OPT and STEM Applications:

Online I-765 Walkthrough

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Why file online?

The new USCIS online form allows students to easily manage their OPT application throughout its life cycle. Through the online form, students can:

- Reduce mailing costs and delivery times
- Have fees deducted from credit cards or bank account immediately
- Access and respond to USCIS notices quickly
- Send secure messages to USCIS or request corrections
Getting Prepared to File Online
Getting Prepared: OPT I-20

Complete the correct iTerp e-form and wait for its approval. Fill out the following iTerp form based on your application type:

- Pre-completion - OPT: Request (Pre-Completion)
- Post-Completion - OPT: I-20 Request
- STEM - STEM OPT Request

You will receive your new I-20 with the OPT or STEM recommendation on the second page.

**Do not begin your online application until you have your I-20 with the OPT/STEM recommendation.**
Please note: Your online application materials must be submitted to USCIS within **30 days of the creation** of the OPT I-20 and **60 days of the creation** of the STEM I-20.

Make sure to sign your I-20 in blue ink in the Student Attestation box! Do this before scanning a copy for your online submission.
OPT I-20

- For pre- and post-completion OPT only: Once you apply for OPT, the dates you requested as your start and end dates are written on your new I-20. SEVIS does not allow these dates to be changed/updated.
Getting Prepared: Organize your Files

We suggest making an electronic copy of all materials and save them as separate files in the same folder on your computer.

Please check:

● Are your files in the correct format?
● Are they clearly labeled so you can quickly see which file is which?
● Do the file names meet the standard (no special characters or foreign language characters)?
● Are the file sizes less than 6MB each?
Getting Prepared: 
Required Materials (all application types)

These are the documents you should save together on your computer:

- Passport style photograph
  - We recommend [https://tsg.phototool.state.gov/photo](https://tsg.phototool.state.gov/photo) to create your photos
- Electronic I-94 record (or hard copy I-94)
- Current passport (biographical page)
- Current F-1 visa
- New I-20 with OPT recommendation on 2nd page (*make sure to sign it!*)
- Copies of any previous I-20s with CPT or OPT recommendations only
  - Include any copies with CPT or OPT from previous degrees, too!
  - Not required for STEM applications
- *If applicable: Copies of any prior EAD card(s)*
Getting Prepared: Required Materials (Pre-completion only)

For Pre-completion OPT applications only:

- Proof of enrollment
  - Request from TESTUDO using the Transcript Request & Status link

For full-time pre-completion OPT during the semester only:

- Copy of academic advisor’s letter certifying that only the thesis/dissertation remains
Getting Prepared: Required Materials (STEM Extension only)

For STEM Extension applications only:

- Copy of your diploma or transcript from your STEM degree
- Evidence that your school is currently accredited by U.S. Department of Education
  - If you are applying based on a University of Maryland degree, download and save this accreditation file or use https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/institution-profile/120218
  - If you are applying based on a degree from another school, visit https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/home to search for your school.
Getting prepared: Payment methods

Before you begin your online application, think about how you will pay for the application and have that information available. You can pay by:

- Credit card or debit card
- ACH from checking or savings account (automatic withdrawal from a bank account)
  - Have bank routing number and account number available

**Important!**

To pay by credit, debit or ACH withdrawal from a bank account, the credit/debit card or bank account needs to be associated with a **US address**. It does not need to be your own account or credit card.
Final Reminders Before You File Online

- Once you start the online form, it will be saved for 30 days, or from the last time you worked on the form.
  - Remember to file your application within 30 days of the OPT I-20 issuance and within 60 days of the STEM I-20 issuance. Contact an ISSS advisor before filing online if you have exceeded these dates.

- This is a **personal application**. You are solely responsible for the content of your I-765 application, accuracy of information, and submission of all required materials.
Creating a USCIS Online Account and Filing Online
Step One: Create or Sign in to USCIS account

Visit https://myaccount.uscis.gov/ to create a new account or sign in to an existing account.

**Helpful tip!** The email address you use for this account **does not** need to be the same email address you have on TESTUDO and SEVIS. Use an email address that you will continue to check after your graduation from UMD.
Step Two: Start I-765 Application

Once you are logged in, in the My Account section, select File a form online.
Step Two: Start I-765 Application

Select **Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)** from the list of application types.

- **Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)**
  
  Only certain F-1 students seeking optional practical training (OPT) may file Form I-765 online. This includes:
  
  - Pre-completion OPT - (c)(3)(A) eligibility category;
  - Post-completion OPT - (c)(3)(B) eligibility category; or
  - a 24-month extension for STEM students (students holding a degree in science technology, engineering, or mathematics) - (c)(3)(C) eligibility category.

  For all other eligibility categories, you must submit a paper **Form I-765**.

- **Petition for Alien Relative (I-130)**

- **Application To Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status (I-539)**
Step Three: Select Eligibility Category

Select your Eligibility Category from the dropdown menu:

- (c)(3)(A): Pre-completion OPT
- (c)(3)(B): Post completion OPT
- (c)(3)(C): STEM Extension OPT

Please note: other categories are not eligible to file online.

