Applying for OPT Online

Steps for Applying

After CIS has processed your OPT request and returned your packet of materials, you can apply for OPT online through the USCIS website. Here are the instructions:

1. **Gather digital (scanned) copies of the following documents:**

   a. Digital Passport-style Photo of You (2x2 photo)
      - Must be recent (within the last 30 days), in color, and meet US passport photo standards.
      - Photos can be obtained at Walgreens, Walmart, or a local photography shop. You may also take your own, but the photo file must meet USCIS's photo requirements.
   b. Valid passport identification page
   c. I-94 record
   d. Previous EAD card(s), if applicable (front & back)
   e. I-20s showing past CPT or OPT authorizations (if applicable)
      - If you don't have these I-20s, the CIS front desk can send you the scanned copies we have on file for you. Please e-mail international@stcloudstate.edu to request your previous copies and include your St. Cloud State ID#.
   f. Most recent I-20 with requested OPT on page 2
      - The I-20 must have been endorsed by the DSO within 30 days of submitting Form I-765. After that time, your application may be denied.
      - You must print the I-20, sign & date on page 1, and scan the signed copy to upload.

   Acceptable File Formats
   Photos: JPG, JPEG, PNG
   Documents: JPG JPEG, PDF, TIF, TIFF (.doc or .bmp files are not allowed)
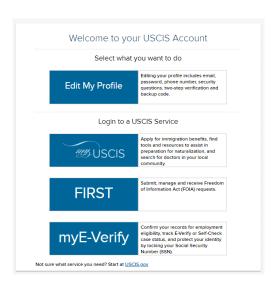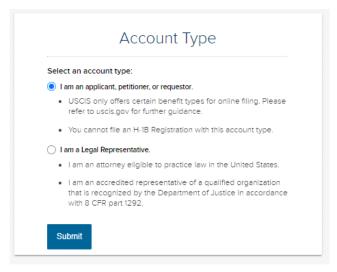   **Maximum size:** 6MB per file

2. **Create a USCIS online account.**

   a. Go to https://myaccount.uscis.gov/ and click "Create an account."
   b. Complete registration process, including setting up two-step verification. You will be required to use the two-step verification process each time you log in.

3. **Start your application.**

   Log into your USCIS account and click the "myUSCIS" button. The first time you log in, you will be prompted to choose an account type; select "I am an applicant, petitioner, or requester."
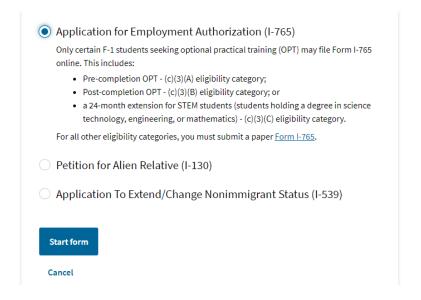
Next, select "File a Form Online" under "Select What You Want To Do."

Then, under "File a Form," select "Application for Employment Authorization (I-765).

You will be brought to a page with an overview of the online filing process, including eligibility requirements, required documents, payment details, and action items you may need to take after submitting Form I-765. **Please read this page carefully** and contact the Center for International Studies if you have any questions.

Review the "Completing Your Form Online" section carefully. Note that your responses will be automatically saved. If you log out, you may log back in and continue where you stopped last time.

4. **Complete the form**

   a. <u>Section 1 – Getting Started</u>

   Provide all the required information in this section. Here are some tips:

   - **Basis of eligibility**
     - Select "c(3)(B)" for Post-Completion OPT
   - **Reason for applying**
     - Select "Initial permission to accept employment" for Post-Completion OPT
   - **Have you previously filed Form I-765?**
     - Select "No" if you have not previously applied for work authorization with an I-765.
     - Select "Yes" if you have previously filed an I-765 (you will be required to upload a copy of your last Employment Authorization Document [EAD] in the "Evidence" section).
   - **Preparer and interpreter information**
     - Select "no" unless someone (e.g. an interpreter) is helping you with the application

   b. <u>Section 2 – About You</u>

   Carefully provide all the required information in this section. Here are some tips:

   - Your immigration information
     - You can retrieve your Form I-94 on the CBP website here: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94.
     - Be sure to select the correct immigration status, as the list of available statuses is quite long (**F1 - Student, Academic, or Language Program**).
     - Your SEVIS number can be found on the top left corner of your I-20.
   - Other information

- o If you do not have a previous EAD, leave the A-Number field blank. If you have a previous EAD, your A-Number will be listed under USCIS# on your card.
- o If you have been issued a Social Security Number, please provide it (if known). If not, please select "Yes" under "Do you want the SSA to issue you a Social Security card?"

c. Section 3 – Evidence

Carefully scan and upload copies of all the required documents and photos in this section.

