine whether or not you are signed up for the appropriate course. If you are not registered for the course, your application for CPT will not be approved. You are required to be registered for the course during the entire term and complete it at the end of the term.
3. A copy of the job offer letter you obtained from the employer. The job offer must contain the following information:
 - a. Student’s name
 - b. Church/Organization/Company name
 - c. Statement of the job offer
 - d. Number of hours to be worked [or part-time or full-time specified]
 - e. Beginning and end dates of employment
 - f. Must be on official letterhead
4. Your current original Form I-20 and all previous ones
5. Photocopies of your passport identification pages, visa, and Form I-94 (paper or electronic)

If your application is approved, CPT will be authorized in SEVIS and you will be issued a new Form I-20 showing its approval. Please be aware that if you wish to pursue CPT for more than one semester (as with M.Div. or M.A. Track 2 Field Education), you will need to complete the above procedures for that semester separately and also register for the appropriate course for that term.

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OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

If you would like to get work experience in your major field of study in the summer or after you complete your studies this spring, you should apply for Optional Practical Training employment authorization from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) early. **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO HAVE A JOB OFFER TO APPLY FOR OPT.** Applications are available online and in our office.

SUMMER OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

We strongly suggest that you apply at least three months before you expect to start your job. Immigration can take two months to process OPT applications. Since you are not permitted to work until your OPT is authorized by USCIS, application processing delays may cause you to lose your employment opportunity.

POST-COMPLETION OF STUDIES OPT

BY LAW YOU MAY APPLY FOR POST-COMPLETION OF STUDIES OPT UP TO 90 DAYS BEFORE YOU COMPLETE YOUR PROGRAM OF STUDY BUT NOT LATER THAN 60 DAYS AFTER.

If you have travel plans after school ends, your OPT should be authorized by USCIS **BEFORE** you leave the country. You will need your EAD Card, endorsed I-20 and a letter from an employer to return to the U.S.

Apply for OPT **NOW** if you want to travel or start working soon after the semester ends. USCIS may take three months to process your OPT application during heavy application periods.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION

WHAT IS IT?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is off-campus employment authorization that lets F01 students get work experience in their major field of study. The amount of work you are permitted is a maximum of 12 months of full-time employment for each higher educational level you pursue in the U.S. You can use it during or after your studies. You can work for any employer, anywhere in the country.

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Think of it as an OPT bank account. In that account there are 12 months of full-time optional practical training for you current program of study. Let's say you'd like to work full-time for three months after your first year of study. That's a three-month withdrawal of full-time employment, leaving you 9 months left to spend during or after your degree. During your second year, you take on part-time work (less than 20 hours per week) for nine months during the school year. Since part-time employment counts at half the full-time rate, you've made a withdrawal of four and a half months of full-time employment. This leaves you with four and a half months of full-time employment still in your account to use after you graduate.

If you decide to spend all of your OPT after you complete your degree, you must request all of it at once, that is the full year. You cannot use it in pieces.

If you go on to get an S.T.M. or Ph.D. after completing your OPT for the M.Div. or M.A., your account will be full again with another 12 months available to you.

HOW CAN IT BE USED?

- Summer and semester breaks - either part-time or full-time employment
- While school is in session - part-time employment only
- After completion of all course requirements for your degree, excluding the thesis - part or full-time employment
- After completion of ALL requirements for the course of study - full-time employment only

HOW CAN YOU QUALIFY FOR IT?

- You must have been enrolled full-time for at least one academic year.
- You must be able to describe how the type of work you are seeking directly relates to your area of study. You do not have to have a job offer to apply for OPT. If you are applying for OPT before the completion of your studies, however, it is wise to be as sure as possible of a job so that you do not waste any of your OPT "Account."
- If you are seeking Post-Completion of Studies OPT, your department must certify the date that you are expected to complete your program study. You may apply for Post-Completion of Studies OPT up to three months before completing your program of study, but no later than 60 days after. If you apply within the 60 period after completion you are likely not to receive your full 12-month benefit due to USCIS processing times.
- You cannot have already used 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (for Union, this would mean full time field education or CPE over the summer).

HOW DO YOU APPLY?

