

# Guide for Submitting your **Online** I-765 Application to USCIS

This guide is to help you successfully complete and submit an online I-765 application for Post-Completion OPT or the STEM OPT Extension to USCIS. This is the **second** part of this application process. 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. Where there are differences, they are clearly labeled. If there is no distinction, you can assume the information applies to both processes.

OIS **strongly recommends** that you download and keep an entire copy of your OPT or STEM OPT application. This can be a helpful resource in case of a rejection or denial of your application.

It is **your responsibility** to complete and file Form I-765 properly and in a timely manner. OIS is here to help you with advice, but not to share the responsibility with you. OIS can neither predict nor influence processing times.

If you choose to file a paper I-765 application by mail, please refer to our Guide for Filing the Paper I-765.

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## Part I: Creating a USCIS Online Account and the Online I-765

Create a USCIS online account if you don't already have one. USCIS has provided a guide to creating the USCIS Online Account:

<https://www.uscis.gov/file-online/how-to-create-a-uscis-online-account>

You can use any email address that you check regularly to create your account. As long as you remain in F-1 status on OPT or STEM OPT you will retain access to your ncsu.edu email account, and you can use that address to create your USCIS account. You may also opt to use another email address you will retain and check beyond your time in F-1 status.

## Part II: Collect your Supporting Documentation

Before filing the Online I-765, make sure to do the following to be prepared to complete the online application.

1. Review USCIS Tips for Filing Forms Online: <https://www.uscis.gov/file-online/tips-for-filing-forms-online>
2. We strongly recommend that you review USCIS's Instructions for Form I-765 yourself at this link before completing the form. [Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#)

It is especially important to review the following sections of the Instructions:

- Foreign Students Categories
  - General Instructions
  - Required Documentation
  - What is the Filing Fee?
  - Address Change
  - Processing Information
3. Double check your I-20 issued to you by OIS with the OPT or STEM recommendation. It should have the recommendation on the second page and have the correct dates. Print and sign the I-20. You will need to upload a scanned copy with your signature in the application.
  4. If you are one of the following types of students applying for the **first 12 months of OPT**, please consult an OIS advisor for additional information about documentation to include with your application:
    - a. 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.
    - b. If you have previously withdrawn an OPT application and are reapplying.
    - c. If you have ever applied for pre-completion OPT.
  5. If you are applying for the STEM OPT extension based on a previously earned degree (not your most recent degree,) please contact OIS for more information about providing accreditation information.

## Checklist for Supporting Documentation

### All students:

- 2in x 2in passport-style digital photo of you in .jpg format. See the [U.S. Department of State's photo requirements](#) for more details and requirements. (Even though this site refers to visas, the photo requirements are the same.) You can also use their [photo tool](#) to make sure it's the right size. You will upload this photo.
- Your most recent I-94 Admission/Departure record. <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94>.
- A clear scanned image of your I-20 **with** OPT or STEM OPT recommendation on the second page.  
NOTE: You must sign your I-20 first before scanning.
- A clear scanned image of previously issued EAD card(s) – if applicable.
- A clear scanned image of your passport ID page, expiration page (if different), and any pages with corrections (if applicable). The passport must be valid at least 6 months into the future.
- A clear scan of your most recent US visa.

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

- A clear scanned image of **all prior** I-20 forms issued for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) or Optional Practical Training (OPT) if applicable

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

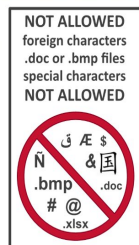
- Copy of diploma and/or transcript (official or unofficial) for the degree upon which your STEM OPT application is based. If your diploma does not list your particular field/major, you must also include the transcript.
- Do NOT upload a copy of your Form I-983

## Formatting Requirements

Have clear and legible scans ready to upload and in the proper formatting before beginning your application.

### Filling Out the Form—Format Requirements

- Photos: JPG, JPEG, or PNG
- Documents: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF or TIFF
- Foreign language documents must have English translation
- Maximum size: 6 MB per file



## Part III: Completing the I-765

Answer all questions fully and accurately. Read the form instructions for information on completing fields that are not applicable to you.

Below we have included tips for commonly asked questions for each section of the online form. If you have other questions, you can ask them at our online OPT Q&A sessions. OIS does not review applications with students individually.

### “Getting Started”

- Make sure to select the correct eligibility category. The rest of your questions are determined by the category you select. Even if you have majored in a STEM field, you are not applying for the STEM Extension of OPT until after you have been approved for the first 12 months of Post-completion OPT.
- For students applying for the STEM extension:
  - For the reason for applying, if you are applying for the STEM extension, you can select “renewal of permission to accept employment”
  - For your degree, include both the major and level of your degree.
  - Make sure to list the name of your STEM OPT employer as it appears in the E-Verify system and the E-Verify Company Identification Number. Your employer should provide you with this information. If your employer is using a third-party company for E-Verify, use 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 has questions, 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!

### “About You”

- For your mailing address 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 mailing 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.
- For the place of your last arrival in the United States, there are a handful of locations outside the United States which serve as ports of entry (‘preclearance’) to the United States (Canada, Aruba, United Arab Emirates, etc). If this is true for you, list the international location.
- An 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. The A-Number is the same as the USCIS Number on your EAD.
- If you do not have a Social Security number, you can apply for one with the online I-765. However, you are not required to request a Social Security card using the I-765 and you can apply for a Social Security card separately once you have your EAD. If you already have a Social Security number do not apply for another card using the I-765.

