



OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

University Center for International Studies
University of Pittsburgh

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:**

	Online	Paper-based
Form I-765 versions	Skips questions that do not apply to you. Automatically uses most current version.	Use OIS' sample I-765 as guide. Must check USCIS' website to ensure that you use most recent version.
Supporting materials	Users upload digital files.	Must include paper copies.
Application fee payment	Submitted <i>online</i> .	Must include check, money order, or Form G-1450 (for credit/debit card payments).
Submitting application	ALL materials submitted online.	Use FedEx, UPS, or USPS mail with a tracking number to mail application materials.
USCIS receipt confirmation	<i>Immediately</i> available.	Paper receipt notice arrives within 3 weeks.
Requests for Evidence (RFE)	Sent via email / text message.	Sent via mail.

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.
 - i. The specific eligibility categories for OPT are:

Pre-completion OPT (C3A)	Post-completion OPT (C3B)	STEM OPT (C3C)
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- ☐ 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.