Guide to Completing Pre-Completion OPT I-765 Online



International Students and Scholars Office
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Instructions

Please note this presentation is for instructional purposes only. The following screenshots have been provided directly from USCIS. ISSO is not responsible for any changes made to the online application by USCIS.

Ultimately, it is your responsibility to carefully review the USCIS I-765 instructions and I-765 form, and to properly complete and file your application in a timely manner.

You must request an I-20 from ISSO before you begin the I-765 application.

Important Reminders

- Do not submit an online application if you have already filed by mail. Duplicate applications may be denied by USCIS.
- You may only file Form I-765 online from within the U.S. You are not eligible to apply for OPT from outside the country.
- While filing Form I-765 online may be quicker and easier than filing by mail, it does not speed up the time required for USCIS to adjudicate your application. See the USCIS website for current processing times.
- Once you submit your application, you cannot go back to edit or change information. Please contact an ISSO advisor immediately if you believe you have provided incorrect or incomplete information when filing Form I-765. Failing to do so can result in Requests for Evidence (RFEs), processing delays, or the denial of your application by USCIS.
- You can still choose to file your I-765 using the paper process. However, as noted above in point (1), please do not file using both methods.

Do I need an ISSO cover letter?

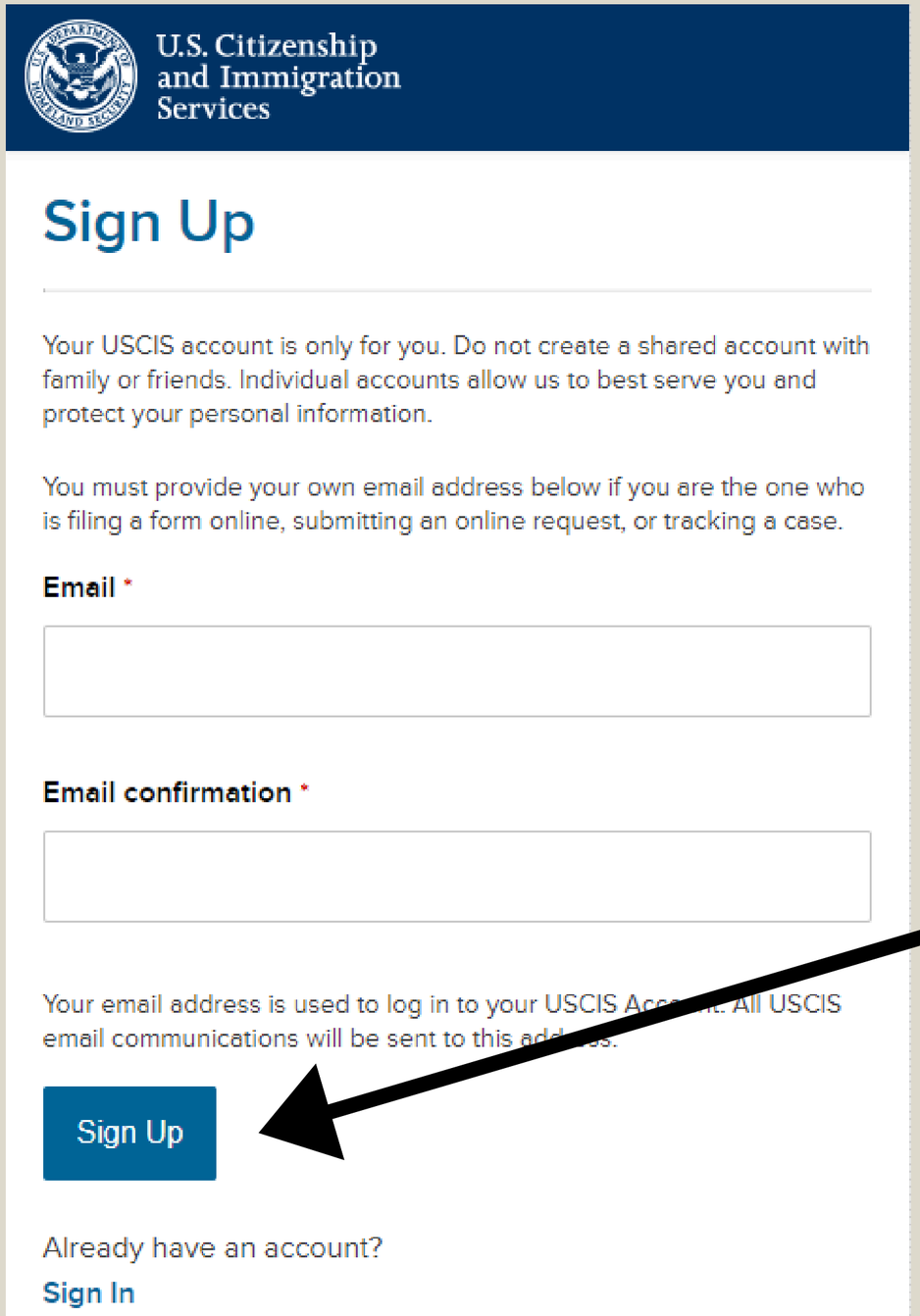
Unlike the Paper I-765, we do not recommend uploading the ISSO Cover Letter with your online application. The online application is intuitive so there are no inapplicable fields to worry about nor will it let you go on to the next screen if you've neglected to fill-in a required field.

Benefits of Filing Online

- All information is submitted online. There is no mailing or postage cost involved
- You must complete all required fields before the system will allow you to proceed. This may mean less chances that your application will be rejected due to incomplete information
- Immediate receipt number
- You can use the online portal to respond to Requests for Evidence (RFEs)
- Updating your address/contact information in profile is immediate
- Can sign up for alerts on case actions
- You can save your work and come back!!!

Pre- Completion OPT Application Checklist

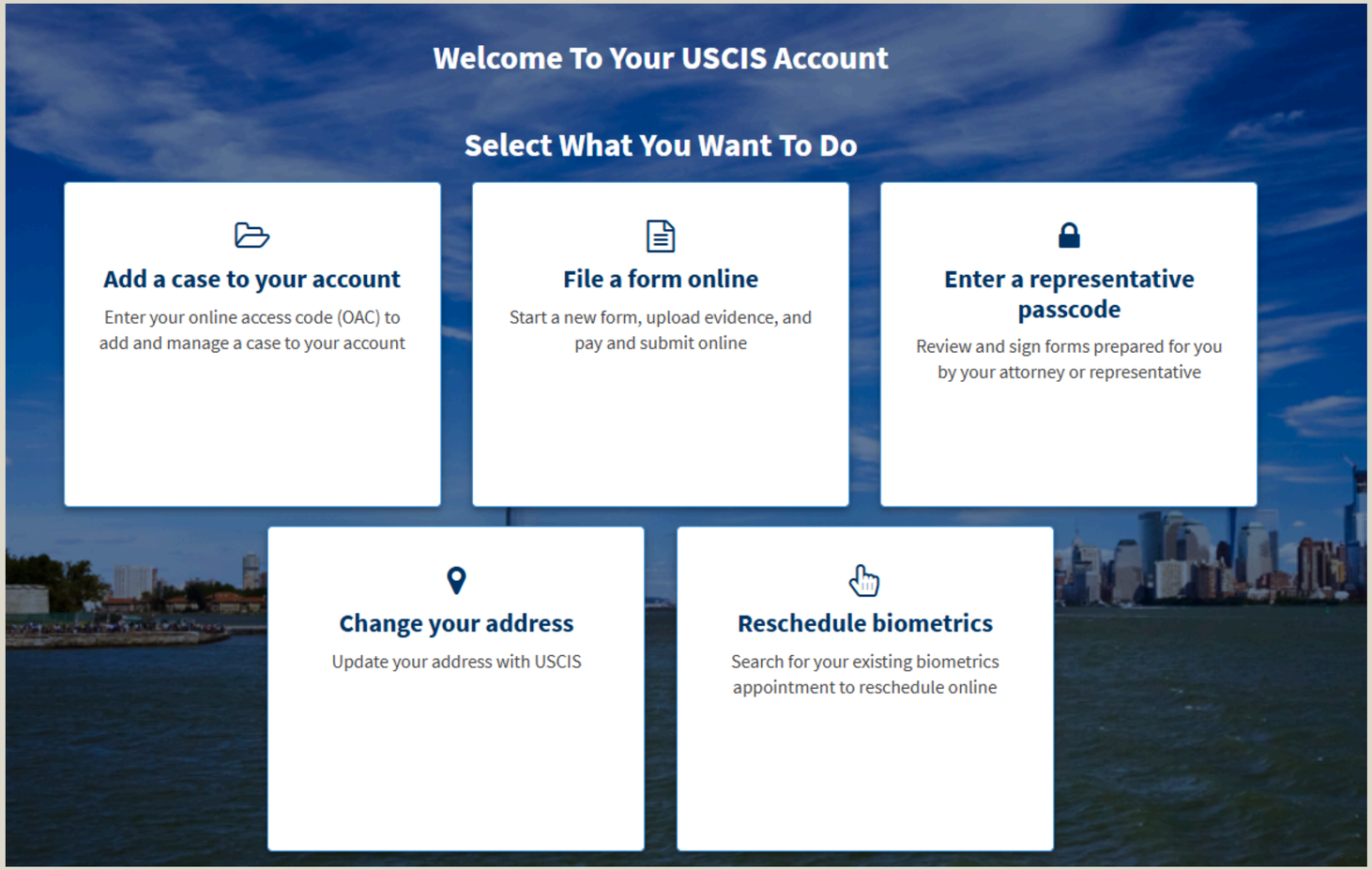
1. Two digital 2x2 color passport photo that meets USCIS specifications (taken in last 30 days)
2. A scan of your passport photograph page OR your most recent I-94 form
3. A digital copy of your I-20 with an OPT recommendation that was issued in the last 30 days for pre-completion OPT (MUST request this from ISSO before beginning I-765)
4. Enrollment Verification Letter
5. Your most recent form I-94 information
6. Your credit card, debit card, or account information with which you will pay the filing fee
7. A scan of any previous I-20s with CPT or OPT information (if applicable)
8. A scan of the front and back of any previous EAD cards (if applicable)



