

The Professional Development Initiative (PDI) - Kuwait

*Administered by
The Embassy of the State of Kuwait
Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences
The National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce*

What is the Professional Development Initiative?

The Professional Development Initiative (PDI) provides Kuwaiti students on F-1 visas in the United States with a well-targeted, year-long Optional Practical Training (OPT) opportunity to work with a U.S. institution before returning home.

The PDI is administered by three program partners: the Embassy of the State of Kuwait (ESKU), the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), and the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC). These PDI program partners will identify qualified American host companies to participate in this prestigious program; identify prospective PDI applicants, screen these applicants, and name the finalists in this highly competitive program. The PDI program partners will match up these finalists, based on degree, skills, and interests, with appropriate host companies in the United States.

Finalists selected to participate in the Professional Development Initiative will take part in a three-day Orientation and Leadership Training Program in Washington DC designed to:

- Spell out expectations surrounding the PDI;
- Enhance these scholars' leadership potential;
- Provide professional leads and insights into the U.S. workplace, including business etiquette and norms;
- Identify each scholar's goals for his/her PDI year;
- Discuss the year-end presentation of a final project.

The PDI program will start with this orientation and leadership training program in Washington, DC, followed by monthly professional development forums that are interactive and accessible via the Internet through a PDI website developed by the PDI program partners.

What is OPT?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is the legal basis for the Professional Development Initiative (PDI) created by the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce. OPT was created by the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS), as a work option available to all F-1 visa holders who are in good standing with U.S. law and with the U.S. Department of State. OPT occurs after graduation at the undergraduate and graduate levels. OPT is designed to provide students with an opportunity to gain actual work experience in his/her field of study, for twelve months, without changing his/her F-1 visa.

The purpose of OPT is to “round out” or compliment the student’s academic work with real, live, and relevant work experience. OPT is not an “entitled benefit” for F-1 visa holders. The USCIS has the right to deny any OPT application at their discretion. It is the student’s responsibility to know the law and comply with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations, as well as university policies. Permission for this temporary employment is obtained through the student's university/college and through USCIS. The PDI applicant may work anywhere in the United States. The National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce, with its partners, will place qualified PDI applicants with select U.S. companies, and also provide leadership training, cultural orientation, and PDI scholar assessments throughout the OPT experience.

The expected start date of the PDI fellowship is July 7, 2014. PDI applicants are expected to notify his/her college or university of this start date for the I-20, OPT, and EAD forms.

What is the Application Process?

Application for OPT begins before a PDI applicant graduates from his/her degree program, and the applicant applies through his/her university. The PDI applicant must not have had more than one year of full-time Current Practical Training (CPT) employment during his/her current degree level. The PDI applicant must be graduating with a Bachelor or Masters degree, with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above with no scholarship extension. Non-degree students, student attending certificate programs and those doing post-doctoral research are not qualified for an OPT.

The student will receive his/her transcript, a new I-20, and an employment document from his/her university, and is then ready to apply for the Professional Development Initiative through the PDI program partners.

What happens next?

THE APPLICATION DEADLINE IS MARCH 31, 2014. Upon successful submittal of the PDI Scholar application forms online to the Embassy of Kuwait and to NUSACC, the PDI Partners will review the student's application.

PDI applicants will then be contacted by email, and invited to participate in an "on demand" interview through the HireVue online interview platform. This interview, once the applicant has been invited to participate, can be done at his/her convenience, and will be comprised of videotaped and written essay answers. The PDI applicant may use any device for this interview that has audio and visual capabilities -- a desktop computer, laptop computer, iPad or other similar device, or a smartphone. Instructions for conducting the interview will be available when the applicant accesses the online interview portal, and will have the opportunity to practice giving answers to similar questions prior to starting the actual PDI interview.

Once the applicant has completed all of the questions for his/her interview (less than 10 questions), the PDI program partners will evaluate the interview. After the results of these evaluations are complete, PDI finalists will be announced by May 1, 2014.

Successful PDI scholar applicants will then be presented to one or more U.S. companies to be considered in their fellowship program. Notification of a PDI scholar's offer by a U.S. host company will occur by June 1, 2014.

For further questions about the PDI program, contact:

Embassy of the State of Kuwait

Cecilia Cancio
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+1 (202) 364-2145

National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce

Cynthia Douglass
PDI Program Director
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Professional Development Initiative Application Checklist

- 1. PDI Scholar Application
- 2. Emergency Contact Information
- 3. Personal Statement (1 Page)
- 4. Copy of passport (all pages except blanks)
- 5. Copy of Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
- 6. Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- 7. One letter of recommendation from Dean; **OR** two letters of recommendation from faculty
- 8. PDI Scholar Declaration Form
- 9. Copy of health insurance card
- 10. Most current transcript from U.S.-Accredited University (3.0 minimum GPA required)
- 11. OPT I-20 Form

