

# Guide for Submitting your OPT Application to USCIS

This guide is to help you successfully complete and submit an application for Post-Completion OPT or the STEM OPT Extension to USCIS. This is the second part of these application processes. You can find more information about how to complete the first part of the process (requesting an I-20 from OIS) on our website ([OPT](#) & [STEM OPT](#)).

These instructions contain information for both students applying for the first 12 months of OPT and the STEM Extension of OPT. When there are differences, they are clearly labeled. If there is no distinction, you can assume the information applies to both processes.

## [Table of Contents](#)

Part I: Application Checklist .....	2
Part II: Common Application Mistakes and How to Avoid Them.....	3
Part III: Mailing Instructions.....	5
Part IV: What to Expect After Mailing.....	5
Part V: Steps after Approval.....	7
Appendix: Guidelines for Completing Form I-765 .....	8

## Part 1: Application Checklist

All documents you include should be clear, legible, and printed on only one side of the paper. Compile your application materials in the order listed below.

### All students:

- Form G-1145: <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>
- Original and completed Form I-765: <http://www.uscis.gov/i-765>. Make sure you are using the most recent version of Form I-765 (see 'edition date' on [USCIS' website](#)) and include all pages.
- Check or money order made out to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security." Staple the check or money order to the top of the first page of the Form I-765. Check [USCIS's website](#) (see 'filing fee') on day of mailing application to confirm the correct fee amount.
- Two passport photos (2inx2in) – write your name and SEVIS ID or I-94 number on the back of the photos and paper clip them to the top of the first page of the Form I-765. Make sure the photos meet the requirements specified in the [USCIS Instructions](#) for Form I-765.
- Photocopy of Form I-20 with OPT or STEM OPT recommendation.
- Printout of most recent I-94: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94>.
- Photocopy of the passport ID page and expiration page. The passport should be valid at least 6 months into the future.
- Photocopy of most recent US visa.
- Photocopy of previously issued EAD card(s) – if applicable.

### Additional documentation needed for students applying for the first 12 months of OPT:

- Photocopies of all prior I-20 forms issued for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) or Optional Practical Training (OPT).

### Additional documentation needed for students applying for the STEM OPT Extension:

- Copy of diploma and/or transcript for the degree upon which your STEM OPT application is based. If your diploma does not list your particular field/major, you must also include the transcript. Unofficial transcripts are fine.
- Do NOT include a copy of your Form I-983.

If you are one of the following types of students, please consult an OIS advisor for additional information about documentation to include with your application:

- If you changed status to F-1 from another immigration status within the last calendar year by traveling or by submitting a change of status application within the US.
- If you have previously withdrawn an OPT application and are reapplying
- If you have ever applied for pre-completion OPT
- If you are applying for STEM OPT based on a prior degree (not the degree your current 12 months of OPT is based on)

**For all students:** OIS strongly recommends that you make and keep a copy of your entire OPT or STEM OPT application. This can be a helpful resource in case of a rejection or denial of your application.

## Part II: Common Application Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Common mistake	How to Avoid
<p>Submitting your application to USCIS too early or too late.</p>	<p>Keep track of your application deadlines.</p> <p><b>For students applying for the first 12 months of OPT, your application must arrive at USCIS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No earlier than 90 days before your I-20 end date</li> <li>• No later than 60 days after your I-20 end date</li> <li>• No later than 30 days after your OPT I-20 was signed by an OIS Advisor. If you are close to this deadline, contact OIS for a new I-20.</li> </ul> <p><b>For students applying for the STEM OPT Extension, your application must arrive at USCIS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No earlier than 90 days before the end date of your current EAD card.</li> <li>• No later than the end date of your EAD card.</li> <li>• No later than 60 days after your STEM OPT I-20 was signed by an OIS advisor. If you are close to this deadline, contact OIS for a new I-20.</li> </ul>