Step 1: Sign-in or create a USCIS Account

If you have previously created an account with USCIS, use that account to sign in. If not, use your UNC Charlotte email address to sign up.

Step 2: Click "File a form online"



File A Form

Once you start your form, we will automatically save your information for 30 days, or from the last time you worked on the form.

Select the form you want to file online.

- Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card (I-90)
- Request for a Hearing on a Decision in Naturalization Proceedings (N-336)
- Application for Naturalization (N-400)
- Application for Replacement Naturalization/Citizenship Document (N-565)
- Application for Certificate of Citizenship (N-600)
- Application for Citizenship and Issuance of Certificate Under Section 322 (N-600K)
- Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)

  Only certain F-1 students seeking optional practical training (OPT) may file Form I-765 online. This includes:

  - Pre-completion OPT - (c)(3)(A) eligibility category;
  - Post-completion OPT - (c)(3)(B) eligibility category; or
  - a 24-month extension for STEM students (students holding a degree in science technology, engineering, or mathematics) - (c)(3)(C) eligibility category.

  For all other eligibility categories, you must submit a paper Form I-765.
- Petition for Alien Relative (I-130)
- Application To Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status (I-539)

Start form

Step 3:

Select "Application for Employment Authorization" (I-765).


Step 4: Please be sure to read all the information on the *Completing Your Form Online* page, including required fee, processing times, and privacy notice. Once done reading, click "Start".
A Day In The Life of an ISSO Advisor: A Memoir
WHY INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ARE THE COOLEST STUDENTS ON CAMPUS

Step 5: Select Eligibility Category

What is your eligibility category?

You can file your request online only for certain eligibility categories

If your eligibility category does not appear on the drop-down list, you must file a paper Form I-765. If you submit online and are not eligible for one of the listed categories, your application may be denied.

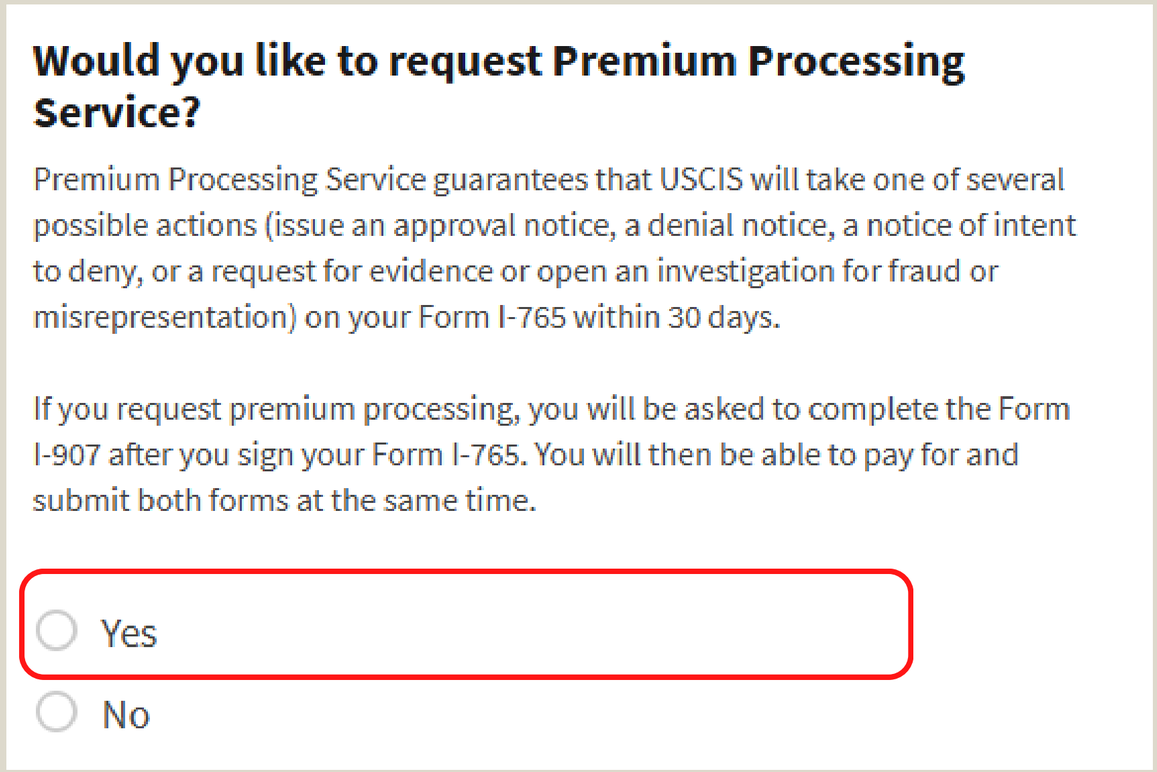
A(12) Temporary Protected Status Granted

