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Why file by mail?

- Not all OPT/STEM applicants will wish to file online. The mailed application offers more payment options and slightly more flexibility around the additional evidence you send; however, increased fees are also associated with this filing option as of 04/01/2024.

- Please [schedule an appointment with an ISSS advisor](#) to discuss whether filing by mail or online is best for you.
Getting Prepared to File by Mail
If you have previously filed an application with USCIS, we recommend that you update your address with USCIS before you begin your OPT application!

- To expedite this process, create a USCIS Online Account to file an Electronic Change of Address (E-COA).
- If you cannot create an online account, file an AR-11 form by mail with USCIS before you file for your OPT.
Getting Prepared: What to know about the I-765

The I-765 is the application form for the OPT/STEM application. Before we review all materials in detail, let’s take a look at the I-765 and how to complete it.

Download the form from: https://www.uscis.gov/i-765

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.
Downloading and Printing the I-765

● I-765 must have a barcode (bottom center of each page)
  ○ Use Adobe Acrobat software to open the file
    ■ TERPware offers all UMD students free access to Adobe programs. Visit the TERPware website for instructions
  ○ Using the Chrome browser is recommended

● Printing the document:
  ○ Make sure your I-765 file displays the barcode BEFORE you print
  ○ Check your printer margins!
Some Hints for Completing the I-765

You can type the entire form or fill it out by hand.

Prepare form in **black** ink and sign signature box in **blue** ink.


Make sure you are using the correct version! See [https://www.uscis.gov/i-765](https://www.uscis.gov/i-765) for information about the current edition date.
Hints for Completing the I-765 (continued)

If a question does not apply to you, type or print “N/A” or “Not Applicable” unless otherwise directed

One page 1, mark box 1.a. if it is your first time applying for OPT on your current degree level

Mark box 1.c. if you have had OPT previously on your current degree level
The mailing address you list should be an address where you can receive mail for the next 2-5 months.

The mailing address is where all correspondence, including your EAD card, will be sent.

If you are using a friend or family member’s U.S. address, put their name in the “In Care of Name” box.

Your physical address is where you currently live, which should be the address SEVIS has on file for you.
If you do not have an Alien Registration number or a USCIS Online Account Number, please leave these sections blank.

Questions 13-17 allow you to apply for a Social Security Card if you do not already have one.

- Please read all instructions carefully.
  
  - If you answer “No” to question 14, leave questions 15-17 blank.
This section tells USCIS what type of work authorization you are applying for. Please type the appropriate code in the boxes:

**Pre-completion OPT:** (c) (3) (A)

**Post-completion OPT:** (c) (3) (B)

**STEM Extension:** (c) (3) (C)
Leave Part 4 items 1.a.-7.b. blank because you are not using an interpreter.

Make sure that you sign the application by hand in **blue** ink!

Electronic signatures are **NOT** accepted.

**NOTE TO ALL APPLICANTS:** If you do not completely fill out this application or fail to submit required documents listed in the Instructions, USCIS may deny your application.
If you are not using an Interpreter or ‘Preparer’ to fill out your application, you do not need to fill out Page 6.

Please **draw a line through the page** to indicate that you have read it, but will not be using the section.
I-765 Continued, Page 7

Use page 7 for any information on which you need to elaborate.

Please list any previously authorized CPT or OPT that you have been granted. To do so:
1. Fill in your name in question 1
2. Correspond this information with Page 3, Part 2, Item 27
3. Give the dates for which the CPT/OPT was authorized and indicate the type (FT or PT)

If you have had a previous SEVIS ID number that must also be listed on this page. Use Page 3, Part 2, Item 26
Getting Prepared: OPT I-20

Complete the correct iTerp application 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 mail your application until you have your I-20 with the OPT/STEM recommendation.**
Preparing your Application Materials

Your application will consist of the following materials.

We will talk about each of the materials in detail.

All types of applications:
- **Optional:** If you would like to receive e-notification about the status of your application, attach the G-1145 form to your application.
- A personal check or money order made out to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”
  - for $410 (through March 31, 2024)
  - $520 (starting April 1, 2024)
- Two color passport photos (must be taken within 30 days)
- The original Form I-765, signed by hand in blue ink**
- The new I-20 with OPT/STEM recommendation
- Photocopies of any previously issued I-20s with prior CPT or OPT authorizations
- A photocopy of your passport biographical page
- A photocopy of your most recent F-1 visa
- I-94 Card (Hardcopy OR Electronic copy)
- If applicable: A photocopy of your previous EAD card(s)

**STEM Extension applicants, additional materials:**
- Copy of your most recent diploma in a STEM field or your official transcripts

**Pre-Completion OPT applicants, additional materials:**
- Official transcripts
- *Full-time during semester only:* A letter from your academic advisor explaining that you have finished all program requirements and only have the thesis/dissertation research remaining
Detailed Look at Application Materials

Time to prepare your application! Please put the materials in the application package in the order they’re discussed here.
G-1145

Want to be notified via email or text message that USCIS received your application?

