Preparing & Mailing Your OPT Application to USCIS

USCIS FORM & FEE INFORMATION

You must always check the edition date of the version of the I-765 and the filing fee before mailing your application: https://www.uscis.gov/i-765

- On the USCIS I-765 main page, you can confirm the current form and fee version under “Form Details.”
- When you download the I-765 form, you can view the version on the bottom left-hand corner of each page.

APPLICATION REMINDERS

- Request tracking of your application package when you mail your application.
- Make sure all pages of your application are printed single-sided and not stapled.
- You MUST be physically present in the U.S. in F-1 status to apply for OPT.
- At this time, the HIO strongly discourages the use of the USCIS online filing system for all Form I-765 OPT applications.
- Make a photocopy or scan of your entire application and retain it for your own records.

ASSEMBLE YOUR APPLICATION

- Personal Check or Money Order for $410 payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”.
- 2 recent passport pictures in an envelope, not previously used for OPT, visa or passport applications – label the back of your photos with your full name and SEVIS ID in pencil.
  - More information on Passport Photo Requirements can be found here: https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/photos/photo-examples.html
- Original Form G-1145
- Original Form I-765, signed and dated in black ink (NO ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES) – include ALL 7 pages of the I-765
  - Always confirm the current version of the form and filing fee before mailing your application: https://www.uscis.gov/i-765
- New Form I-20 with OPT recommendation. You must print the electronic OPT I-20 you received from the HIO. You must physically sign and date in black ink (NO ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES) your printed I-20. Put the signed and dated I-20 in your OPT application to USCIS.
- Photocopy of most recent I-94 record – www.cbp.gov/i94
  - If you travel before submitting your application to USCIS, but after you submitted your request to the HIO, include an updated I-94 record.
- Photocopy of most recent U.S. visa page in your passport (Canadians do not need to provide this)
- Photocopy of biographical page of your passport
- Photocopies of ALL past I-20s issued to you from all schools you have attended in the U.S. If you cannot locate I-20s from previous schools, please include a letter stating that you cannot locate them and provide dates of when you were at those schools. You may use this template: http://www.hio.harvard.edu/opt-missing-i-20-letter-template
- Photocopy of any USCIS approval notices from change of status applications (if applicable)
- Photocopy of any previously issued EAD (employment authorization document) (if applicable)
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APPLICATION WINDOW

YOUR APPLICATION MUST BE RECEIVED BY USCIS:

- **POST-COMPLETION**: No more than 90 days before your I-20 expiration date.
- **PRE-COMPLETION**: No more than 90 days before your requested OPT start date.
- No later than 30 days from the date the HIO advisor made the recommendation on your Form I-20 (date issued).
- Applications that arrive to USCIS outside this time period will be denied and you may not be able to reapply for the OPT authorization.

MAILING YOUR APPLICATION

*Mailing addresses can change without notice so you must check the USCIS site to view the most up-to-date instructions at the time you mail your application.

1. Go to [https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses](https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses)
2. Find section/tab labeled “Foreign Student”
3. Under Category Description, find “F-1 Optional Practical Training”
4. Under “Filing Location” find the USCIS Lockbox address(es). Must use a specific address depending on whether you use United States Postal Service (USPS) or a courier service (FedEx, DHL, UPS)
   - You must select a shipping option that guarantees a delivery date and provides proof of delivery. Keep clear records of your payment receipt and delivery confirmation.
   - If using USPS, do NOT use Certified Mail. Certified mail does not guarantee a delivery date.

ISSUES WITH YOUR APPLICATION

Please contact your HIO advisor directly about any of these issues before taking action on your own:

- You do not receive the USCIS Receipt notice within 60 days of the government receiving your application.
- USCIS returns your application to you for any reason, you will likely need a new I-20 so please contact the HIO.
- You receive a notice from USCIS requesting additional information (known as a Request for Evidence).
- You will not graduate as planned this semester.

The HIO provides general guidance on your OPT/STEM OPT application based on information obtained from reliable sources and reflecting our years of experience in working with students. We make every attempt to ensure that we provide you with the most up-to-date information available. Any advice provided to you by our office (as well as the information in this packet) does not constitute legal advice, however. The OPT application is a personal application for which you are responsible; the application preparation and USCIS case decision will vary depending on the facts at issue in your particular case. The HIO does its best to provide you with the most current guidance, but please be mindful that USCIS may change its interpretation of these policies, procedures, regulations, and eligibility requirements at any time. The HIO is not responsible for any errors or omissions, or for the results obtained from USCIS.