Please complete the sections of the PDI Application below, and attach required documents to this file, or as additional files. Label all files with your name and today's date.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: MARCH 31, 2014

Send the PDI Application electronically, Sections 1 – 11, to:

Embassy of the State of Kuwait

Attn: Professional Development Initiative

Ms. Cecilia Cancio, kucvcancio@kuwaitculture.com

(NOTE: Please cc your academic advisor on all materials)

AND

National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce

Attn: Professional Development Initiative

Ms. Cynthia Douglass, cdouglass@nusacc.org

PDI Scholar Application 2014

| Section 1: Contact Information | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|--|----------|
| First Name: | | Last (Family) Name: | |
| Father's Name: | | Suffix: ___Mr. ___Ms. ___Mrs. | |
| Date of Birth: Month: Day: Year: | Gender: ___Male ___Female | | |
| City of Birth: | | Country of Birth: | |
| Country of Citizenship: | | Country of Legal Permanent Residence: | |
| Current Occupation: | | If Student, Major Field of Study: | |
| <p>Please Confirm:</p> <p>___ I am currently enrolled in a U.S.-accredited university or college. My expected graduation date is: Month: Day: Year:</p> | | | |
| Current Mailing Address: | | | |
| Street Address 1: | | | |
| Street Address 2: | | Apartment/Suite/Floor #: | |
| City: | State: | Zipcode: | Country: |
| Email Address: | | | |
| Mobile Phone: | | Additional Phone: | |
| Home Country Mailing Address: | | | |
| Street Address 1: | | | |
| Street Address 2: | | Apartment/Suite/Floor #: | |
| City: | State: | Zipcode: | Country: |

Section 2: Emergency Contact Information

| Emergency Contact 1: | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| First Name: | Last (Family) Name: |
| Mobile Phone: | Additional Phone: |
| Relationship to Student: | Email Address: |
| Emergency Contact 2: | |
| First Name: | Last (Family) Name: |
| Mobile Phone: | Additional Phone: |
| Relationship to Student: | Email Address: |
| Emergency Contact 3: | |
| First Name: | Last (Family) Name: |
| Mobile Phone: | Additional Phone: |
| Relationship to Student: | Email Address: |

Section 3: Personal Statement

Please tell us about yourself. Tell us:

1. What has your experience been in your university/college?
2. Why have you come to the United States to study?
3. What do you hope to accomplish by participating in the Professional Development Initiative (PDI)?
4. Why do you think you would be a good candidate for the PDI?
5. What kind of U.S. company would you like to work with?
6. Where would you prefer to live in the United States during your PDI experience?
7. Are you willing to relocate to be a PDI fellow?

Please attach your personal statement, in essay format, and limit yourself to one page, typed, 12 pt font size.

Section 4: Passport

Please attach a copy of your passport here. PLEASE COPY FIRST FOUR PAGES PLUS VISA PAGE, AND MAKE SURE THEY ARE READABLE.

Section 5: Employment Authorization Document

Please attach a copy of your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) here.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) issues the Employment Authorization Document. It is also known as a work permit.

The EAD is issued in the following categories:

- **EAD:** This document proves that you are allowed to work in the United States.
- **Renewal EAD:** You cannot file for a renewal EAD more than 120 days before your original EAD expires.
- **Replacement EAD:** This document replaces a lost, stolen, or mutilated EAD. A replacement EAD also replaces an EAD that was issued with incorrect information, such as a misspelled name.

To obtain the EAD, you must complete Form I-765 (pdf), available for download at [I-765 Application for Employment Authorization](#).

If completing the form online, do not submit your application until after receiving your new I-20. Mail the documents listed on the below checklist to the USCIS at one of the addresses listed below. You **MUST** send your application **within 30 days** of getting the new I-20 from the ISO. Be sure to keep copies of everything you mail for your own records!

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><u>If you live in (return address on I-765):</u></p> <p>Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington (state), Wisconsin, Wyoming, or Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands</p> | <p><u>Mail your application to USCIS Phoenix Lockbox:</u></p> <p>For U.S. Postal Service deliveries including U.S.P.S. express mail: USCIS PO Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036</p> <p>For (non-USPS) courier service: USCIS, Attn: AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S, Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034</p> |
| <p><u>If you live in (return address on I-765):</u></p> <p>Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, or West Virginia</p> | <p><u>Mail your application to USCIS Dallas Lockbox:</u></p> <p>For U.S. Postal Service deliveries: USCIS PO Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266</p> <p>For Express Mail: USCIS, Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy, 121, Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067</p> |

Section 6: Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Please attach your most current resume or CV. This should include the following information:

1. Name, Address, Phone Number, Email
2. Summary of Qualifications
3. Education
4. Skills and Expertise
5. Work Experience
6. Volunteer Experience (including internships)
7. Awards, Honors, Certifications

Section 7: Letter(s) of Recommendation

Please attach **EITHER** one letter of recommendation from the Dean of your School; **OR** two letters of recommendation from professors with whom you studied during the last two years of your schooling. These must come from the school in which you are currently enrolled.