c(3)(A) Student Pre-Completion OPT

c(3)(B) Student Post-Completion OPT

c(3)(C) STEM Extension

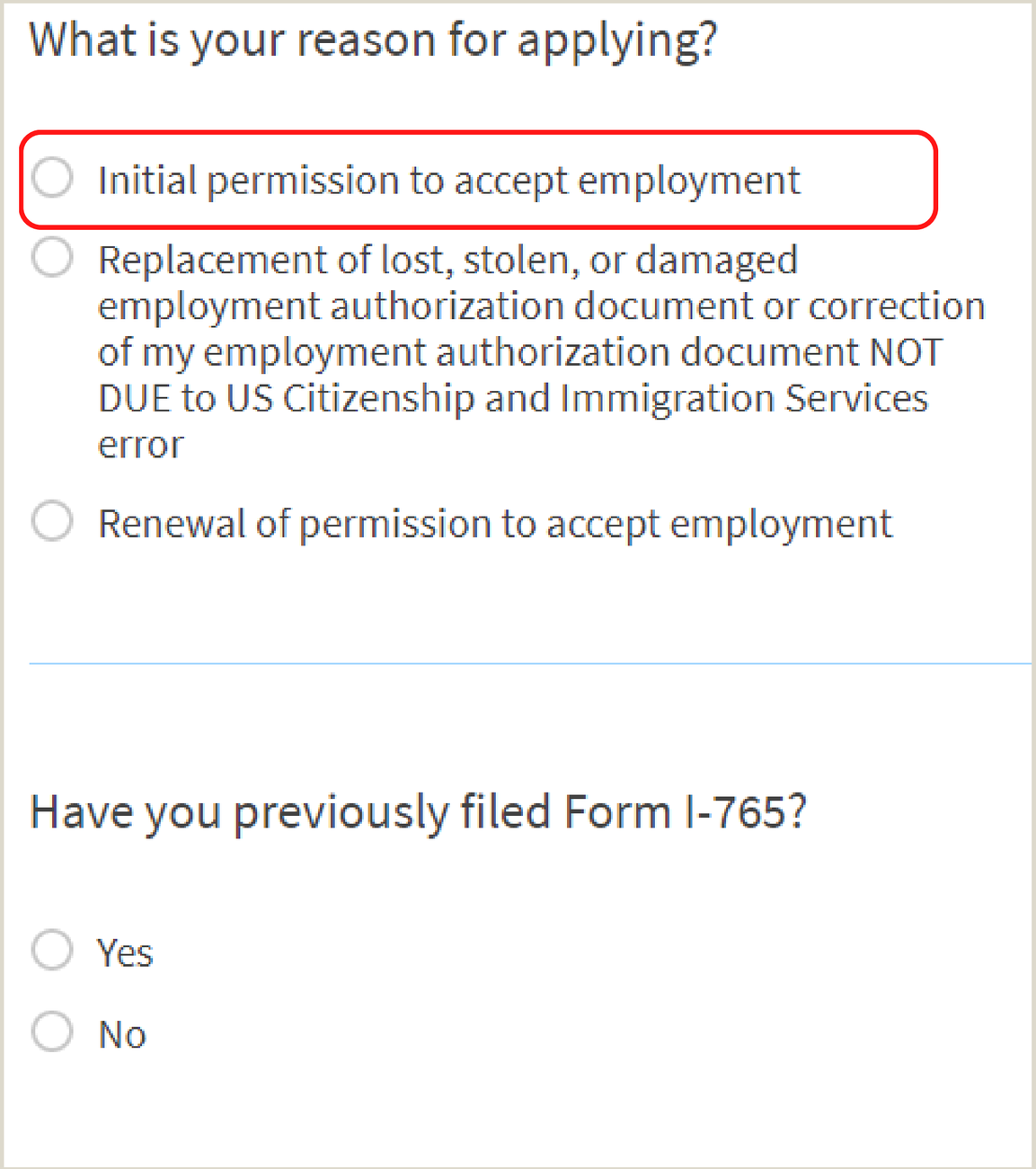
Choose c(3)(A) Student Pre-Completion OPT



Step 5b: Premium Processing

Premium Processing (PP) guarantees USCIS will process OPT applications within 30 calendar days of receiving the premium process request. The fee for Premium Processing can be found here.

You can discuss with an ISSO advisor before you apply for PP to see if it is the right decision for you.



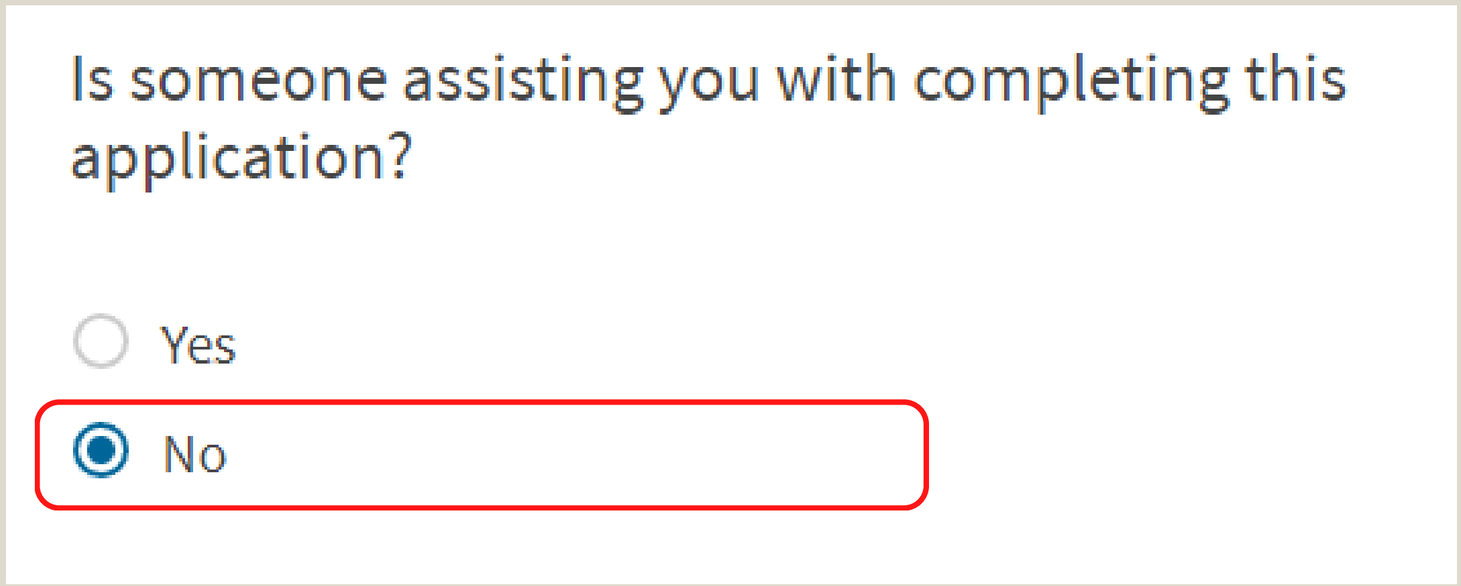
Step 7:
Reason for applying

Pre-Completion applicants should choose "Initial Permission to accept employment".

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 EAD card in the “Evidence” section.



Step 8:
Preparer and interpreter information

Select "no" unless someone (e.g., an interpreter) is assisting you with the application.

What is your current legal name?

Your current legal name is the name on your birth certificate, unless it changed after birth by a legal action such as marriage or court order. Do not provide any nicknames here.

Given name (first name)

Middle name

Family name (last name)

Have you used any other names since birth?