Double-check before you continue: Did you select the correct eligibility category for your application?
Step Four: Reason for Applying

Select:

- ‘Initial permission...’ if it is your first time applying for OPT on your current degree level
- ‘Renewal of permission’ if you have had OPT previously on your current degree level
- Mark ‘No’ for the question on whether someone is assisting you
Step Five: About You

- Please enter your legal name. If your name does not fit in the boxes allotted, enter it on the ‘Additional Information’ page at the end.
- If you do not have a first, middle, or last name, please leave the text box blank.
- Proceed to the demographic questions.
Step Five: About You

- Please enter your U.S. mailing address. This address is where your EAD will be sent. **If you might move in the next 1-5 months, please use a friend’s or family member’s address.**

- If your mailing address is not the same as your address of residence in the U.S., mark ‘No’ and enter your U.S. address of residence. Your EAD card will NOT be sent to this address.
Step Five: About You

- Please enter your I-94 information
  - Electronic records can be found here: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov
    - You can find the last ‘place of arrival’ by selecting ‘View Complete Travel History’
  - If you have a paper card, please record the requested information

- You will be uploading your I-94 later!
  Please have your I-94 record downloaded/scanned and ready to upload.
Step Five: About You

- If you have an SSN number please mark ‘yes’ and enter it here
  - An SSN is good for life; you do not need to request another

- If you do not have an SSN number please mark ‘no’ and answer the following question as to whether you would like a Social Security card to be issued to you
  - Complete the requested information
Step Six: Evidence

- Upload a passport style photo of yourself here
- **We recommend you use this free tool to take your photos:** [https://tsg.phototool.state.gov/photo](https://tsg.phototool.state.gov/photo)
- Pay attention to file size and titles
Step Six: Evidence

- Upload your I-94 record here
- If you have an electronic copy:
  - You only need to include the main page of your I-94 record
- If you have a paper card:
  - You must scan and upload both sides of the card
Step Six: Evidence

- You MUST upload a copy of your passport (the biographical page with your photo and name) and your visa here.
- If you have previously had OPT, please upload a copy of your EAD card as well.

Employment Authorization Document Or Government ID

Upload a copy of your last Employment Authorization document (EAD) (front and back). If you were not previously issued an EAD, you must upload a copy of a government-issued identity document (such as a passport) showing your picture, name, and date of birth; a birth certificate with photo ID; a visa issued by a foreign consulate; or a national ID document with photo and/or fingerprint. The identity document photocopy must clearly show your facial features and contain your biographical information.

File requirements

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator’s certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file
Step Six: Evidence

Note: this screen is available on pre- and post-completion OPT applications only. STEM applicants are not required to upload copies of past CPT or OPT I-20s.

- Upload a copy of any I-20s you had previously with CPT or OPT.
- This does NOT include your new OPT/STEM I-20 - you will upload that in the next step.

Post-Completion CPT Or OPT
Upload evidence of any previously authorized CPT or OPT and the academic level at which it was authorized.

File requirements
- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator’s certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file

Choose or drop files here to upload
Step Six: Evidence

- Please upload your I-20 with the new OPT/STEM recommendation (make sure you signed it!)
- Pay attention to file size and title
Step Six: Evidence

- Use the Additional Information section to note any previously authorized CPT or OPT.
  - STEM extension applicants will not be asked to upload evidence of this information
- If you have had an alternate SEVIS number in the past, please provide it here.
Step Six: Evidence Pre-Completion Only

- For **pre-completion** only:
  
  - Use the Proof of Enrollment Section to upload your transcript.

  **Reminder:** Request this document from TESTUDO using the Transcript Request & Status link

  - If you are requesting full-time pre-completion OPT during the semester, you may also upload the advisor’s letter here.

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Proof Of Enrollment

Upload evidence of having been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year at a college, university, conservatory, or seminary approved by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) for attendance by F-1 foreign students.

File requirements

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator’s certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file

Choose or drop files here to upload
Step Six: Evidence
STEM Extension Only

- For **STEM Extension** only:
  - Use the College Degree section to upload your transcript or copy of your diploma from the STEM-eligible degree.

**College Degree**

Upload evidence the degree that is the basis for the STEM OPT extension is in one of the degree programs currently listed on the [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#) or a copy of your prior STEM degree.

**File requirements**

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator’s certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file

Choose or drop files here to upload
Step Six: Evidence

STEM Extension Only

- For **STEM Extension** only:
  - Use the Institution Accreditation section to upload evidence that the school you earned your STEM-eligible degree is accredited.

- Reminder:
  - If you are applying based on a University of Maryland degree, [download and save this accreditation file](https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/institution-profile/120218) or use [https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/institution-profile/120218](https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/institution-profile/120218)
  - If you are applying based on a degree from another school, visit [https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/home](https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/home) to search for your school.

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**Institution Accreditation**

Upload evidence that the institution that granted your STEM degree is currently accredited by the U.S. Department of Education and certified by the Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP). If this STEM OPT extension is based on a previously earned STEM degree.

**File requirements**

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator's certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file

[Choose or drop files here to upload](https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/home)
Step Seven: Review

● Please review your application before submitting
  ○ You cannot make further changes once you submit your application!

● If Alerts/Warnings are present, you must address them before moving forward with your application
Remember to use an account associated with a US address!
Filling Out the Form—Paying the Fee

- Enter payment information
- Note the form type and agency tracking ID at the top
- When you hit “Continue” to pay the fee, your form will be submitted

Warning - this is the final step before submitting! You cannot modify your application after hitting continue.
After You File the Online I-765
Download and Save Your Application

Print or view the draft snapshot and **save a copy for your records**. We would suggest saving it in the same folder with the files you uploaded.
View/Save Your Receipt Notice

You can immediately view your receipt notice and any future documentation about your case.

Note: All documentation will be mailed to the address you provided; however, you can log in to this portal to view and download any notices in advance.
Questions?

If you have questions about your OPT application or materials after you file, please contact ISSS.

It is recommended that you contact ISSS before uploading additional documentation to your USCIS application or making any correction requests.

We are here to support you during the application and while you are on OPT/STEM. Good luck with your OPT/STEM application!

How to contact us:
Schedule an appointment
Chat with ISSS
E-mail an ISSS advisor