The letter of recommendation should address the following:

- How long the Dean/professors have known you; what is his/her relationship with you;
- If you have been on the Dean's List, and, if so, from when to when;
- What makes you an exceptional student;
- What you contributed to the college/university;
- Why you are being recommended by the Dean/professors for the PDI program.

Please ensure that your Dean or professors include their full name, phone number, and email.

Section 8: PDI Scholar Declaration Form

I, _____, declare that:

- All of the information contained above is true, to the best of my knowledge;
- I am currently enrolled as a full-time student, and I will graduate before the expected start date of the PDI program in July 2014;
- If selected as a PDI scholar, I will commit to one year of PDI fellowship in the United States;
- I will participate in all parts of the PDI program, including:
 - The interview process with the Embassy of Kuwait and NUSACC;
 - The interview process with a potential U.S. host company;
 - The Orientation and Leadership Training Program in Washington DC prior to the start of the PDI;
 - The monthly online training meetings with NUSACC;
 - The mid-program and end-of-program interviews/evaluations;
 - Completion of a professional binder that reflects my PDI experience;
 - A short presentation of my PDI experience for the new incoming group of PDI scholars in July 2015, in Washington DC;
- I will contact the Embassy of Kuwait and NUSACC if any emergencies arise that may have an impact on my ability to participate in the PDI program;
- I will strive to be an ambassador for the PDI program, and for the State of Kuwait, throughout my year of fellowship in the United States.

Signature

Date

PDI Scholar Name: _____

Section 9: Health Insurance Card

The Cultural Office will attach a copy of your current health insurance coverage letter.

Section 10: University Transcript

Please attach your most recent college or university transcript. Once your final transcript is available, please send it to:

Embassy of the State of Kuwait

Attn: Professional Development Initiative

Ms. Cecilia Cancio, kucvcancio@kuwaitculture.com

(NOTE: Please cc your academic advisor on all materials)

AND

National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce

Attn: Professional Development Initiative

Ms. Cynthia Douglass, cdouglass@nusacc.org

Section 11: OPT I-20 Form

To receive your new I-20 for use with the OPT, please complete the following steps:

1. Obtain a letter from your department (advisor or department chair) verifying your program end date, the desired OPT start date (July 7, 2014), and recommendation for the OPT program with the Professional Development Initiative.
2. Fill out an I-20 request form and mark "New I-20 for Optional Practical Training" and complete checklist including:
 - Current official university transcript
 - Current I-20
 - Department letter
 - Form I-765 (download from www.uscis.gov)
3. Bring the items listed above to your International Student Office (ISO) and sign up to speak with an advisor on duty.
4. An ISO advisor will print out a new I-20 for you within two (2) weeks, which will include their recommendation for your OPT. Attach a copy of this new I-20 with this application.

OPT Packet Checklist:

1. Form I-765.
2. Copy of page 1 and page 3 or the new I-20 that the ISO advisor gives you with the recommendation for Optional Practical Training on page 3.
3. A copy of both sides of your I-94 Card (with the new online version, there is just one page).
4. A copy of photo page (identification page) and expiration date page of your passport.
5. A copy of the F1 visa page of your passport (even if expired).
6. A copy of ALL previous I-20s issued to you in your current education level (if you do not have these, check with the ISO advisor to get copies of your university's I-20s or your previous schools' international office).
7. If you had a previous EAD card, include a copy of the front and back.
8. Two passport type photographs (taken within 30 days of submitting application). Print your name and I-94 card number lightly in pencil on the back of each photo. Put the photos in an envelope and attach to front of I-765. **DO NOT CUT THE PHOTOS!**
9. **Fee of \$380.** Checks may be made payable to the *Department of Homeland Security*. You may send a money order or a personal check drawn on funds from a bank in the U.S., NO CASH. Attach the check to the front of the I-765.

Staple all documents together and send by **certified mail** with a return receipt or **Federal Express** (so that you have a tracking number). You will receive a receipt notice (Form I-797) from the USCIS. You may also attach **Form G-1145** to the first page of your application to receive an E-verification of application acceptance.

REMINDERS: REGULATIONS WHILE YOU ARE ON "OPT" WITH THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE:

- **Required Update (Address and Employment):** Immigration regulations REQUIRE that while you are on OPT, you **MUST** notify your university's ISO when you change your address AND/OR when you are NOT employed, by filling out an information update form with them.
- **Traveling Abroad While on Practical Training:** In order to re-enter the U.S. while you are on the Optional Practical Training, you must have a valid passport, current F-1 visa stamp, I-20 signed within the last six months, the EAD (OPT work card) or the receipt notice for your OPT application **AND your job offer letter.**
- **NEVER enter the U.S. in any visa status other than F-1** while on your OPT (it will invalidate your OPT!)