



## Outside Work for EECS Graduate Students

The EECS Department will support graduate students (earning the MEng, SM, PhD degrees) to work<sup>1</sup> outside of the department and outside of MIT for some scenarios. The steps needed to be approved for outside work are provided here and depend on a graduate student's individual circumstance. This document seeks to explain the process and approvals that are required. Four types (A-D listed below) of EECS graduate students may wish to consider outside work while earning their degree. On page 4, a flow chart shows the steps and the order of approvals that are needed.

- A. **US+\$\$**: this is a graduate student with US citizenship who would like to work, as a consultant for example, while conducting their thesis work.
- B. **I+\$\$**: this is a graduate student with international citizenship who would like to work, as a consultant for example, while conducting their thesis work.
- C. **US/Th+\$\$**: this is a graduate student with US citizenship whose thesis research requires resources only available outside of MIT, and access to those resources may involve employment requirements.
- D. **I/Th+\$\$**: this is a graduate student with international citizenship whose thesis research requires resources only available outside of MIT, and access to those resources may involve employment requirements.

### Step 1: Endorsement by Research Supervisor

The first step will be to consult with the research supervisor regarding the type of outside work envisioned and to discuss how the outside work is related, or unrelated, to the thesis research. For all circumstances, conflict of interest (COI) will be necessary to consider, and the graduate student will submit an outside professional activities (OPA) disclosure. When necessary, consultation with MIT's Vice President for Research and Technology Licensing Office may be required. For circumstances where conflict of interest may be present, a COI management plan must be established, agreed upon, and put in place. For outside additional work, such as consulting (**student A** or **student B**), the work must be distinct and separate from the research work, and the work must be completed outside of the normal work hours specified for the research work. For outside work that is necessary to complete the thesis research (**student C**

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<sup>1</sup> The outside work described here is not work considered for completion of the Professional Perspective requirement (PPR), such as a summer internship as an example. The EECS PhD Status Portal accepts plans for completion of the PPR. [[https://eecs.mit.edu/phd\\_status.cgi](https://eecs.mit.edu/phd_status.cgi)]

or **student D**), the research supervisor must provide a letter certifying what resources are required, what number of hours per week are anticipated to be needed, and what expected duration of time will be necessary to complete the thesis-related outside work. The research supervisor must attest that no other resources are available at MIT for the necessary thesis-related work, and that the thesis cannot be completed without said external resources (**student C** or **student D**).

### **Step 2: Consultation with Academic Advisor or Graduate Counselor**

Assuming all conditions related to research work and outside additional work have been discussed, disclosed appropriately, and mutually agreed upon by graduate student and research supervisor, the academic advisor or graduate counselor will be consulted and will approve the outside work. [Note: approval from the academic advisor or graduate counselor agrees with the Graduate Student Union Collective Bargaining Agreement.] The academic advisor or graduate counselor serves as an additional resource for the graduate student and provides guidance on the pluses and minuses that may be anticipated by having outside work. The academic advisor or graduate counselor may offer views on how outside work may impact degree completion and professional goals.

### **Step 3: Review and Recommendation by the EECS Graduate Office**

The next step includes review from the EECS Graduate Office and specifically considers the progress in the PhD program and timely achievement of the PhD milestones. Step 3 considers the impact of the outside work on the academic progress toward the degree. Considerations include timely completion of degree requirements according to departmental guidelines and any deficiencies in progress. Students being supported with a fellowship will need to address any stipulations related to outside employment while on tenure. Additionally, the EECS Graduate Office will review the OPA disclosure of the graduate student, and the letters of certification or support provided by the research supervisor (as needed). The EECS Graduate Office will make a recommendation to the EECS department head to support outside work.

