OPT Filing: How to Fill in the I-765

You can access the I-765 Form at https://www.uscis.gov/i-765. The link takes you to the page for both downloading the form and the government’s instructions on how to complete the I-765. Do not submit your I-765 to USCIS until you receive the OPT recommendation I-20 and instructions from ISA.

This resource is meant to provide you with best practices in preparing an OPT application. Please note that this is not legal advice. You may choose to hire an immigration attorney to assist you with this process at any time. The information contained here is for general information purposes only. The U.S. government may make modifications to the I-765 form and instructions at any time without prior notice.

General Tips

Online Filing
You can file the I-765 online by creating a USCIS account at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/. More information about filing online is available at https://uscis.gov/file-online. You can also see ISA’s ‘How to Apply for F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)’ guide for more tips on online filing. The online form is the same as the paper version, but the online form logic will show relevant questions based on your answers. Your answers are automatically saved when you go to a new section and draft forms are saved for 30 days from the last time you worked on your form.

Mailing A Physical Application
If you plan to mail a physical application to USCIS, be sure to download the correct edition of the form from the USICS website. If you use an outdated form, your OPT application will be denied. Please print the I-765 single sided and type in your information whenever possible. If you are unable to type in a field, you may neatly handwrite the information in black ink. Sign the signature on page 5 with BLUE ink. Please fill in “N/A” or “None” on the questions that do not apply to you (if you cannot enter “N/A” or “None”, leave any fields that don’t apply to you blank). Keep a photocopy of your complete OPT application for your records.

Filling in Form I-765

Part 1. Reason for Applying
1.a.-1.c. Choose 1.a. ‘Initial permission to accept employment’ if you are applying for Pre- or Post-Completion OPT.

Only STEM degree holders who are already in their first year of OPT and are applying for the STEM extension should choose 1.c.
Part 2: Information About You
1.a.-1.c. Please put your name exactly as it shows on your passport.

Other Names Used
You must put any other legal names that you have ever used in the past in the Other Names Used section. If you have any commonly used nicknames, it is up to you if you wish to enter them. If you have another name you regularly go by, it may be a good idea to include it.

Your U.S. Mailing Address & U.S. Physical Address
5a. – 7d. Put a U.S. address where you can receive mail after graduation. If it is not the place where you are currently living, please put your physical address as well.

Please note USCIS will not mail anything to you abroad. Changing your mailing address while your OPT is pending is possible, but is not recommended!

If you will be moving after graduation and don’t know your new mailing address yet, you may enter the address of a relative or friend who you trust to receive and forward your mail to you.

Other Information
8. Alien Registration Number: If you have applied for OPT or other immigration benefits before, please put the USCIS number (9 digits) that is listed on your previous EAD card.

9. Enter your USCIS online account number if you already have one. If you do not have an account, you can enter “None”.

10. You must check one of the boxes to indicate your gender.

11. You must check one of the boxes to indicate your current marital status.

12. You must check one of the boxes to indicate if you have ever previously filed a Form I-765.

13.a.-14. If you already have a Social Security number, check “yes” in 13.a., enter the SSN number in 13.b., and check “no” in 14.

If you don’t have a SSN, check “no” in 13.a., skip 13.b., and check “yes” in 14 to apply for one. USCIS will send your information to the SSA once they approve your OPT application. The SSN will be issued and mailed to the address you put on the I-765. According to SSA, you will receive the SSN within 7 business days after you receive your EAD.

You don’t have to choose to apply for a SSN on your I-765 application, as you can always apply for a SSN in person once you receive your EAD.
15-17.b. If you checked “yes” in 14, check “yes” in 15 and enter your parents’ information in 16-17. If you checked “no” to 14, you may skip these questions.

**Your Country or Countries of Citizenship or Nationality**
18a.-18b. Enter your country of citizenship. If you have dual citizenship, please put both countries.

**Place of Birth**
19.a.-19.c. Enter the information for your place of birth. Please be sure to double check that everything is spelled correctly.

20. Enter your date of birth in mm/dd/yyyy format. Be careful not to reverse the month and day.

**Information About Your Last Arrival in the United States**
21.a. You can find your I-94 record number at: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94. Do not use a previously printed out I-94, please download your most recent I-94.

21.b. Put the passport number of your most recently issued passport.

21.c. If you used a travel document other than a passport to travel to the United States, enter the travel document information, even if the travel document is currently expired. (This field does not apply to most F1 students.)

21.d. Enter the country that issued your passport. Please note that even if you renewed your passport in the U.S., the country of issuance should be your country of citizenship.

21.e. Enter the expiration date for your passport in mm/dd/yyyy format. The expiry date is listed on the ID page of your passport. Be careful not to reverse the month and day.

22. You can find the date of your last arrival on your I-94 at: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94. Be careful not to reverse the month and day.

23. You can find the date of your last arrival either on the entry stamp in your passport or the travel history on the same website where you print out your I-94.

24 & 25. Most students can enter “F-1 student” for both questions, unless you previously held a different status when you last entered the U.S. If you held a different status when you last entered the U.S., please enter the category in 24.

26. Enter the SEVIS number listed on your current I-20.

If you have multiple different SEVIS numbers, please enter the current one here and use page 7 (Part 6) to list all the SEVIS numbers you had previously with the degree level, dates, and citation to include Page 3; Part 2; Item Number 26.
Information About Your Eligibility Category
27. Be sure to enter the correct eligibility category:
   • Post-Completion OPT (for after graduation or after finishing all coursework) - (c)(3)(B)
   • Pre-Completion OPT (used before graduation during your program) - (c)(3)(A)
   • 24 month STEM OPT Extension - (c)(3)(C) (for STEM degree holders after their first year of Post-Completion OPT)

Only STEM degree holders who are already in their first year of OPT and are applying for the STEM extension should enter (c)(3)(C).

28.a.-28.c. Students of all majors applying for Post-Completion OPT may skip 28. Only STEM degree holders who are already in their first year of OPT and are applying for the STEM extension should enter their degree and employer name as listed in E-verify. Please note the E-verify number (4-7 digits) is different from the Employer Identification Number (EIN) on your I-983.

29-30. F-1 students applying for OPT may skip these questions.

Part 3. Applicant’s Statement, Contact Information, Declaration, Certification, and Signature
1.a.-1.b. Check the box that applies to you. If you are not using an interpreter and not having someone else fill in the form for you, check 1.a.

3 – 5. Fill in your contact information.

7.a. Sign your name by hand in BLUE ink!

7.b. Enter the date when you signed your name.

If you did not use an interpreter to assist you with filling in this application, you may skip Part 4.

Part 6. Additional Information
If you had a different SEVIS number before, you need to fill in this page. Enter your full name as it appears in your passport in 1.a.-1.c. Then in the fields below, list your previous SEVIS number with dates, degree level (Bachelor’s, Master’s, Doctorate, etc.), and citation to include Page 3; Part 2; Item Number 26.

If you had any CPT or OPT before, you need to provide that information on this page. Enter your full name as it appears in your passport in 1.a.-1.c. List the type of work authorization, degree level (Bachelor’s, Master’s, Doctorate, etc.), start and end dates, part-time/full-time, and citation to include Page 3; Part 2; Item Number 27. If you had OPT before, also include the USCIS number on your previous EAD card. If you haven’t had CPT or OPT before, you don’t need to fill this in.