OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) FOR F-1 STUDENTS

What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?
1. OPT is a 1 year practical training opportunity provided by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).
2. HIC makes a recommendation on the I-20, but USCIS approves the OPT.
3. Students will still be on F-1 visa, using their Kapiolani CC I-20.

Eligibility Requirements
1. 12 months of OPT are available for every time students graduate, as long as the degree is obtained at a higher educational level.
2. Applicants MUST have been in lawful student status for at least 1 full academic year and graduating from an Associates Degree or Certificate of Achievement program.
3. Students who have completed 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical training (CPT) lose eligibility for OPT. (Periods of part-time CPT, even if they exceeded 12 months, do not count against OPT)
4. Employment must be directly related to the student’s major and appropriate for their level of education.
5. Employment can be paid or nonpaid.
6. It is recommended but not required that students have job offers before applying.

OPT Application Process
1. The USCIS will start accepting applications 90 days before the student’s program end date until 60 days after the student’s program end date.
2. The process at the USCIS can take up to 90 days.
3. There is a $380 application fee.
4. Students MUST choose their start and end dates and MAY NOT change them.
5. When you are approved for OPT, you will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card.
6. Following OPT, students have a 60 day grace period to either depart the U.S., transfer to another school, or change to another visa status.

OPT Before Graduation (Less Common)
1. OPT may be approved pre-graduation if it occurs in one of the following circumstances
2. Full time (21 or more hours/week) during vacation periods (e.g. summer break); Part-time (20 or fewer hours/week) while school is in session
3. Part-time OPT before graduation is counted against the 12-month total as follows: 2 months part-time OPT= 1 month full time OPT

Splitting OPT Periods Before Graduation and After Graduation (Less Common)
1. May use OPT for consecutive summers (3 months each) or for shorter periods, which when totaled equal no more than 12 months.
2. May use part of 12 months OPT before and part after graduation. To split OPT, students must apply and submit separate application fees for each period of OPT requested.
OPT After Graduation (Recommended)
1. May work anywhere in the U.S.
2. OPT after graduation is always granted for full-time work (21 hours per week or more).
3. There is a **90 day limitation on unemployment**. Students MUST work or volunteer for 21 hours or more per week. If they do not, then each day will count towards the 90 days of unemployment. Once students accumulate the 90 days, they are in violation of their status.
4. Students may work in more than 1 job.

Transfer During or After OPT
1. Students may take classes part-time (11 credits or less) during OPT.
2. Students should apply to the school, be accepted, and then let the school know of their intention to only take classes part-time while they are doing OPT.
3. The new school may give students a transfer or release form. Student should submit this form to HIC **ONLY IF** they plan to stop their OPT and take classes full-time.
4. If students start taking classes full-time (12 or more credits), their OPT will automatically be cancelled.

Not Graduating After Applying For OPT
1. If a student applies for post-completion OPT but does not complete the academic program as expected, the student MUST contact HIC to discuss their options further as soon as possible.
2. Student may be able to continue OPT part-time only and finish up the remaining class(es) at KCC. Once the academic program is completed, the student can work full-time for the remaining time.

Track Your OPT Application with USCIS:

1. If a student does not receive a receipt notice from the USCIS within 3-4 weeks, send an email to the following address: csc.nonotice@dhs.gov

2. To check on the status of a pending application, access the USCIS website at: https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp and enter in the receipt number.

3. The National Customer Service number is 1-800-375-5283.
   To speak to someone, press:
   - “1” for English
   - “7” for benefit information
   - “3” for nonimmigrant foreign nationals
   - “4” for assistance with other (have paperwork ready, including I-94 number and receipt number)

4. Delays are common and students may anticipate a wide range of USCIS processing times for authorizations.
OPT Reporting Requirements

☐ Name, address, or phone number changes--Submit Change of Address/Phone Number Form to HIC.

