

Brigham Young University Hawaii
O.P.T. (Optional Practical Training) Policy and Procedures
Effective August 15, 2005

Policy Statement:

Brigham Young University Hawaii will endorse students in F-1 visa status for Optional Practical Training (OPT) provided the students meet the designated requirements mandated by the U.S. government and BYU Hawaii policy.

**Students are strongly encouraged to complete an internship or practicum during the academic program of study rather than OPT after graduation.*

Qualifications:

1. Student has accepted a job offer that:
 - is in a field directly related to the student's major field of study
 - requires a college degree as a minimum qualification
 - provides experience not readily available in the student's home country.
2. Student provides documented evidence (i.e., offer letter on company letterhead) of the job offer.
3. Student must have a 3.0 cumulative GPA (certified by the Academic Advisor) and be a student in good standing at BYU Hawaii.
4. Student has
 - met with either a career center or faculty advisor to discuss the candidate's career plan
 - registered on the university's YCareers electronic job network
 - submitted an approved resume and cover letter to student's file in the Career Center
5. Student has been enrolled in the U.S. for full time studies for one full academic year.
6. Student must be in valid F-1 status.
7. Student may not have regained legal status through reentry or been reinstated by immigration within one full academic year of OPT application.

Application Process:

1. Student must meet with a faculty or career center advisor to discuss the applicant's career plan. Student should register on the YCareers electronic job network, submit an approved resume and cover letter to the student's file in the Career Center and begin an active job search at least one year prior to graduation. OPT applicants are required to attend an OPT information session at least one semester prior to the application period. It is recommended that interested students participate in sessions at least one year in advance of graduation to learn specifics of the application process. (Contact International Student Services or the Career Center for details.)
2. 90-120 days prior to graduation, the international student may meet with an International Student Services advisor to obtain the necessary authorization forms and certify that the applicant meets criteria established by the US Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS).

3. The student must complete the OPT application forms and attach a copy of the offer letter to the application.
4. Obtain the application form clearance signatures from:
 - A Career Center advisor
 - The student's academic advisor
 - The department chair and/or faculty advisor for the applicant's major field of study
 - An International Student Services advisor
5. Complete the application photo requirements, file documents, pay \$175.00 application fee with either personal check or money order and submit the I-765 application to an International Student Services advisor. Sign a BYU Hawaii "Promise to Return" agreement.
6. Mail all necessary signed documents to the USCIS office in California. The OPT application must be received by USCIS prior the date you are expected to complete the program of study. Immigration regulations do not allow a student to submit an application after study program completion.

During and After OPT:

1. Graduates may **not** begin the OPT work experience until (a) receipt of the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card from USCIS and (b) the begin date on the card has been reached. During an OPT, the graduate is still in F-1 status at Brigham Young University Hawaii.
2. Federal guidelines require the OPT participant to keep the university notified of employer and/or personal address changes during the practical training period. Participants may update personal and/or employer contact information online at the BYU Hawaii Career Services webpage (www.byuh.edu/career). The online form generates a record for International Student Services to maintain for the US government SEVIS records and another for Career Services to use for reporting university placement outcomes and return rates.
3. The university also requests that the OPT participant submit a contact update for the next destination at the conclusion of the OPT experience.

Appeals Process:

Appeals for exception cases may be made to a Review Panel comprised of one representative from International Student Services, one from Career Services, and one faculty and/or academic advisor representative from the department of the applicant's major field of study. To make an appeal for the exception, the applicant should meet the qualifications listed previously and must also:

1. Write a maximum one page request for and explanation of need for the exception.
2. Submit verification documents, request and explanation paper to either the Director

of International Students or Director of Career Services at least two weeks prior to the first Monday of the month.

If a pending offer or lack of a job offer is the reason for appeal, candidate must have demonstrated a serious effort to find qualified employment. Documented evidence of application with a minimum of 10 employers is required in addition to the originally stated requirements.

The Review Panel will meet on the first Monday of each month at 4:00 p.m. on an as-needed basis. Emergency sessions may be called in extreme situations as determined by the Review Panel standing members (International Student and Career Center representatives). The Review Panel chair will submit a monthly action report to the President's Council for review.