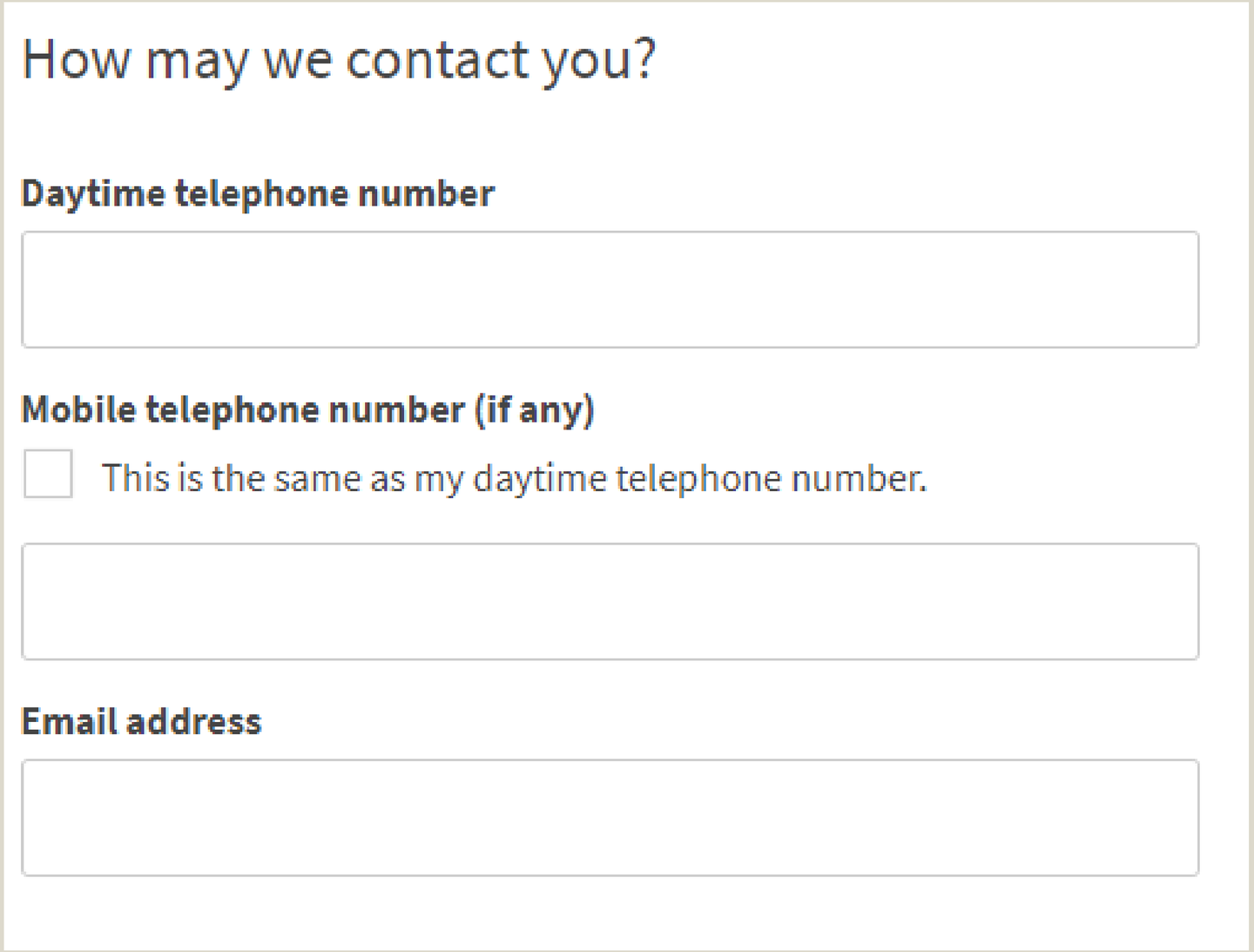
Other names used may include nicknames, aliases and maiden names.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

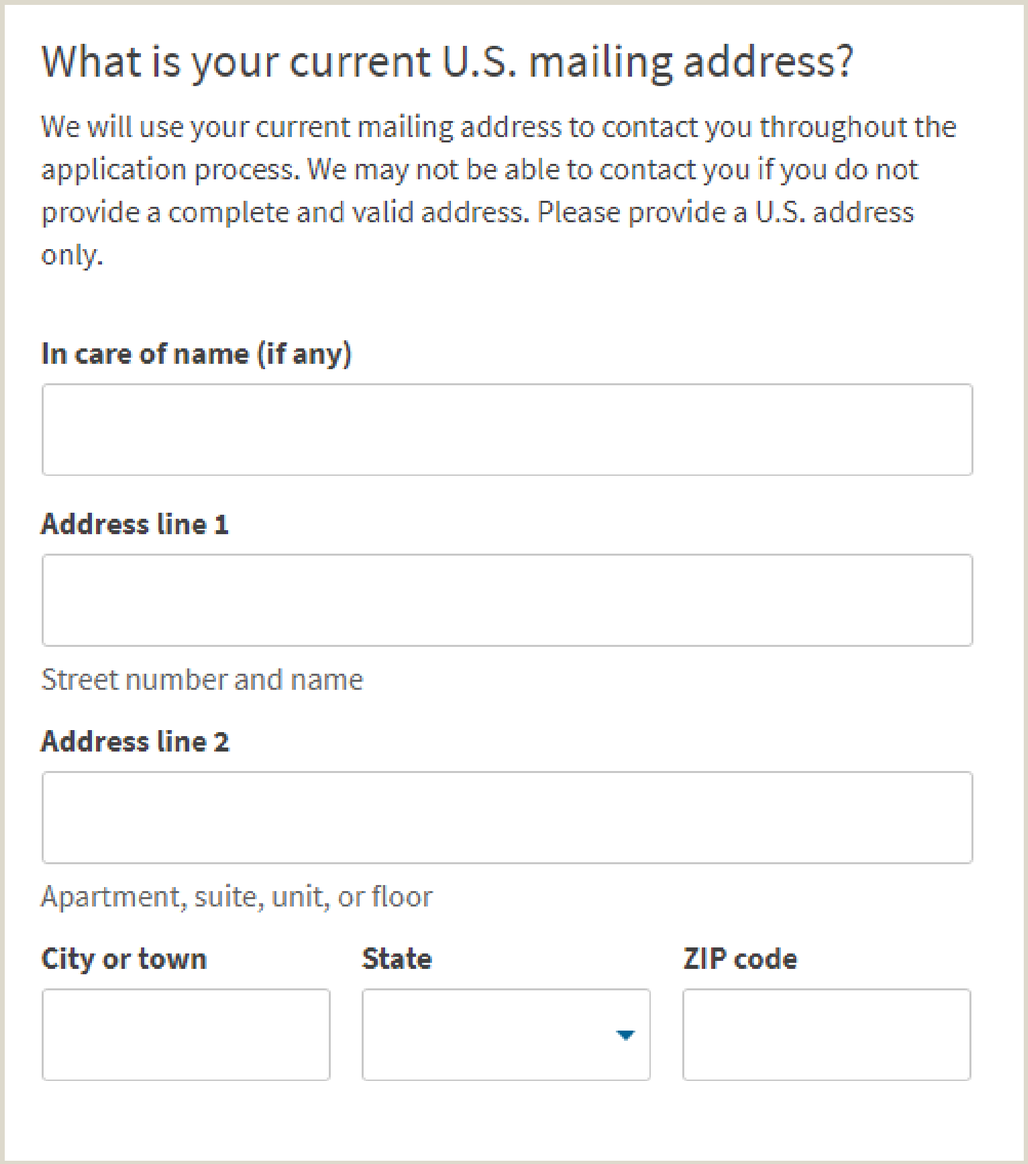
Step 9: Enter your full legal name(s)

Enter your full legal name used on your passport in this section. If you have used any prior names, be sure to select yes to the second question and enter all prior names.

(Other names would apply if you have legally changed your name, have gotten married, etc.)



Step 10:
Enter your phone number and email address



Step 11:
Enter your U.S. mailing address*

*If your current mailing address is not the same as your physical address, enter your physical address.

**This address is where your EAD card will arrive to.

What is your gender?