You must report to HIC: kccopt@hawaii.edu within 10 days with the following:

☐ Find a job
  • Name and address of the employer
  • Your position title; start and end dates
  • Working hours per week

☐ Change jobs
  • End date of your previous employment
  • Name and address of your new employer
  • Your new position title; start and end dates
  • Working hours per week

☐ Accrue more than 10 days of unemployment

☐ Discontinue OPT

Traveling Outside the U.S.

• **There is risk involved** if students plan on traveling before or even after they receive their OPT approval (the EAD card).
  • Bring the following to facilitate re-entry:
    1. Valid passport
    2. Valid F-1 visa (If expired, a new visa must be obtained while outside of the U.S.)
    3. Original I-20 with travel signature for re-entry on page 3 (Signature valid for 6 months)
    4. EAD card*
    5. Proof of employment and salary (Usually a letter from your employer)

  *If students plan on traveling while their OPT status application is pending, replace item 4 with OPT receipt notice from USCIS and printout the application status page from the USCIS website.

Social Security Number

• Students may apply for a SSN after receiving their EAD card.
• Please contact HIC for more information about “How to Obtain a Social Security Number”.

Social Security/Medicare Taxes

• F1 students are generally exempt from Social Security/Medicare Taxes on wages paid to them for services performed within the United States as long as such services are allowed by USCIS.
• Tax-related resources for international students: http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/article/0,,id=129427,00.html
• Guidance for international students on preparing tax returns: http://www.hawaii.edu/issmanoa/index_tax.htm
I am applying for: ☑ Permission to accept employment.

Replacement of lost employment authorization document

Removal of my permission in accept employment (attach previous employment authorization document)

Which USCIS Office? Date(s) ☐

Results (Granted or Denied - attach all documentation)

Date of Last Entry into U.S. (mm/dd/yyyy) 02/01/2011

Place of Last Exit into the U.S. Honolulu, Hawaii

Manner of Last Entry (Visitor, Student, etc.)

Student

Current Immigration Status (Visitor, Student, etc.)

Go to Part 2 of the instructions. Eligibility Categories. In the space below, place the letter(s) of the category you selected from the instructions for example, (A)(2)(i)(B), etc.)

Eligibility under 8 CFR 274a.12 ( ☐ ) ( ☐ ) ( ☐ ) ( ☐ ) ( ☐ )

If you entered the I-765 category, check (☐) in the box above. List your employer, your employer's name is listed in I-Verify, and your employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number on this block on the left corner.

Employer's Name as listed in I-Verify

Employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Company Identification Number

If you have ever before applied for employment authorization from USCIS?

Yes (if "Yes," complete below) ☑ No

Do not touch the lines above or below!

Signature

Santa Claus

Telephone Number (808)734-9312

Date 10/01/2011

Signature of Person Preparing Form, If Other Than Above: I declare that this document was prepared by me at the request of the applicant and is based on all information of which I have any knowledge.

Print Name

Address

Signature

Date

Remarks

Initial Request

Resubmitted

Bolished

Completed

Received

Sent

Approved

Denied

Reopened
√ Before You Apply, You Must Check

1. Is your I-20 end date the same as your actual graduation date?  □ Yes  □ No
   If “NO”, submit your I-20 to HIC and ask for your program end date to be shortened.

2. Did you apply for Reduce Course Load if taking less than 12 credits?  □ Yes  □ No
   If “NO”, submit your I-20 to HIC and the Reduce Course Load form

3. Is your major on your I-20 your current major?  □ Yes  □ No
   If “NO”, submit your I-20 to HIC and the Change of Major form.

4. Did you sign your I-20 on page 1?  □ Yes  □ No

5. Does HIC have your most current U.S. address?  □ Yes  □ No
   If “NO” or you are unsure, submit the Change of Address/Phone Number form.

6. Did you apply for graduation at KISC (Ilima 102)?  □ Yes  □ No
   Graduation Application Deadline:
   Fall – October 15 / Spring – March 15 / Summer – June 15

Choose Your OPT Start and End Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester End Date</th>
<th>OPT Start Date</th>
<th>OPT End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60 days grace period</td>
<td>1 year of OPT</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Prepare Your Passport Photos

1. KapCC Passport Office provides passport photo services.
   Olapa 112; phone: 734-9258; hours: 8:30 am – 12 pm and 1-4 pm, Mondays to Fridays.