Common mistake	How to Avoid
Submitting the wrong version of the Form I-765	Check that you are submitting the correct version of the I-765 by comparing the date in the bottom left corner of your I-765 to the 'edition date' listed on <a href="#">USCIS' website</a> .
Submitting an unsigned I-765, an electronically signed I-765 or not all pages of the I-765	Check that you have signed the I-765 <i>in ink</i> and included every page, even if you did not have anything on the page.
Issue with payment (wrong amount, signed incorrectly, insufficient funds)	Check <a href="#">USCIS's website</a> (see 'filing fee') that you are submitting the correct amount. Payment must be made out to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security." Do not sign the back of the check or money order, and do not use a starter check (a personal check without your address that you were given when you opened an account).
Writing the wrong eligibility category on page 3 of the I-765 (or handwriting unclear)	Use the following codes: (c) (3) (B) for the first 12 months of post-completion OPT (c) (3) (C) for STEM Extension of OPT
Issues with the mailing address (incorrectly formatted, unstable address)	<p>Choose a mailing address that you will have access to for up to 5 months. If you anticipate that you will need to move, use a friend's address to receive your application. If you use a friend's address you will need to put their name in the "In Care Of" field on the mailing address section of the I-765.</p> <p>If you do not have access to a secure address for your mailing address, you may choose to use OIS's address by filing out a mail waiver. However, if you are using the I-765 to request a Social Security Number, you cannot use OIS's address. Please visit the <a href="#">OPT/ STEM OPT Mail Waiver form</a> in GlobalHome for further information.</p>

## Part III: Mailing Instructions

**USCIS must receive your I-765 application while you are physically present in the U.S. in F-1 status.** OIS strongly recommends that you stay in the U.S. until at least when you receive the official Receipt Notice from USCIS before embarking on any international travel.

I-765 applications must be submitted to the correct USCIS Lockbox Facility for processing and adjudication. Follow the instructions for where to mail your application at the following website under the “Foreign Students” section: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses>. Always confirm this address is up to date before mailing. Note that there are different addresses depending on if you use the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) or a courier service such as FedEx, UPS, or DHL.

We strongly recommend that whichever mail service you use, that you purchase a service that allows you to track your package and receive confirmation when it is delivered. Keep the confirmation for your records. After mailing, do not attempt to recall your package. If you believe there is an issue with your application, contact OIS to discuss your options.

## Part IV: What to Expect After Mailing

1. You will receive an electronic notification (if you filled out a G-1145 Form) that the USCIS Service Center has received your application and has begun the review process. This notification contains your case number, which allows you to look up your case status on the USCIS website: <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>
2. Within several weeks after the date USCIS has received your application, you should receive a hard copy receipt notice indicating that your case is in progress. This notice will be mailed to the mailing address listed on your Form I-765. Please check the receipt for accuracy (for example, is your name spelled correctly? If not, let OIS know). Keep your receipt notice and do not throw it away.
3. Processing times are very hard to predict and can vary greatly depending on many different factors. OIS is not involved in the processing of any petitions filed with USCIS and cannot predict when your application will be approved nor aid requests for [expediting](#) the process. You can check USCIS’s processing times, including the date past which you can submit an inquiry about a pending case, here: <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>.
4. If your application is approved, you’ll receive an approval notice and your EAD card separately.
5. For students applying for the STEM OPT Extension, if you properly file your application before your EAD expires, you automatically receive 180 days of your employment authorization to continue working while your application is pending.

## Other Possible Outcomes

### Rejections

Instead of being accepted at the Lockbox for processing, your application can be rejected straightaway if there is something wrong with your application (for example, the wrong form version being submitted or the payment not going through). In this case, you will **not receive electronic notification or a receipt notice from USCIS**. They will mail back your entire application for correction and resubmission. You will likely need a new I-20 before you resubmit, so contact OIS for further advising before sending anything back to USCIS.

### Requests for Evidence (RFE)

You can be sent a Request for Evidence (RFE) during the adjudication period. If you receive an RFE, this means USCIS wants additional evidence to make a decision on your case. Contact OIS for assistance in responding to the RFE.

### Denials

If you receive a denial notice for your application, contact OIS for our assistance.