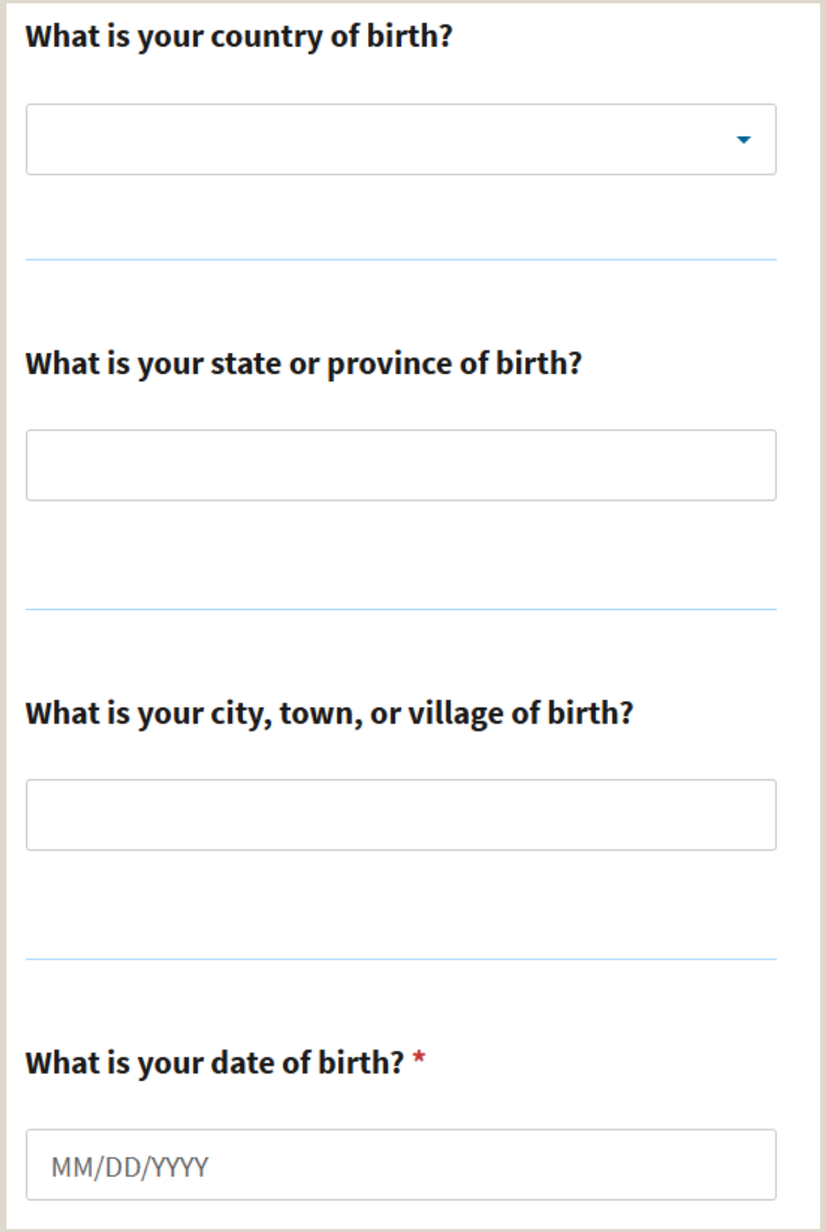
- Male
- Female

What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed

Step 12:

Select your gender and marital status



Step 13:
Enter your birth information

IMPORTANT

Be sure to enter your date of birth in **month/day/year format**. Incorrect date of birth formatting is one of the most common EAD card errors. As a reminder, errors caused by incorrect information provided on Form I-765 will require an additional filing fee.



Step 14:

Enter your country or countries of citizenship or nationality

What is your Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record Number (if any)?

When did you last arrive in the United States?

List your arrival date, place of arrival, and status at arrival.

Date of arrival

MM/DD/YYYY

Place of arrival

Status at last arrival

Step 15:
Enter information about your last entry to the U.S.

IMPORTANT

Access Your I-94 & Travel History Online

To retrieve your I-94 and travel history information, click **here**.

If you have trouble accessing your I-94 information, try your prior passport number(s), if possible. If you continue to have issues accessing your I-94 information, email your ISSO advisor.

What is the passport number of your most recently issued passport?

What is your travel document number (if any)?

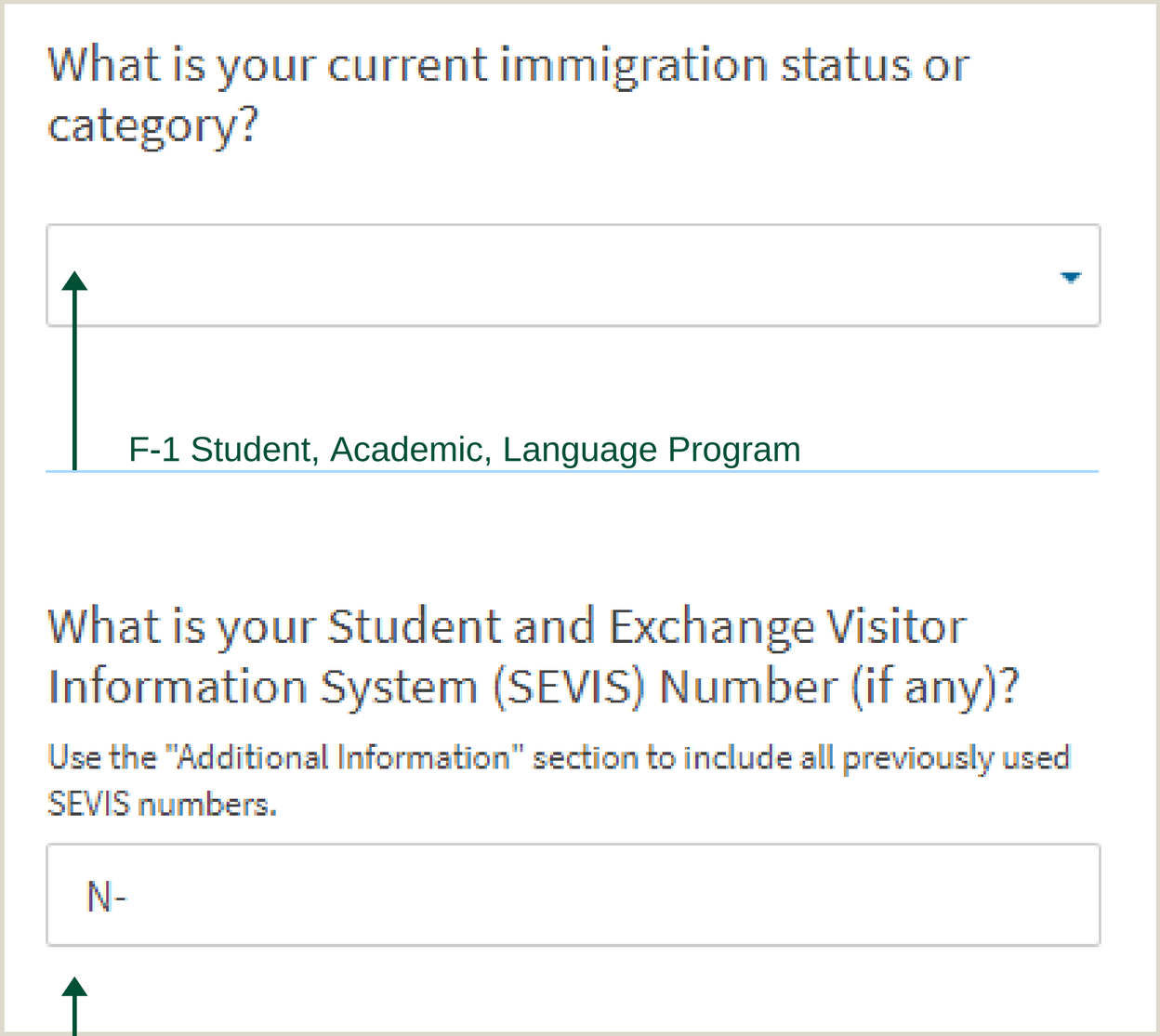
What is the expiration date of your passport or travel document?

MM/DD/YYYY

What country issued your passport or travel document?

Step 16:
Enter passport information

Most students do not have a travel document or travel document number so leave blank or enter "N/A". If you think you have a travel document, please contact your OPT advisor.



Step 17:

Enter your immigration status and SEVIS number

What is your A-Number?

☐ I do not have or know my A-Number.