2. Write on the back of both photos in pencil LAST NAME – all capital letters, First Name – regular letters, and I-94 number.
Application Procedure for OPT

1. Student submits complete OPT application packet (including all 8 items on OPT checklist) to HIC.

2. HIC reviews documents and issues an OPT recommendation on I-20.

3. After 5 business days, student picks up OPT application packet from HIC.
   - Student keeps original I-20.
   - Student attaches a $380 check (payable to: Department of Homeland Security).
   - Student creates a cover letter --- see sample below.

   **USCIS Phoenix Lockbox**
   **P.O. Box 21281**
   **Phoenix, AZ 85036**

   Dear USCIS Officer,

   The following documents are enclosed with this OPT request:

   - I-765 form with $380 check attached
   - 2 passport-sized photos with name and I-94 # on the back of both photos
   - Copy of KCC I-20 with OPT recommendation on page 3
   - Copy of passport photo page
   - Copy of the front and back of I-94
   - *(Does this apply to you? TYPE THIS IN ONLY IF IT APPLIES TO YOU* Copy of I-20s, letters, certificates, or transcripts from previous schools
     Copy of previous EAD card)

   Thank you,

   Your name
   Address

4. Student makes copies of all documents for his/her own records before mailing out the application packet.

5. Student mails the application packet (within 30 days of the OPT recommendation date on page 3) via “CERTIFIED MAIL with Return Receipt” at the post office --- cost is about $4.

6. Student should receive his/her OPT approval within 3 months
Application for Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Step 1  Student Name: _________________________  UH Email Address: ________________________
        UH ID Number: _________________________  Phone Number: _________________________
        Degree Seeking: □ A.A. □ A.S.      Major: _______________________________
        Expected Graduation Date: __________________

Step 2  Briefly describe the employment experience that you wish to have during OPT. Please remember that the work/training must be related to your field of study and appropriate to your educational level. List 3 possible position titles (e.g. I will be working in the field of Psychology as an advisor, a social worker, and ........)

        I will be working in the field of ____________________________ as a ___________________
        (major) and/or another job in my major.
        (possible position titles)

Step 3  Choose your OPT start and end dates.

        OPT Start date: ________________   End date: ________________
        (month/date/year)    (month/date/year)

Step 4  Preparation before seeing your Program Counselor

        ☐ Print out your STAR transcripts
        ☐ Check for yourself if you will be graduating this semester
        ☐ Then make an appointment to meet with your Program Counselor to verify that information

Step 5  PROGRAM COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATION

        To Program Counselors: Please sign this form only when the students have completed Steps 1-4

        I certify that this student intends to complete his/her studies on ________________.

        Program Counselor’s Name: _______________________________
        Program Counselor’s Signature: ____________________________
        Phone Number: ______________________  Date: ________________
OPT Checklist

Important!
- Arrange your documents in the order listed below
- Make sure that your I-20s are stapled, according to each school and with the most recent on top

☐ 1. OPT Checklist (the sheet you are looking at right now)
☐ 2. OPT Application Form (the other side of this sheet)
☐ 4. Original set **AND** Copy set of KCC I-20 (all pages) --- stapled
☐ 5. Copy of passport photo page
☐ 6. Copy of I-94 (front and back, make sure stamp is visible)
☐ 7. 2 passport-sized photos

If you have attended any U.S. schools before KCC, submit
☐ 8. Copy of previous I-20s. If these I-20s are not available, submit letters, certificates, or transcripts--- the most recent should be on the top

If you have received EAD before, such as from previous OPT or Economic Hardship, submit
☐ 9. Copy of any previous EAD

BEFORE SUBMITTING DOCUMENT TO HIC:
- Place the blue checklist on top
- Verify you have completed all the steps listed above