### Tips for avoiding unnecessary delays with your application:

1. Apply as early as you can within the proper filing windows.
2. Choose a stable mailing address that you have access to from the time you submit your application to up to 5 months later. If communication from USCIS cannot be delivered to you in a timely manner your application process will be delayed, as well as your EAD card. Changing your mailing address while your application is pending will likely cause delays.
3. Follow all of the instructions for filling out your application and include all necessary materials.
4. On the day you mail your application, check the USCIS website to make sure you are filing the correct I-765 edition, the correct fee amount, and are sending it to the correct lockbox address as these are subject to change.
5. If you notice something is wrong or missing after you submit your application, contact OIS. Do not submit a second application or try to intercept the mailing of your application.
6. Upon receiving any communication from USCIS (Rejections, RFEs, Denials, or anything else) reach out to OIS immediately before responding yourself.

## Part V: Steps after Approval

### For students on the first 12 months of OPT:

1. Once you receive your EAD card in the mail, submit a copy to OIS.
2. You may begin working once you have received your EAD card AND the start date on the EAD card has arrived.
3. You will receive an email to set up your SEVP Portal account after your OPT becomes active. Set up your account as soon as you can, even if you are not working, as the link in the email will expire.
4. Report your employment to the SEVP Portal within 10 days of starting employment. If you have issues with the SEVP Portal, visit our [website](#) for more information.
5. If you move during OPT, you must update OIS with your new address in [GlobalHome](#).

### For students on STEM OPT:

1. Once you receive your EAD card in the mail, submit a copy to OIS.
2. You are required to regularly complete data validations and performance evaluations while on the STEM Extension. Additionally, you will need to report to OIS if you change employers or elements of your employment change. All of the STEM Extension reporting requirements and how to complete them are detailed on our [website](#).
3. If you move during STEM OPT, you must update OIS with your new address in [GlobalHome](#).

### Changes during your OPT or STEM OPT period

- If you begin a new degree program at another school, you must submit a transfer out form to OIS.
- If you begin a new degree program at NC State, you must submit a Change of Level form to OIS.
- If you change to a new immigration status, please send a copy of the proof of your new status (I-94, I-979 approval notice) to [ois@ncsu.edu](mailto:ois@ncsu.edu).
- If you choose to depart the U.S. before your OPT or STEM OPT period ends, please submit a departure form to OIS

## Appendix: Guidelines for Completing Form I-765

These guidelines have been prepared by the Office of International Services (OIS) at NC State for F-1 students applying for Optional Practical Training (OPT) or OPT extension (STEM OPT). These guidelines are based on OIS's best practices and interpretation of USCIS's Instructions for Form I-765. We strongly recommend that you review [USCIS's Instructions](#) for Form I-765 yourself before completing this form.

It is your responsibility to complete and file Form I-765 properly and in a timely manner. OIS is here to be a resource, but the application is ultimately yours.

### General Guidelines

- Make sure to use the latest edition of Form I-765 available at <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>. These guidelines are based on the 08/25/2020 edition of Form I-765.
- Complete the form by typing or printing legibly in black ink. You may need to use Adobe Acrobat to be able to complete all fields electronically.
- Answer all questions fully and accurately.
- Print out and include all 7 pages of the I-765, even if there are pages that do not apply to you. Do not print the application double-sided.
- Sign the form in black *ink* on page 4 (and page 7, if applicable).
- If a question does not apply to you, type or print "N/A" (short for "Not Applicable"). If the question requires a numeric response, you can type or print "None."
- If you need extra space to complete any item on the form, use the space provided in Part 6. Additional Information or attach a separate sheet of paper. Type or print your name and Alien Registration Number (A-Number) (if you have one) at the top of each sheet; indicate the Page Number, Part Number, and Item Number to which your answer refers. Sign and date each sheet.
- These guidelines only cover the items of Form I-765 that can be confusing. Make sure to provide answers to all applicable items regardless of whether they are covered in these guidelines.

### Part 1. Reason for Applying

If you are applying for the initial 12-month post-completion OPT: select 1.a. (Initial permission to accept employment).

If you are applying for the 24-month STEM OPT extension (i.e. STEM OPT): select 1.c. (Renewal of my permission to accept employment).



## Part 2. Information About You

### Your Full Legal Name

**Items 1.a – 1.c.** Type or print your full legal name as it appears on your I-20 and passport.

### Other Names Used

**Items 2.a – 4.c.** Type or print all other names you have ever used, such as a maiden name, “FNU”, previous legal names, etc. If you need extra space, use the space provided in Part 6. Additional Information.