A-

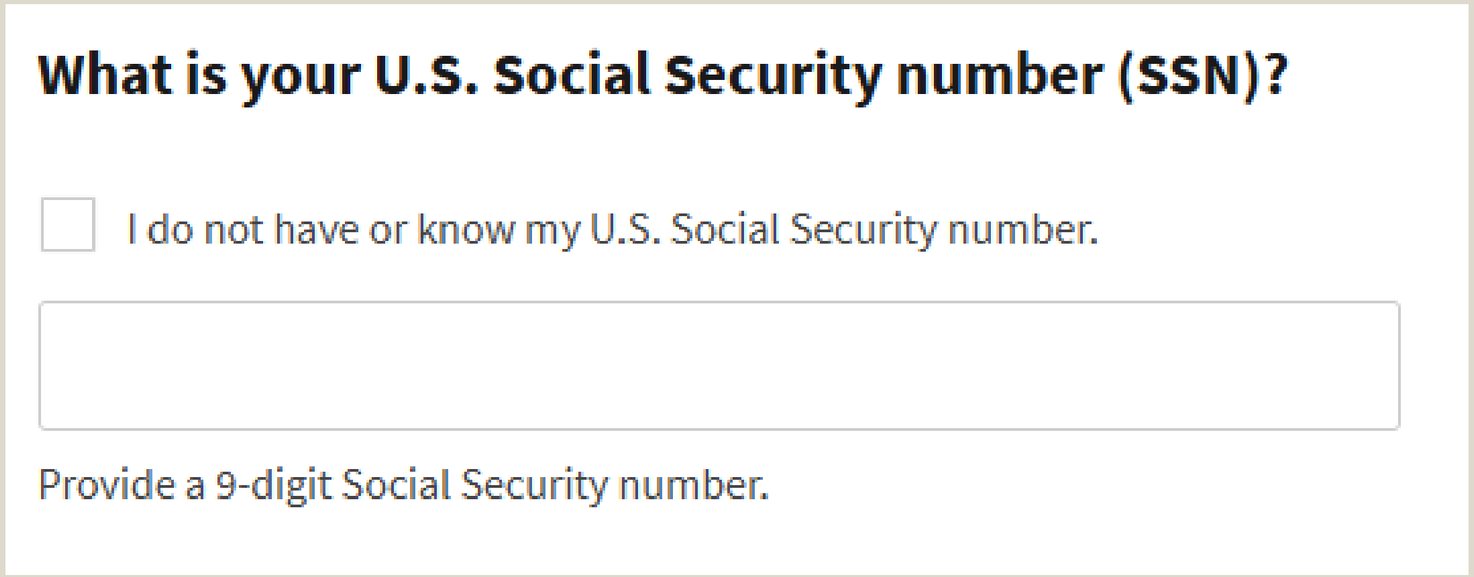
What is your USCIS Online Account Number?

Providing your unique USCIS Online Account Number (OAN) helps us manage your account. You may already have an OAN if you previously filed certain paper forms and received an Account Access Notice in the mail. You can find the OAN at the top of the notice; it is not the same as an A-Number.

☐ I do not have or know my USCIS Online Account Number.

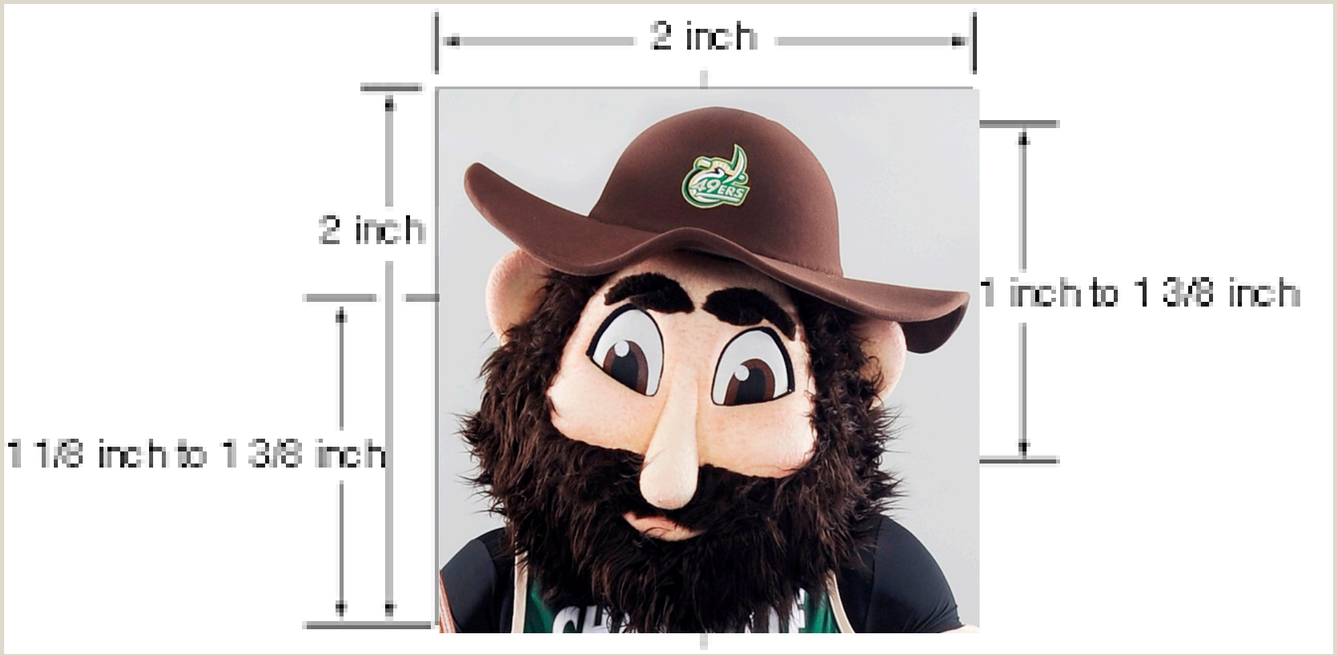
Step 18:
A-Number and USCIS Account Number

Most F-1 students do not have an A-Number or USCIS Online Account Number. If you do not, select the boxes that state you do not know or have the number.



Step 19:
Social Security Card Questions

If you do not have a U.S. Social Security Number, you will have to apply for one after your EAD card has arrived in the mail.



Step 20:
Upload 2x2 Color Passport Sized Photo

Passport photos can be taken at Union Station (on campus), USPS, or other drug stores

USCIS requires you either scan them in or take a picture with your phone and upload

I-94, Arrival And Departure Record

Upload a copy of one of the following:

- Your Form I-94, Arrival-Departure Record (front and back);
- A printout of your electronic Form I-94 ; or
- Your passport or other travel document.

If you were admitted to the United States by CBP at an airport or seaport after April 30, 2013, CBP may have issued you an electronic Form I-94 instead of a paper Form I-94. You may visit the CBP website to obtain a paper version of an electronic Form I-94. CBP does not charge a fee for this service. Some travelers admitted to the United States at a land border, airport, or seaport, after April 30, 2013, with a passport or travel document, who were issued a paper Form I-94 by CBP, may also be able to obtain a replacement Form I-94 from the CBP website without charge.

If your Form I-94 cannot be obtained from the CBP website, it may be obtained by filing Form I-102, Application for Replacement/Initial Nonimmigrant Arrival-Departure Record, with USCIS. USCIS does charge a fee for this service.

File requirements

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator's certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file

Choose or drop files here to upload

Step 21:
Upload I-94 record OR passport biographical page

IMPORTANT

Access Your I-94 & Travel History Online

To retrieve your I-94 and travel history information, click **here**.

If you have trouble accessing your I-94 information, try your prior passport number(s), if possible. If you continue to have issues accessing your I-94 information, email your ISSO advisor.

Employment Authorization Document Or Government ID

Upload a copy of your last Employment Authorization document (EAD) (front and back). If you were not previously issued an EAD, you must upload a copy of a government-issued identity document (such as a passport) showing your picture, name, and date of birth; a birth certificate with photo ID; a visa issued by a foreign consulate; or a national ID document with photo and/or fingerprint. The identity document photocopy must clearly show your facial features and contain your biographical information.