Attach form G-1145 https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145 to your application to request E-notification of the receipt number of your application and other updates!
Payment

- Write a check/money order payable to the “U.S. Department of Homeland Security” for $410 or use the G-1450 form to authorize a credit card payment (the G-1450 MUST be typed!)

No starter checks!
Payment

If you’re writing a check, here’s an example of how it can be filled out:
Please Note: $410 (through 03/31/24), $520 (starting 04/01/24)

In the memo/notes line: Write your SEVIS number

If you are using the G-1450 form, make sure to type it!
Payment: G-1450 Credit Card Application

Applications with the G-1450 credit card form are possible, but should be undertaken with caution.

No Debit cards or cards with foreign addresses!

It can take several weeks for USCIS to deduct payment. If the card is lost, stolen, or otherwise compromised during this time, the OPT application may be rejected. Please proceed with caution if selecting this type of payment.
Photos

- Have two color, U.S. passport-style photographs taken within 30 days prior to mailing your application to USCIS

Photo Guidelines

2 photographs, passport style 2x2 inches, with name and SEVIS number printed gently on the back, preferably in pencil
The Original I-765 form

Check your form before you put it in the packet:

- Did you fill in all required fields? Review the I-765 completion guide again if needed.
- Does your form have a barcode at the bottom and the correct edition date (current edition date is 10/31/22 in bottom right corner)?
- Did you sign the form with your original signature?
  ○ Remember, don’t e-sign this form!
- Did you include all seven pages?
OPT/STEM
Endorsed I-20

- Please note: Your application materials must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the creation of the OPT I-20 and 60 days of the creation of the STEM I-20

- Check your program end date listed on your I-20

- Make sure to sign your I-20 in blue ink in the Student Attestation box!
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.

You will be keeping this original I-20 and sending USCIS a COPY.
Previous I-20s

Copies of all I-20’s with:

- OPT authorizations
- CPT authorizations

- If mailing, organize in reverse chronological order
  ○ Newest to oldest
Copy of I-94 front and back of hard copy card or printout of I-94 from www.cbp.gov/travel/international-visitors/I-94

- Only the main page of your record detailing your latest entry into the U.S. is needed!
Passport

Copy of passport

- Must be valid at least 6 months into the future!
- Black and white or color
Visa

Copy of F-1 Visa

- Only a copy of your most recent visa, even if it is in an old/expired passport
- Black and white or color
EAD Card

Copy of EAD card

- If previously applied for OPT
- Black and white or color
Additional Materials for Full-time Pre-Completion OPT Applications

- One official transcript (keep sealed in envelope)
- Copy of Academic Advisor’s letter indicating that you have finished all the degree requirements and only have the dissertation/thesis research remaining
Additional Materials for STEM Extension
Applicants Only

- One official transcript (keep sealed in envelope) or copy of diploma
- Optional: Any additional evidence that the employment is directly in the field of your STEM degree.

*STEM applicants do not need to include copies of previous I-20s*

Do not attach a copy of your I-983 to your application. It does not get mailed to USCIS.
Mailing the Application to USCIS
Don’t Forget Before you Mail:

• Insert a **copy** of the OPT I-20 you received in the application packet (on top of the previous I-20s)

• Make one complete copy of all application materials for your records. This may be helpful in case there are any questions while your application is in process.
Your application must be received by USCIS within **30 days** of creation of OPT I-20

The return address based on your current address of residence in the U.S.

**USCIS Address**

I-765/OPT
What is the differences between the USPS and private mailing services (FedEx, UPS, DHL)?

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries:
You use the U.S. Portal Service when you go to the Post Office. Make sure to get tracking!

For private mailing services and courier deliveries:
You must use a different address if you go to a STORE, like FedEx, UPS, or DHL.
The mailing address depends on the mail carrier you utilize:

**U.S. Postal Service (USPS)**
Attn: I-765 C03
P.O. Box 805373
Chicago, IL 60680-5374

**FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:**
USCIS
Attn: I-765 C03 (Box 805373)
131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor
Chicago, IL 60603-5517
After Applying
After filing your application to USCIS, you will receive a Receipt Notice within 5 weeks. Track the status of your case using the “Receipt Number” at https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do

If you do not receive the Receipt Notice within 5 weeks of filing, contact the USCIS National Customer Service Center at 1 (800) 375-5283

Save your receipt notice in a safe place, even after you have received your EAD card! It contains information that may be helpful for future applications (STEM, OPT, H1B, etc).
Linking your Mailed Application to a UScis Online Account

Did you know that if you mail your application, you can still connect the application to your UScis online account?

Create a UScis account at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/ and then add your paper filed case. You can then view notices and other information about your case online!
If you have questions about your OPT application or materials, please contact ISSS to schedule time with an advisor before mailing the packet.

It is recommended that you contact ISSS before sending in 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