For graduate students with international citizenship, work authorization<sup>2</sup> will be necessary, and in partnership with the MIT International Students Office (ISO), such approval will be obtained. Depending on the visa type, various work authorizations are allowed by the US government, and ISO will guide the individual graduate student through the application processes. Importantly, some approvals are needed from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and will require additional time for administrative processing. Thus, for **student B**, the

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<sup>2</sup> Curricular Practical Training (CPT), Academic Training (AT), Optional Practical Training (OPT)

EECS Graduate Office will provide eligibility information when using the Professional Perspective requirement of the graduate degree to obtain work authorization. For **student D**, the EECS Graduate Office will provide the necessary letter of support to certify that the thesis proposal has been received and approved for the degree, as will be needed for “CPT-under-thesis” work authorization. The MIT ISO will help the international graduate student to understand their various options associated with their visa type. The EECS Graduate Office letters will support the approvals for work authorization obtained from the MIT ISO. Details on eligibility for international student off-campus employment authorizations, and procedures for how to apply for the appropriate authorization, are available on the [MIT ISO Employment webpage](#); guidance on when to apply to USCIS will also be provided.

Step 3 is thus a review of all graduate students requesting outside work and will ensure necessary oversight prior to submitting the request to the EECS department head for final approval.

#### **Step 4: Approval by EECS Department Head**

The EECS department head will have final authorization to approve outside work following oversight from the EECS Graduate Office. All approvals and oversight will have been carried out including research conflict of interest, disclosure of outside professional activities, outside resources required for degree completion, work authorization for international graduate students, as well as considerations regarding academic progress and steady achievement, or progress, of degree program milestones.

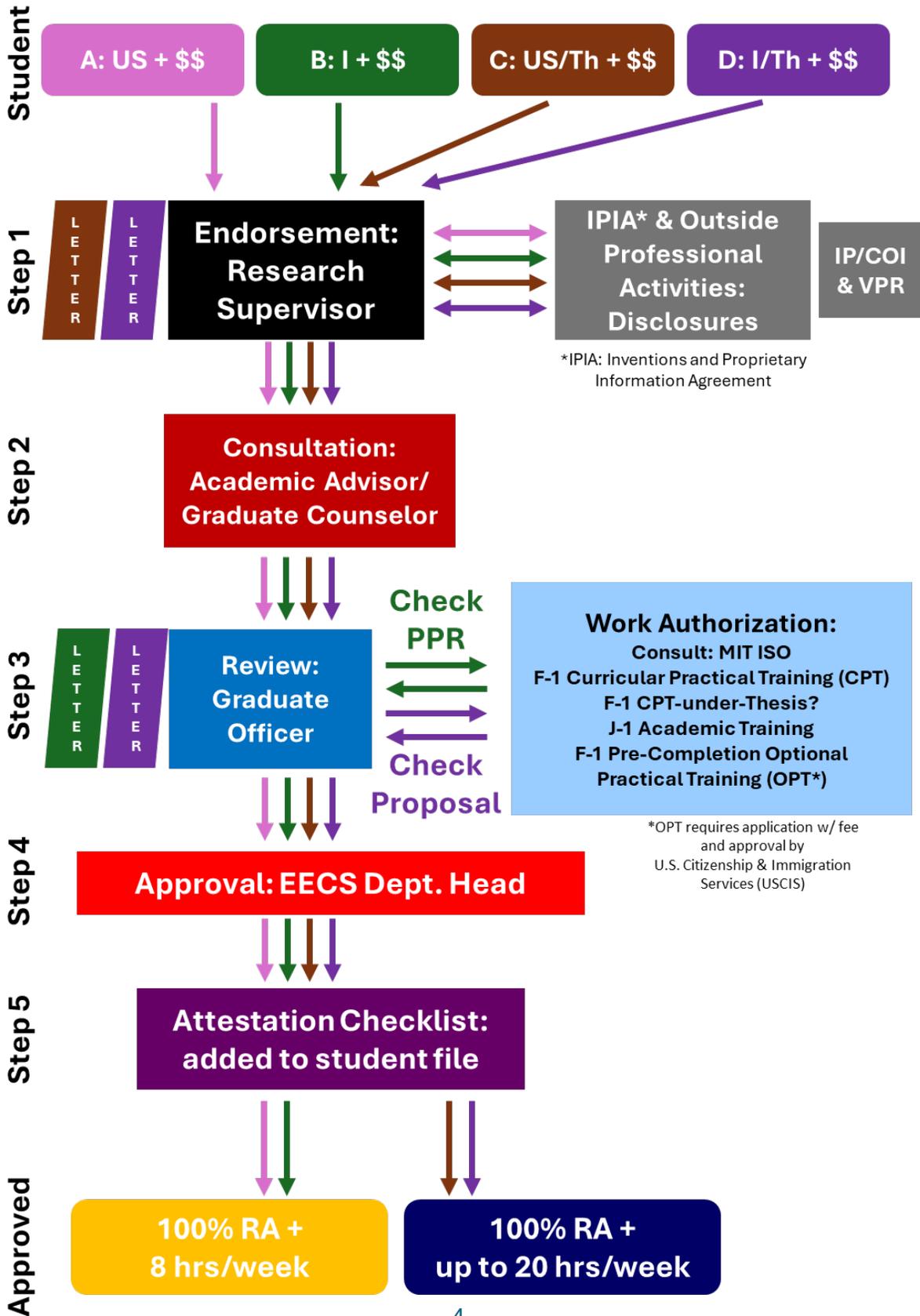
#### **Step 5: Attestation Checklist Completion**