Access the F-1 Optional Practical Training Employment Recommendation online here, fill it out, and submit it. When you submit it, we will review your application to make sure it is complete and that you qualify. If everything is in order, we will issue a new Form I-20

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recommending your OPT and contact you. When you pick up the application (??), we will provide you with instructions on how to submit your application to USCIS and track its progress.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

After your application is filed at USCIS, plan that it will take about three months for your EAD (Employment Authorization Document) to be returned to us from USCIS. It could take less or more depending on their workload and any security clearances. If it takes longer than 90 days, you may request “Expedition Handling” of your application.

It’s important to take USCIS processing time into consideration when planning the date you want to start working. **YOU CANNOT BEGIN TO WORK UNTIL YOU HAVE YOUR EAD CARD.**

What if you want to travel before starting post-completion of studies OPT?

Contact the office of international student affairs before making any travel plans if your OPT is still pending USCIS authorization. DHS regulations require that you have your EAD card and a job or job offer to return to the U.S.

STUDY AND POST-COMPLETION OPT

DHS regulations state that. “Authorization to engage in optional practical training employment is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level.” Therefore, you should not continue your U.S. studies until after your OPT has ended.

APPLYING FOR DSO RECOMMENDATION FOR OPTICAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

I. COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING FORMS

1. PT DSO Recommendation Request Form available online [here](#).
 - a. Item 1: Expected date of Completion of studies: the earliest your application may be submitted to the government for Post-Completion of Studies OPT is 90 days before this date.
 - b. Item 2: Indicate what type of OPT you are applying for and the dates you want to work
 - c. Item 3: If you previously have been authorized for OPT for your current education level, tell us when it was authorized and the start and end dates as they appear on your EAD.
 - d. Item 4: Describe how your proposed employment for practical training is directly related to your major and appropriate for your level of education. Take

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time to do this carefully. DO NOT say that you are seeking an entry-level job in your area. Your description must clearly explain to an Immigration Officer what you expect to DO on the job you are seeking. Do not use any abbreviations or acronyms in your description.

- e. Item 5: Obtain your Departmental Certification
 - f. Item 6: Read and sign the Acknowledgement of Understanding
2. **F-1 STUDENT STATUS RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE ON POST-COMPLETION OF STUDIES OPT** (available [here](#) if that is the type of OPT for which you are applying)
 3. **Form I-765**: Application for employment authorization. Go to uscis.gov and complete items 1-16, print it and sign it in blue ink.
 - a. Item 3 : Address. if you would like us to help track the adjudication of your application, enter our office address.
 - b. Item 10: A-Number or I-94 Number: Put your I-94 number unless USCIS has previously assigned you an alien registration number.
 - c. Item 11: If you have ever applied for hardship or optional practical training before, answer yes, where and when you applied, whether it was granted or denied, and attach a photocopy of any EAD card issued for it.
 - d. Your Certification: Sign in BLUE ink, put your telephone number and the date.
 - e. Item 16: Enter the code that applies to the type of OPT you are requesting
 - i. Pre-Completion OPT: (c)(3)(A)
 - ii. Post-Completion OPT: (c)(3)(B)
 4. **Form G-1145**: E-NOTIFICATION OF APPLICATION/PETITION ACCEPTANCE. Go to uscis.gov, complete, print out, and sign in blue ink the MOST RECENT [Form G-1145](#) available.

II. ATTACH THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS TO YOUR APPLICATION

1. Two passport-type photographs. Print your name and SEVIS ID number on the back in pencil.
2. Forms I-20. Photocopies of all current and previous Forms I-20 issued by Union Theological Seminary and other schools you have attended in the U.S.
3. Photocopy of any previous EAD Card(s)
4. Form I-94. Photocopy of paper I-94 or electronic I-94 from www.cbp.gov/I94.
5. Photocopies of your passport identification pages and visa
6. \$380 Fee in the form of a check or money order payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security. If you are using a personal check, it must have your name and address on it.

