OPT APPLICATION CHECKLIST

STEP 1: Obtain and complete the following documents:

- A check or money order $380 filing fee payable to “Department of Homeland Security”
- A copy of Form I-94 Departure Record (the small white card stapled inside your passport)
- Two passport-style photos with a white background taken no earlier than 30 days before submission to USCIS. They should be unmounted, glossy and unretouched. The photos should be bare unless you are wearing a headdress as required by a religious order to which you belong. The photo should not be larger than 2 x 2 inches, with the distance from the top of the head to just below the chin about 1 ¼ inches. Lightly print your name on the back of each photo with a pencil.

You may obtain these photos at Longs Drug for $7.99 + tax.

Longs Drug Store – Prince Kuhio Plaza
111 E. Puainako Street
Hilo, HI 96720
(808) 959-5881

Longs Drug Store – Downtown
555 Kilauea Avenue
Hilo, HI 96720
(808) 935-9075

- A copy of all prior Form I-20
- A copy of a completed application for graduation/degree/certificate
- A copy of your passport

STEP 2: At least 60 days BEFORE your program end date on your I-20 bring the above documents to the Hawai‘i Community College International Student Counselor. The International Student Counselor will create a new I-20 with an endorsement of recommendation for OPT. The International Student Counselor will give you the original and a copy. Include the copy of your new I-20 with your application.

STEP 3: No more than 120 days and at least 45 days BEFORE your program end date on your I-20 submit the following documents to USCIS. If you are completing your program earlier than the date on your I-20, the DSO will shorten your program, so you can apply for OPT. It is recommended that you mail your application Certified Mail, Return Receipt requested, so the post office will be able to track your application should the USCIS not receive it in a timely manner.

USCIS Phoenix Lockbox
USCIS
PO BOX 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

STEP 4: When you receive a Form I-797 receipt for your application, bring a copy to the DSO, so it can be kept in your file. If you do not receive the receipt within 90 days of application, please contact the DSO for assistance.

STEP 5: Update your address and employment status changes with the DSO.
TRAVEL

Can I reenter the U.S. if my request for OPT is pending?

Yes. Make sure you have the following documents with you when you reenter.

- Passport good for at least 6 months
- Unexpired visa, unless you are exempt from the visa requirement
- I-20 with OPT endorsement and DSO signature on page 3
- I-797 (receipt)

A student who departs without a job offer before the EAD is issued and has the EAD issued while outside the U.S. may encounter difficulties upon return to the U.S.

Can I reenter the U.S. if I left while on OPT?

If your OPT has been approved and you depart before you get a job, your OPT ends and you cannot reenter.

If you have a job, you may travel and reenter to resume work at the same job. Your absence must be less than 5 months. Make sure you have the following documents with you when you reenter the U.S.

- Passport good for at least 6 months
- Unexpired visa, unless you are exempt from the visa requirement
- I-20 with OPT endorsement and DSO signature on page 3
- I-797 (receipt)
- Unexpired EAD
- Letter from employer stating dates of employment (to show you are returning to a job)

A student who chooses to travel without an unexpired EAD and a job or job offer assumes the risk of encountering difficulties upon return to the U.S.