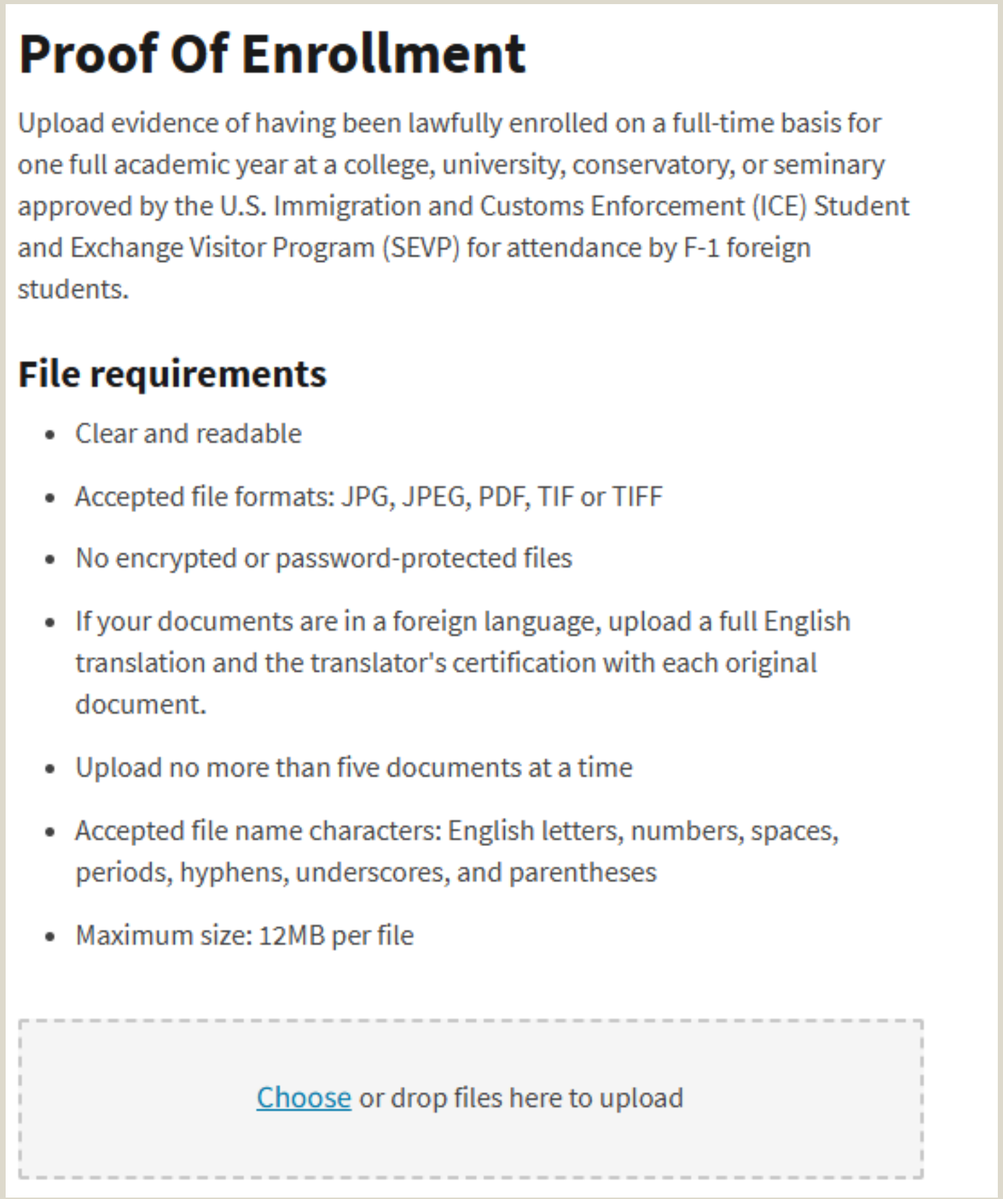
File requirements

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator's certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file

Choose or drop files here to upload

Step 22:
Upload Any Prior EAD Cards Issued By USCIS

If you have not been issued an EAD card before, you must upload a government issued identity document.
Example: Passport ID page, Visa, NC State ID, NC Drivers License



Step 23:
Upload Enrollment Verification Letter

Access your unofficial transcript HERE.

1. Log into MyCharlotte
2. Select Student Self Service
3. Select Student Profile in the Student Records section
4. Select Unofficial Transcript
5. Select the Transcript Level and the “Web Transcript” Transcript Type

Previously Authorized CPT Or OPT

Upload evidence of any previously authorized CPT or OPT and the academic level at which it was authorized.

File requirements

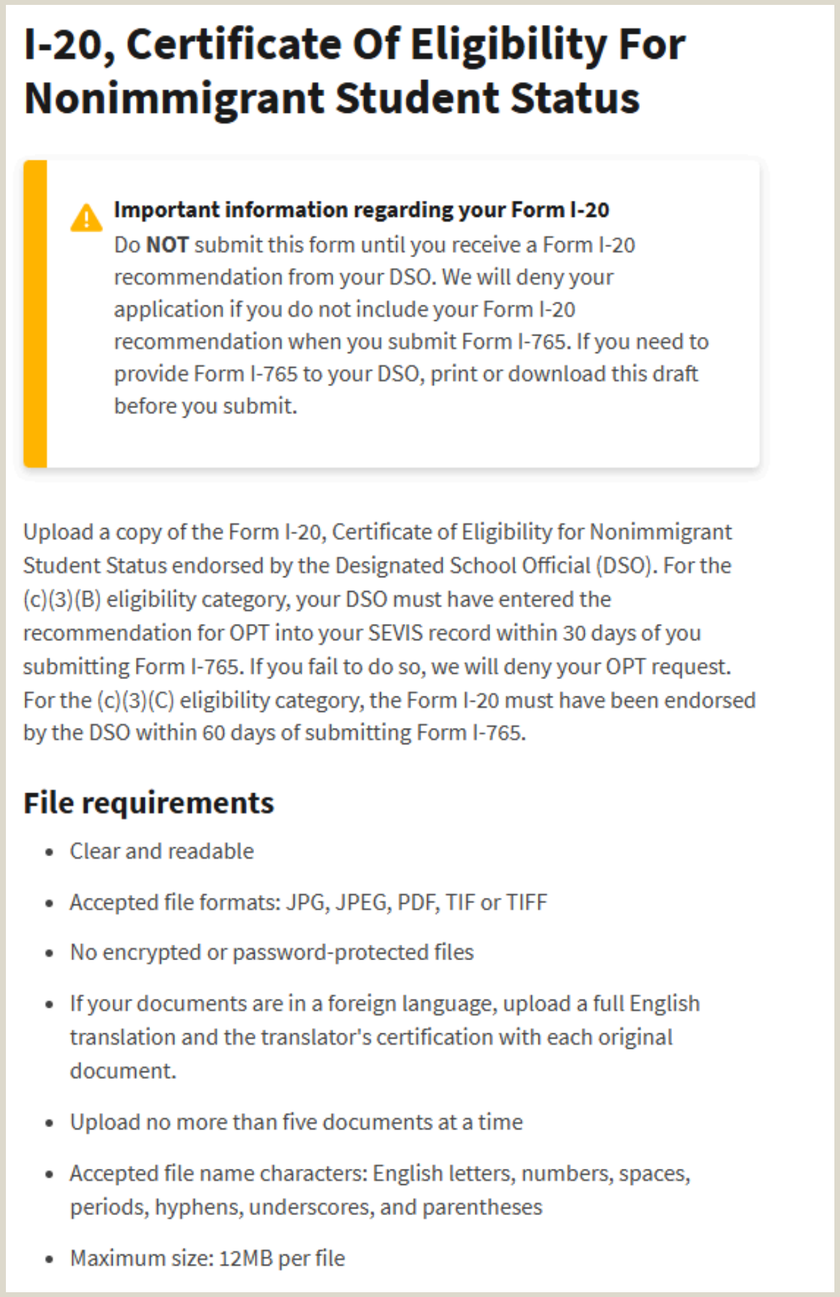
- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator's certification with each original document.
- Upload no more than five documents at a time
- Accepted file name characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 12MB per file

Choose or drop files here to upload

Step 24:

Upload evidence of prior approved OPT and/or CPT (past OPT approved I-20s/CPT I-20s suffice)

If you have not previously been authorized for OPT or CPT please do not upload anything.



I-20, Certificate Of Eligibility For Nonimmigrant Student Status

Important information regarding your Form I-20
Do **NOT** submit this form until you receive a Form I-20 recommendation from your DSO. We will deny your application if you do not include your Form I-20 recommendation when you submit Form I-765. If you need to provide Form I-765 to your DSO, print or download this draft before you submit.

Upload a copy of the Form I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status endorsed by the Designated School Official (DSO). For the (c)(3)(B) eligibility category, your DSO must have entered the recommendation for OPT into your SEVIS record within 30 days of you submitting Form I-765. If you fail to do so, we will deny your OPT request. For the (c)(3)(C) eligibility category, the Form I-20 must have been endorsed by the DSO within 60 days of submitting Form I-765.