Step 5 will be a checklist that will attest that all the necessary steps have indeed been completed and documented. All institute-level disclosures have been submitted, reviewed, and approved; all department-level documents have been properly recorded in the student file; and the final request for outside work of the graduate student is in place and approved. The outside work will be supported by all entities: research supervisor, academic advisor, or graduate counselor, EECS Graduate Officer and EECS department head.

#### **Summary**

The five-step process necessary for outside work to be requested, contemplated, and carefully considered, reviewed, approved, and documented will require time for completion of all steps. If a graduate student plans to seek outside work, appropriate time will be necessary, with some authorizations from outside of MIT taking additional time.

# Outside Work for EECS Graduate Students



# MIT Conflict of Interest Worksheet:

## Graduate Student Outside Professional Activities

The purpose of this worksheet is for graduate students to gather relevant details for discussion with your thesis supervisor and/or graduate officer, to consider whether the proposed activity poses a potential [conflict of interest](#).

### Graduate Student Information

Student Name:

Research Advisor Name:

Graduate Officer Name:

### Graduate Program Information

What year did you start your program?

What is your expected thesis defense date?

What is your expected thesis submission or graduation date?

How are you funded?

If you have a fellowship, do the terms of the fellowship allow you to consult?

### Consulting Information

Company name:

What is your anticipated start date?

What is your anticipated end date?

*Please estimate if not yet finalized.*

Do you have or will you receive equity in the company?

How many hours per week will you consult or work for the company?

Will you be compensated? If so, how?

If you are an international student, does your visa status allow for employment, and do you have the proper work authorization? It is imperative to follow all relevant regulations and International Students Office guidance.

**The following questions will help determine if the outside professional activity could create a conflict of interest.**

- Describe in detail how your MIT research is separate and distinct from your OPA.
- Please address whether or not your MIT research will affect the outcome of your OPA.
- Please address whether or not your OPA will impact your MIT research and time to degree.
- Will your ability to publish your thesis or any other academic publication you are planning be implicated or restricted in any way?
- Will it build upon an existing patentable invention, copyrighted software, or other intellectual property rights owned by MIT or related to your MIT research?
- Does your research supervisor/thesis advisor have any involvement or financial interest in your OPA?
- Will the OPA involve any use of MIT facilities, including your supervisor's or department's lab spaces or resources? If yes, describe.
- Will any MIT faculty, postdocs, students, or staff be involved in carrying out your OPA? If yes, describe.
- Is there a danger of inadvertent use of outside company confidential information in your thesis research or any publications (including your thesis itself)?
- Is there a danger of inadvertent sharing of unpublished MIT intellectual property during the OPA?
- If you have supervisors at other Institutions, have they been informed, and do they approve?
- Are you working on federally-sponsored research? It may require special disclosures; please consult with your research supervisor to make sure you understand your obligations.

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If you have concerns about taking on specific consulting work, such as feeling an obligation or pressure to conduct work not of your choosing, please reach out to [OGE GradSupport](#).