### Your U.S. Mailing Address

**Items 5.a – 5.f.** This is the address USCIS will use to mail you documents related to this application, including the official Receipt Notice and EAD card. If you are using someone else’s mailing address, make sure to include their name in the “In Care Of Name” field.

You should list a stable address that you will have access to for the entire length of the application process (potentially 5 months).

If your mailing address changes after you send your application to USCIS, you will need to submit the USCIS’s online Change of Address form. Changing your address during the OPT application process could jeopardize how quickly you receive your EAD card, so only do this as a last resort. You should also file an online change of address with the postal service on the USPS website.

**Item 6.** If your physical (home) address is different from the mailing address listed in Items 5.a. – 5.f., check “No” in this item and complete Items 7.a. – 7.d. If your mailing address is the same as your physical address, check “Yes.”

### U.S. Physical Address

**Items 7.a – 7.d.** If you answered “No” to Item 6, provide the address where you currently live. USCIS will not use this address to mail your documents. If you answered “Yes” to Item 6, you can leave Items 7.a. – 7.d. blank.

For students applying for the first 12 months of OPT, make sure your “SEVIS Local” address in MyPack matches the address you indicate is your physical address.

For students applying for the STEM Extension, make sure you have updated your physical address in [GlobalHome](#) and the SEVP Portal to match the address you indicate is your physical address.

If your physical address changes after you send your application to USCIS, update your address in the appropriate places as indicated above.

### Other Information

**Item 8.** Alien Registration Number (A-Number) is only applicable to you if you have been issued an EAD in the past. All students applying for the STEM OPT extension should have this number. A-Number is the same as the USCIS Number on your EAD. If you are applying for the initial 12-

month OPT and have never been issued an EAD before nor have you been assigned an A-Number for any other reason, type/print “None.”

**Item 9.** Most likely, you don’t have a USCIS online account number. Type/print “None” unless you know that you have a USCIS online account.

**Item 12.** If you answered “Yes,” make sure to include copy/copies of your previous EAD(s). You may use Part 6 to add any details if applicable.

**Items 13.a – 13.b.** If you have ever been issued a Social Security card (even if it was issued in your previously used name, such as your maiden name), you must check “Yes” in Item 13.a. and enter your Social Security Number (SSN) from the card in Item 13.b. Otherwise, answer “No” to Item 13.a. and skip to Item 14.

**Items 14 – 15.** You are not required to request a Social Security card using Form I-765, so you can answer “No” to this item even if you don’t have an SSN yet. You can apply for a Social Security card separately once you have your EAD. However, if you want the Social Security Administration to automatically issue you a Social Security card without a separate application, answer “Yes” to both Item 14 and Item 15.

**Items 16.a – 17.b.** If you answered “Yes” to Items 14 and 15, you will need to provide your father’s and mother’s names in Items 16.a – 17.b. Otherwise, type/print “N/A.”

#### Your Country or Countries of Citizenship or Nationality

**Items 18.a – 18.b.** The country of citizenship listed on your Form I-765 should match the country of citizenship on your current passport(s).

#### Information About Your Last Arrival in the United States

**Item 21.a.** Provide the number of your most recent I-94 arrival record. You can access your most recent I-94 at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home> (go to the “Get Most Recent I-94 tab”). Make sure the information in your I-94 record is correct. If you notice an error, you can contact OIS and we will work with US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to get it corrected.

**Item 21.c.** If you have a passport, type or print “N/A.”

**Item 22.** The date of your last arrival into the United States should be listed on your most recent I-94.

**Item 23.** Provide the city name and state or airport code for the port of entry for your last arrival. This information should be listed on your Travel History available on the I-94 website. There are a handful of locations outside the United States which serve as ports of entry (‘pre-clearance’) to the United States (Canada, Aruba, United Arab Emirates, etc). If this is true for you, list the international location.

**Item 24.** If you last entered the United States on your F-1 visa, enter “F-1 student.” If you last entered the United States on a different visa type, enter the type of that visa (for example, “F-2 spouse” or “B-2 tourist”).