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Phone: 212-280-1396; 212-280-1555
Email: intlstudents@uts.columbia.edu

INFORMATION ABOUT APPLICATION PROCESSING

1. If everything is in order, we will issue you a new Form I-20 with our recommendation on it. We will contact you to come in and pick up your application.
2. We will provide you with information about how and when to send your application to USCIS.
3. If you put our office address on your Form I-765, USCIS will communicate with us about your application. If they request additional information, we will contact you. If your application is approved, the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will be sent here and we will contact you to come in and pick it up.
4. You cannot begin working until you have received your EAD card.

OPT APPLICATION GUIDE

- I. Be sure that your application contains all of the following documents
 - A. Form I-765 (Properly completed and signed in blue ink)
 - B. Form G-1145 E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance
 - C. \$380 Fee in the form of a check or money order payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security. If you are using a personal check, it must have your name and address on it.
 - D. Your newly issued Form I-20 with your DSO OPT recommendation on page three
 - E. Photocopies of all current and previous Forms I-20 issued by Union Theological Seminary and other schools you have attended in the U.S.
 - F. Two passport-type photographs. Print your name and SEVIS ID number printed on the back in pencil.
 - G. Photocopies of the following
 1. Previous EADs
 2. Passport Identification Page
 3. Visa
 4. Photocopy of paper I-94 or electronic I-94 from www.cbp.gov/I94
- II. Make a photocopy of all of the above documents for your records.
- III. Make sure that the Form G-1145 E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance is paper-clipped (not stapled) to the top of your complete application.
- IV. Your complete application must be received at USCIS within the following deadlines

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- A. Within 30 days of the DSO's OPT Recommendation on your Form I-20, that is, signatures on pages 1 and 2.
 - B. For students applying for post-OPT, your application may not be received at the USCIS Lockbox later than 60 days after you have completed your program of study.
 - C. It is strongly recommended that you send your application by some type of courier service that will provide you with proof of timely receipt.
- V. File your complete application by express mail or courier to the USCIS Lockbox.
- USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Highway 121
Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

(Continued on the next page)

- VI. If you are not using our mailing address, send evidence of timely filing and acceptance of your application to our office and keep copies for yourself.
1. Courier delivery receipt
 2. G-1145 E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance
Please note: If your application is returned to you, for any reason, that means that it has not been accepted. Contact our office immediately for information about your options.
- VII. Track the progress of your application by either contacting our office or through the USCIS Case Status Online System at www.uscis.gov.
- VIII. Provide us with a photocopy of your EAD Card if it is being sent directly to you.

F-1 STUDENT STATUS RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE ON POST-COMPLETION OF STUDIES OPT

During your period of authorized Post-Completion of Studies OPT, you are continuing in your F-1 Student Status and have legal responsibilities. Below is a list of these responsibilities. Please read them carefully and sign the Acknowledgment that you understand them. You must also submit your signature online here and retain this signed paper for your records.

1. Only work in your major field of study and within the dates for which you have been authorized on you EAD.
2. DHS regulations state, "During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of

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unemployment...” [8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(E)]. You are required to report interruptions of OPT employment to your international student affairs office [8 CFR 214.2(f)(12)(i)].

3. It is strongly recommended that you keep a record and supporting evidence of all your OPT-related activities such as:
 - a. Details of job searches, correspondence with prospective employers, interviews, etc.
 - b. Employment information: dates, name, location of employer, position, part/full-time
 - c. Volunteer work: dates, name, location, type of volunteer work, part/full-time. Please note that federal law requires that a volunteer may not assume a normally paid position or displace a U.S. worker.
4. You are required to report the following information to our office:
 - a. Change of name (You must bring proof of you updated passport noting the change)
 - b. Change of address
5. Beginning a new course of study or transferring U.S. schools automatically terminates OPT employment.
6. Obtain a DSO's endorsement to travel every six months
7. Employment authorization is automatically suspended in the event of a strike or other labor dispute involving work stoppage at the place of employment [8 CFR 214.2(f)(14)]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE ON POST-OPT

Please fill out the acknowledgment form online here

https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/post_study_opt_responsibilites

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SEVERE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION

WHAT IS IT?

Severe Economic Hardship Employment is off-campus employment authorization for students who are experiencing serious financial difficulties caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond their control. If authorized, you may get any kind of job, anywhere, and work for a maximum of 20 hours per week while school is in session and full-time during vacation periods.