- **2 x 2 photo**
  - o Be sure to review the guidelines for taking and uploading a photo. Selfies are not acceptable, and the picture must be taken on a plain white or off-white background. You can upload your photo to the Photo Tool on the Department of State's Passport Photos page to create an acceptable passport-style photo. Your application will not be approved without a photo.

- **Form I-94**

  In this section, you will upload copies of multiple documents:

  - o I-94 (https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94)
  - o Passport photo page (if you have more than one passport number, upload copies of both your old and new passport)

- **Employment Authorization Document** (if applicable)
  - o Leave empty if you do not have a previous EAD

- **Previously authorized CPT or OPT I-20s**
  - o Upload your past I-20 copies that show previous CPT or OPT authorizations.

- **Most Recent I-20**
  - o Upload a copy of your new I-20 with the OPT request on page 2.
  - o Don't forget to sign the I-20 on page 1.

d. Section 4 – Additional Information

Use this section to provide any additional information that you could not fit into the previous sections.

- **Example #1 –** If you have a previous SEVIS number:

- o **Section:** Select "About You"
- o **Page:** Select "Your immigration information"
- o **Question:** Select "What is your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Number (if any)?"
- o **Additional information:** Enter your previous SEVIS ID number, the name of the institution, degree level, and program start date. For instance:
  - ▪ N00123456789
    New York University
    Bachelor's
    1/13/2015 – 12/11/2019

Additional Information

If you need to provide any additional information for any of your answers to the questions in this form, enter it into the space below. You should include the questions that you are referencing.

If you do not need to provide any additional information, you may leave this section blank.

Section

Evidence ▾

Page

Post-Completion CPT or OPT ▾

Question

Post-Completion CPT or OPT ▾

Additional information

CPT, Amazon, Part-time
5/31/2018 - 9/1/2018
Master's
N00123456789

66/500

Figure 1: Example #2 - Previous CPT or OPT

- • **Example #2 –** If you have previous CPT or OPT authorization:
- o **Section:** Select "Evidence";
- o **Page:** "Post-Completion CPT or OPT";
- o **Question:** "Post-Completion CPT or OPT";
- o **Additional Information:** Enter the type of authorization, employer, full- or part-time status, dates, degree level, and SEVIS ID. For example:
- ▪ CPT, Amazon, Part-time
  5/31/2018 - 9/1/2018
  Master's
  N00123456789

- • **Example #3 –** If you have received Severe Economic Hardship work authorization:
  - o **Section:** Select "Evidence"
  - o **Page:** "Employment Authorization Document"
  - o **Additional Information:** Enter the type of authorization and name of your employers, etc. For example
    - ▪ Severe Economic Hardship
      EAD dates: 01/01/2019-12/31/2019
      Bachelor's N00123456789

5. **Review, digitally sign, and submit your application.**

The system will alert you of any errors or incomplete fields and will give you the opportunity to make corrections. However, please also manually review each section of the form to ensure that you are submitting accurate information under "Your application summary." You will also have the opportunity to download a .pdf copy of your responses, which you can save for your records by clicking "View draft snapshot."

After you review your application, you must indicate that you can read and understand English. You will then be required to provide a digital signature by typing your full legal name to confirm that all information you submitted is accurate as of the time of filing.

6. **Pay the filing fee.**

After you sign your application in the previous step, you will pay your $410 [filing fee](). Filing online allows you to pay using a credit card, debit card, or withdrawal from a checking or savings account. After you click "Pay and submit," you will be taken to [pay.gov]() to complete your payment.

Please note that the USCIS filing fee is not refundable. Avoid clicking the back or refresh button on your browser. If you are not ready to complete the payment, click Cancel to be taken back to the USCIS online portal.

7. After you pay, you will be redirected to a screen confirming that your form was submitted. Click "Go to my cases" to view your case card and receipt notice. Please save a copy of your receipt number for your records.

Once your application and payment are submitted, you can use your online account for the following:

- Access your receipt notice
- Access biometrics notices (if applicable)
- Review Requests for Evidence (RFEs), if applicable
- View your case status (via the Case Status tab)
- See a PDF of the completed Form I-765
- Access your Decision Letter

All notices will also be mailed to the mailing address you provided on your I-765.