



## 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.nonnotice@dhs.gov](mailto:csc.nonnotice@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](mailto: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](http://www.hawaii.edu/issmanoa/index_tax.htm)

- 1) Go to <http://www.uscis.gov>
- 2) On the green bar, click on "Forms"
- 3) Scroll down until I-765 "Application for employment Authorization"

OMB No. 1615-0040

Department of Homeland Security  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

**I-765, Application For  
Employment Authorization**

Do not write in this block.

Remarks	Action Block	Fee Stamp
<b>SAMPLE</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved by USCIS (Date) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Denied by USCIS (Date) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Failed to establish economic necessity as required in 8 CFR 274a.12(c)(14), (18) and 8 CFR 214.2(f)		

I am applying for:  Permission to accept employment.  
 Replacement (of lost employment authorization document)  
 Renewal of my permission in accept employment (attach previous employment authorization document)

1. Name (Family Name in CAPS) (First) (Middle) Which USCIS Office? Date(s)	Results (Granted or Denied - attach all documentation)
CLAUS Santa	
2. Other Names Used (include Maiden Name)	
3. Address in the United States (Number and Street) (Apt. Number) (Town or City) (State/Country) (ZIP Code)	12. Date of Last Entry into the U.S. (mm/dd/yyyy)
4303 Diamond Head Road Honolulu Hawaii 96816	01/01/2011
4. Country of Citizenship/Nationality	13. Place of Last Entry into the U.S.
Japan	Honolulu, Hawaii
5. Place of Birth (Town or City) (State/Province) (Country)	14. Manner of Last Entry (Visitor, Student, etc.)
Tokyo Japan	student
6. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)	15. Current Immigration Status (Visitor, Student, etc.)
12/25/1968	Student
7. Gender <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	16. Go to Part 2 of the Instructions, Eligibility Categories. In the space below, place the letter and number of the category you selected from the instructions (For example, (A)(8), (c)(17)(iii), etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Married <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced	Eligibility under 8 CFR 274a.12 ( C ) ( 3 ) ( B )
8. Marital Status <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed	17. If you entered the Eligibility Category, (c)(1)(C), in item 16 above, list your <del>cease</del> your employer's name as listed in E-Verify, and your employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number in the space below.
9. Social Security Number (include all numbers you have ever used) (if any)	Degree: <b>SKIP</b>
10. Alien Registration Number (A-Number) or I-94 Number (if any) 11 digit # on your I-94 (top left corner)	Employer's Name as listed in E-Verify: <b>SKIP</b>
11. Have you ever before applied for employment authorization from USCIS? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (if "Yes," complete below) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number: <b>SKIP</b>

**Certification**

**Your Certification:** I certify, under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, that the foregoing is true and correct. Furthermore, I authorize USCIS to use the information that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services needs to determine eligibility for the benefit. **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. **SKIP**

Prior Name: Address: Signature: Date:

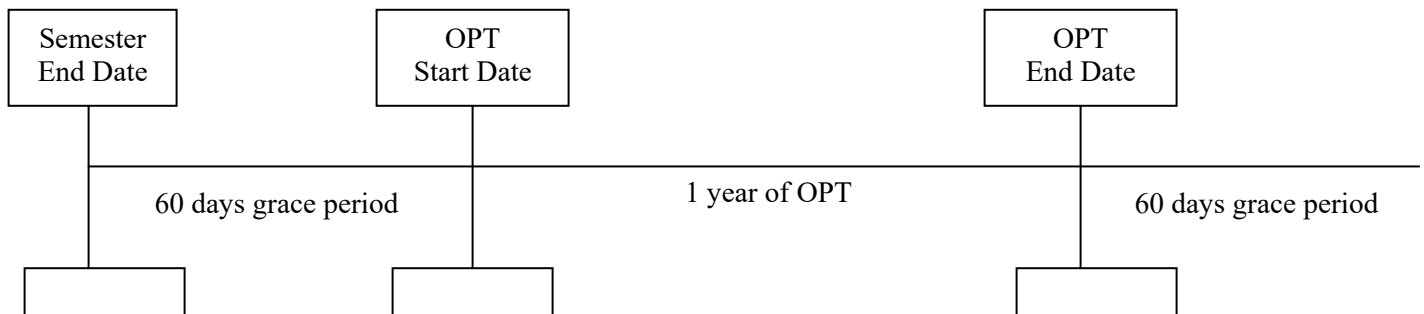
Remarks	Initial Receipt	Resubmitted	Relocated		Completed			
			Rec'd	Sent	Approved	Denied	Returned	



## √ 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



## 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**

Sample Cover Letter

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)
- 3. Signed I-765 (Complete and print form from [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov))
- 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