**Item 25.** Type or print “F-1 student.”

**Item 26.** Type the SEVIS ID number (N00...) as indicated on the top of your I-20

**Item 27.** Type the correct code for the eligibility category:

- Initial 12-month post-completion OPT: (c)(3)(B)
- 24-month STEM OPT extension: (c)(3)(C)

**Items 28.a – 28.c.** These items apply only to students applying for the 24-month STEM OPT extension. If you are applying for the initial 12-month OPT, you do not need to fill anything in here.

If you are applying for the 24-month STEM OPT extension:

- Item 28.a. Type or print your degree level and major (for example, MS in Computer Science). It is ok to abbreviate your degree in this field. You may use the extra space in Part 6. Additional Information to provide the full name of your degree level and major
- Item 28.b. Make sure to list the name of your STEM OPT employer as it appears in the E-Verify system. Your employer should provide you with this information.
- Item 28.c. Your employer should provide you with their E-Verify Company Identification Number. If your employer is using a third-party company for E-Verify, this must be your employer’s E-Verify Client Company Identification Number.
  - Remember: your STEM OPT employer must be enrolled in E-Verify prior to your requesting a STEM OPT I-20 from OIS. If your employer doesn’t have any experience with the E-Verify system, you can refer them to the E-Verify website.
  - Don’t confuse the E-Verify number with the Employer Identification Number (EIN)! These are two different numbers!

**Items 29 – 31.b.** These items are not applicable for OPT. Type or print “N/A.”

### Part 3. Applicant’s Statement, Contact Information, Declaration, Certification, and Signature

#### Applicant’s Signature

**Items 7.a – 7.b. Do NOT forget to sign in ink and date the form!** Applications submitted without a proper signature in Item 7.a will be denied. The signature must be in black ink. Do not provide a stamped or typewritten name instead of a signature and do not use an electronic signature.

### Part 4. Interpreter’s Contact Information, Certification, and Signature

You should have sufficient English fluency to complete this form yourself, so it is very unlikely that you will need an interpreter’s help for this. If you checked Item 1.a in Part 3 (“I can read and understand English...”), you don’t need to fill out Part 4 – just type or print “N/A” in this section’s fields.

### Part 5. Contact Information, Declaration, and Signature of the Person Preparing this Application, If Other Than the Applicant

If you checked Item 1.a in Part 3, type or print “N/A” in all fields of Part 5.

## Part 6. Additional Information

**For all students**, you will need to use this section, if

- you have used a different SEVIS ID number in the past (SEVIS numbers are listed on top of I-20s and DS-2019s);
- you need extra space to provide answers to any of the items within this form.

**If you are applying for the first 12 months of OPT**, you will need to use this section, if

- you have been approved for CPT (Curricular Practical Training) in the past;
- you have been approved for OPT in the past

Type or print your name and A-Number (if any) at the top of each sheet; indicate the Page Number, Part Number, and Item Number to which your answer refers; and sign and date each sheet. If you need more space than what is provided in Part 6, you may make copies of Part 6 to complete and file with your application, or attach a separate sheet of paper.

Examples of how to complete Part 6:

- **Previous SEVIS ID.** If you are using Part 6 to provide your previously used SEVIS ID number(s), we suggest the following format: **Previous SEVIS ID: N0000000; program start date – program end date (at the time you used this SEVIS ID); degree level.** As for the Page Number, Part Number and Item Number, we recommend that you enter 3 for Page Number, 2 for Part Number and 26 for Item Number (as this information refers to your SEVIS number). See our sample below.
- **CPT.** If you are using Part 6 to provide information about your previously authorized CPT, we suggest the following format: **CPT authorization: part time or full time; CPT start date – CPT end date; degree level; SEVIS number** (which you had at the time of this CPT). As for the Page Number, Part Number and Item Number, we recommend that you enter 3 for Page Number, 2 for Part Number and 27 for Item Number (as this information refers to your eligibility category).
- **OPT.** If you are using Part 6 to provide information about your previously authorized OPT, we suggest the following format: **OPT authorization (indicate what type of OPT – pre-completion, post-completion, or STEM extension): part time or full time; OPT start date – OPT end date; degree level; SEVIS number** (which you had at the time of this OPT). As for the Page Number, Part Number and Item Number, we recommend that you enter 3 for Page Number, 2 for Part Number and 27 for Item Number (as this information refers to your eligibility category).

