Optional Practical Training: Form I-765 Online Filing Information

F-1 students have the option to file their Optional Practical Training (OPT) application online through USCIS’s application portal; this process is very similar to applying for OPT by mailing a paper application. The online OPT application has the same legal authority as the paper-based application.

If you are new to Optional Practical Training, please watch OIS’ online OPT presentations. Before starting USCIS’s online I-765 application, you MUST submit the Optional Practical Training e-form in My OIS. Please review these resources prior to emailing or scheduling an appointment with your Immigration Specialist.

- **Should students apply for OPT online?**
  - You should consider your own preferences and comfort using online application systems.
    - Most students have found the online system more efficient and easier to use.
  - USCIS has indicated that the online process should streamline processing times.
    - OIS can’t guarantee that the overall process will be faster.

- **Key differences between online and paper-based OPT / STEM OPT applications:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Paper-based</th>
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<tr>
<td>Form I-765 versions</td>
<td>Skips questions that do not apply to you.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Automatically uses most current version.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting materials</td>
<td>Users upload digital files.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application fee payment</td>
<td>Submitted online.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submitting application</td>
<td>ALL materials submitted online.</td>
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<tr>
<td>USCIS receipt confirmation</td>
<td>Immediately available.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Requests for Evidence (RFE)</td>
<td>Sent via email / text message.</td>
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**Form I-765 Online Filing Instructions and Notes:**

- To begin your application, you must create a USCIS account. USCIS offers a video tutorial.
  - You must specify that you are an F-1 qualified nonimmigrant student applying for OPT.
    - The specific eligibility categories for OPT are:
      - Pre-completion OPT (C3A)
      - Post-completion OPT (C3B)
      - STEM OPT (C3C)

- USCIS offers tips on filing online applications.
- When in doubt, follow the online form’s instructions. USCIS’ processes can change quickly.
- **NOTE:** Currently, OIS recommends signing your paper Form(s) I-20 in ink and creating digital versions to upload to the USCIS application portal.
  - You will have to upload the I-20 with your OPT / STEM OPT recommendation, and any other I-20s with previous work authorizations (CPT/OPT.) If you are missing previous CPT/OPT I-20s, contact your Immigration Specialist.
- Do not submit any information, or a duplicate application, to USCIS via mail.
- Your application is considered submitted when you pay via the Pay.Gov website. Therefore, make sure you have done a final check through your application before you pay.

Contact your Immigration Specialist if you have questions not addressed by this handout or any of its linked resources.