HOW CAN YOU QUALIFY FOR IT?

1. You must have been in F-1 status for one academic year.
2. You must have a grade point average of 2.0 or higher.
3. You must explain how on-campus employment has been either unavailable or insufficient to meet your needs.
4. You must convince us that working will not interfere with your full-time studies.
5. You must be able to provide EVIDENCE which proves that you have financial problems that are caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond your control. Any reasons are acceptable as long as you can convince us that they could not have been avoided and are beyond your control.

Examples of unexpected expenses may be medical or dental bills, illness, death, or business problems of your sponsor, natural disasters or other problems where your sponsor lives, currency devaluations, or large tuition increases.

If your financial difficulties are caused by problems your sponsor is having (the person whose name appears on your Form I-20), that person will have to complete a *Sponsor's Affidavit of Severe Economic Hardship* and provide evidence of the unexpected circumstances that are now affecting your support. She or he will also have to complete a *Revised Affidavit of Financial Support* indicating the new amount that will be provided (if any) and evidence of continued financial capability to provide it. Evidence may include newspaper articles, back issues of the *New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal* showing currency devaluations, official school notices, or medical or dental bills.

HOW DO YOU APPLY?

If you think that you qualify for severe economic hardship employment authorization, make an appointment with the Office of International Student Affairs to discuss your situation. Bring any evidence that you have to prove your financial need. At your meeting, you will be asked to complete the **Application for Severe Economic Hardship Employment Authorization Recommendation** online after your meeting. Once you submit it, we will review your application to make sure that you qualify. If we agree that you do, we will recommend that USCIS authorize your employment due to severe economic hardship and send your application for processing of your work authorization.

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HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

After you submit your application to USCIS, plan that it will take 2-3 months for your EAD (Employment Authorization Document) to be approved. It could take less or more depending on their workload. Unfortunately, there is no way to make the process go faster.

Sometimes USCIS will request more evidence of your financial problems. If that happens, please make an appointment to see us right away.

YOU CANNOT BEGIN WORK UNTIL YOU HAVE YOUR EAD CARD.

HOW LONG WILL I BE ABLE TO WORK?

USCIS grants hardship employment authorization for one-year periods. It can be renewed annually up to your expected date of completion of studies.

Your employment authorization is automatically terminated if you fail to maintain your F-1 student status.

**YOU CANNOT START WORK UNTIL USCIS AUTHORIZES YOUR EMPLOYMENT
AND YOU HAVE YOUR EAD CARD!**

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APPLICATION FOR F-1 SEVERE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP INSTRUCTIONS

After completing the **Application for Severe Economic Hardship Employment Authorization Recommendation** form here https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/economic_hardship_app and the **Acknowledgement of How to File Your Hardship Application** form here https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/acknow_howtofile_hardship, the following steps will guide you file through USCIS for Severe Economic Hardship Employment.

1. COMPLETE THE APPLICATION FORMS

- a. **Form I-765:** Application for Employment Authorization. Complete items 1-15 <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
 - i. **Item #3 Address:** If you would like us to help track your application, enter our office address.
 - ii. **Item #9 Social security number** is NOT your school identification number. Leave it blank if you do not have one.
 - iii. **Item #10 A-Number of I-94 Number:** Put your I-94 number unless USCIS has previously assigned you an alien registration number.
 - iv. **Item #11:** If you have ever applied for hardship or optional practical training employment before, answer yes, where and when you applied, whether it was granted or denied, and attach a photocopy of that EAD card.
 - v. **Your certification:** Sign, put your telephone number, and the date.
- b. **Attachment to Form I-765:** Why you need off-campus employment authorization to avoid severe economic hardship. Be sure the form is fully completed. Please complete this form online through our office and keep a PDF version of the email confirmation to print for your application to USCIS. When applying to USCIS the evidence attached must be printed out and mailed in with your application. https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/attachment_form_i765
- c. **Form G-1145:** E-notification of Application/Petition Acceptance. Go to, <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/g-1145.pdf>, complete, print out and sign in blue ink the most recent Form G-1145 available. If this link does not work, go to uscis.gov and enter “G-1145” into the search bar.