### “Evidence”

- Make sure to follow the acceptable file formats and instructions included for each document.
- What evidence you need to upload is dependent on what you are applying for. Read each section carefully if it is applicable to you.
  - If you have not applied for CPT or OPT previously, you do not have to upload I-20s in that section.
  - The Institution Accreditation evidence is only required for students applying for the STEM extension based on a prior degree.

### “Additional Information”

- If there is any section in the application where you need more space to include additional information, you can use this section to do so. For example, if you have marked that you have applied for the form I-765 before, you can use this section to explain the outcome of your previous filings.
- If you have ever had a previous SEVIS ID number, this is where you would provide it. We recommend that you include what status (F-1 student, F-2 dependent, J-1 Research Scholar, etc.), the dates of the program, and the degree level if applicable.
  - For example: Previous SEVIS ID: N0000000. F-1 Student. 08/15/2021-05/15/2023. Bachelors.

### “Review and Submit”

- **Review your entire application to make sure that every element is complete and accurate before submitting it.**
- Payment is the last step of submission. You cannot go back and change anything in the application after the payment has been completed.
- Do not rely solely on the online application’s check for alerts or warnings about errors or missing elements. We recommend that you print out the draft of your application and review it in its entirety before submission.
- You should retain a copy of the draft of your application in your records. If your application is denied or rejected or your card contains errors, you can refer back to what you filed to determine if it was your error or USCIS’s.

### Unsolicited Evidence

- After payment is completed and your application is submitted, there is an option to upload unsolicited evidence.
- This should only be used for evidence not requested in the initial application. **Do not rely on this option to submit or correct things required in the initial application.** While completing the form if you do not have all of the correct information or documentation, wait until you do to complete the submission.
- While it may be possible to append information after submitting, it is still a requirement that you have a complete application upon submission. There is no guarantee that things you add after submission that were required in the initial submission will be considered in the adjudication of your application.

## Part IV: 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><b>For students applying for the first 12 months of OPT, you must complete your online application:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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, you must complete your online application:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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> <p>To avoid delays, apply as early as possible within the proper filing window.</p>
<p>Choosing the wrong eligibility category</p>	<p>The questions you are given on the online I-765 depend on which category you select, so be careful to select the correct category.</p> <p>(c) (3) (B) for the first 12 months of post-completion OPT (including STEM majors)</p> <p>(c) (3) (C) for the 24 month STEM Extension of OPT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Only use this code when you are applying for the 24 month extension. Use (c) (3) (B) when you are applying for the first 12 months.</li> </ul>
<p>Completing the I-765 Online Application before getting the I-20 with a recommendation from OIS.</p>	<p>If you do this, your application will be denied. You must request an I-20 with the applicable recommendation from OIS <b>before</b> initiating your online application.</p>
<p>Issues with the mailing address (incorrectly formatted, unstable address) If communication from USCIS cannot be delivered to you during the application process, you may be delayed in receiving your card.</p>	<p>All OPT related mail will be sent to the address you enter. If you use a friend's address you must put their name in the "In Care Of" field on the mailing address section of the I-765. You may use the OIS address if you have no other stable options. Full conditions and instructions are included in the <a href="#">OPT/ STEM OPT Mail Waiver</a>, which you must complete should you use OIS's mailing address..</p>

## Part V: What to Expect After Submitting

1. You should get a receipt notice in your USCIS online account upon submission.
2. Within several weeks after the date USCIS has received your application, you should receive a hard copy receipt notice, mailed to the mailing address listed on your Form I-765. Please check for accuracy. Keep your receipt notice and do not throw it away.
3. Monitor your online account for updates as you wait. You can check [USCIS's processing times](#), including the date past which you can submit an inquiry about a pending case. If your application is approved, you'll receive an approval notice and your EAD card separately.
4. For the STEM OPT Extension, if you properly file your application before your EAD expires, you receive an automatic 180 days of your employment authorization while your application is pending.

### Other Possible Outcomes

#### Requests for Evidence (RFE)

If you receive a Request for Evidence (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 assistance.

## Part VI: Steps after Approval

1. Once you receive your EAD card in the mail, submit a copy to OIS in Global Home.
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 because 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 information on common issues.
5. If you move during this time, you must update OIS with your new address in [GlobalHome](#).
6. **STEM STUDENTS:** You must regularly complete employment validations and evaluations while on the STEM Extension. Additionally, you must report to OIS if you change employers or elements of your employment change. All of the STEM Extension Reporting Requirements and how to complete the reporting are laid out in detail on our [website](#).

#### Changes during your OPT or STEM OPT period

- To begin a new degree program at another school, you must submit a Transfer Out form to OIS.
- To begin a new degree program at NC State, you must submit a Change of Level form to OIS.
- To change to a new immigration status, you must submit a copy of the proof of your new status (I-94, I-979 approval notice).
- To depart before your OPT or STEM OPT period ends, you must submit a departure form to OIS.
  - All the above forms can be found on our ["Requests"](#) page.