2. ATTACH THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS TO YOUR APPLICATION TO USCIS

- a. **Evidence:** Attach any evidence that will prove that you are experiencing severe economic hardship that was both unexpected and beyond your control. If your financial difficulties are caused by problems your sponsor is having (the person whose name appears on your Form I-20), have your sponsor complete the **Sponsor’s Affidavit of Severe Economic Hardship/Revised Sworn Promise of**

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Cash Support form here

https://docs.google.com/document/d/14_fEvNlmg6lsEXyGHMYQ52LSfnfI9bS7928VMfdVRGI/edit?usp=sharing and provide evidence of the unexpected circumstances that are now affecting your support and evidence of continued financial capability to provide the new promised support (if any).

- b. **Two Passport type photos.**
 - c. **Forms I-20.** Photocopies of all previous Forms I-20 issued by us and other schools you have attended.
 - d. **Photocopy of any previous EAD Card(s)**
 - e. **Photocopy of Form I-94** (paper or electronic from www.cbp.gov/i94)
 - f. **If you never had a previous EAD Card, attach photocopies of your passport identification pages, and visa.**
 - g. **\$380 Fee** in the form of a check or money order. Make it payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security. If you are using a personal check, it must have your name and address on it.
- 3. File your complete application by express mail or courier to the USCIS Lockbox:**
- USCIS
Attn. AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121
Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

INFORMATION ABOUT APPLICATION PROCESSING

1. If everything is in order, we will issue you a new Form I-20 with our recommendation on time. We will contact you to come in and pick up your application.
2. We will provide you with information about how and when to send your application to USCIS.
3. USCIS will communicate with our office about your application. If they request additional information, we will contact you. If your application is approved, the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will be sent here and we will contact you to come in and pick it up.
4. **You cannot begin working until you have received your EAD card.**

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SPONSOR'S AFFIDAVIT OF SEVERE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AND REVISED STATEMENT OF ANNUAL CASH SUPPORT

WHAT DOES THIS AFFIDAVIT MEAN?

By completing this affidavit, you are swearing to the U.S. government that you are suffering from unexpected financial difficulties that have affected your previous promise of cash support to the student. You are also revising your statement of annual cash support and proving that you can continue to afford the support you are now promising, if any, with the documents you have attached.

Your completion of this form will enable the student to apply for employment authorization in order to help support her or his education in the U.S.

HOW TO COMPLETE THIS FORM

1. Fill this form out in English (or have it officially translated).
2. Clearly describe the unexpected circumstances that have caused you to reduce or stop the financial support you previously promised the student. Attach evidence that proves the change in your financial situation.
3. State the revised amount you will now give the student and attach the evidence of support explained below which proves your ability to meet that financial commitment.
4. Sign the affidavit in front of a notary public or the appropriate official in your country.
5. Make copies for your records. Give the student the original printed documents. The student will need to retain the originals to present to USCIS.

I cannot support the student as I had previously because:

I have attached the following documents to prove the unexpected change in my financial situation:

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REVISED SWORN PROMISE OF CASH SUPPORT

I, _____, promise that I can and
full name
will give _____ no less than
full name of student
U.S. \$ _____ in cash for EVERY YEAR of the
student's program of study at Union Theological Seminary.

Relationship to student: _____
Parent, spouse, brother/sister, friend, etc.

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

The following persons are fully or partially dependent upon me for their support (do not include the student named above)

Name Relationship to me

Name Relationship to me

Name of employer: _____

Annual Salary: \$ _____ (USD) Other income: \$ _____ (USD)

Proof of income and bank statements must be attached.

I swear that the information I have provided is true and correct.

Signature of Sponsor

Date

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TRAVEL ENDORSEMENT

For all travel outside the U.S., you must get an endorsement on your Form I-20 by filling out this form online. Your Form I-20 can only be endorsed for reentry to the U.S. if you intend and are eligible to continue your studies at Union Theological Seminary or are pursuing Post-Completion studies OPT. It cannot be endorsed if you have completed your program (even if you have not yet attended graduation ceremonies) but have not yet applied for Post-OPT employment.

Please fill this form out online so we can make sure you will not have reentry difficulties.

https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/request_for_travel_endorsement