File requirements

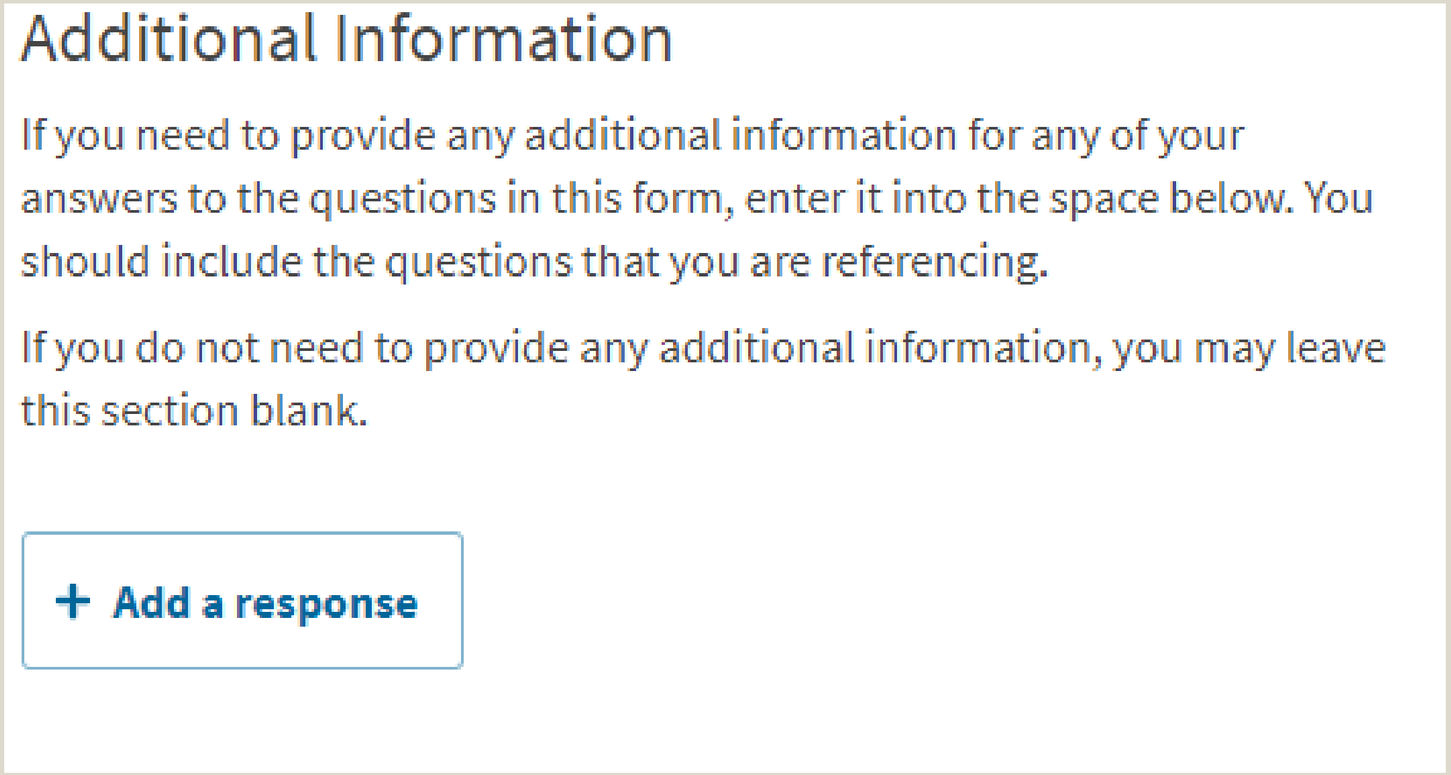
- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator's certification with each original document.
- Upload no more than five documents at a time
- Accepted file name characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 12MB per file

Step 25:

Upload Pre-Completion OPT-Requested I-20 given to you by the ISSO.

The ISSO advisor must have entered the recommendation for OPT into your SEVIS record within 30 days of you submitting Form I-765. Your application will be denied if it is submitted outside of the 30 days of issuance.

Don’t forget to sign your I-20…. IN BLUE PEN INK!!!!!!



Step 25:
Additional Information

SEE NEXT SLIDE IF YOU QUALIFY FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Section *

About You

Page *

Your immigration information

Question *

What is your current immigration status or category?

Additional information *

Previous H-4 Status
From 08/02/2017 to 04/29/2018
Exited US on 04/29/2018
or
Change of Status Approved on 04/29/2018

116/500

If you changed your visa status while a student (ex. H4 to F-1)

Section

Evidence

Page

College degree

Question

College Degree

Additional information

Previously enrolled at Cornell University, from
8/1/2011 5/15/2015
N009999999
Graduated on 5/15/2015
Bachelors in Mat Sci. Engineering
Transferred to UNC-Charlotte

195/500

If you have done a previous degree level in the US

Section *

About You

Page *

Your immigration information

Question *

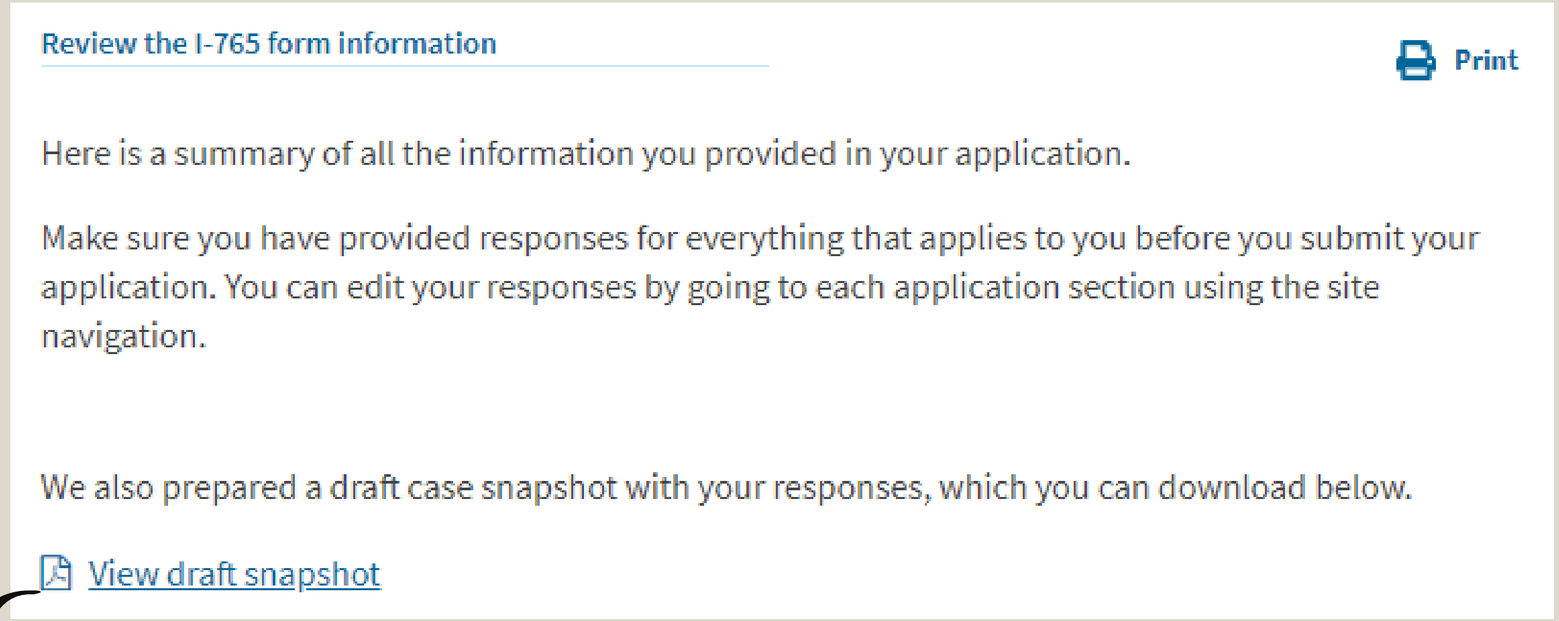
What is the passport number of your most recently i…

Additional information *

I most recently entered the U.S. on MM/DD/YYYY with passport ######## and was issued I-94 #######. Since this date, I have renewed my passport. The number of the new passport is ########.

187/500

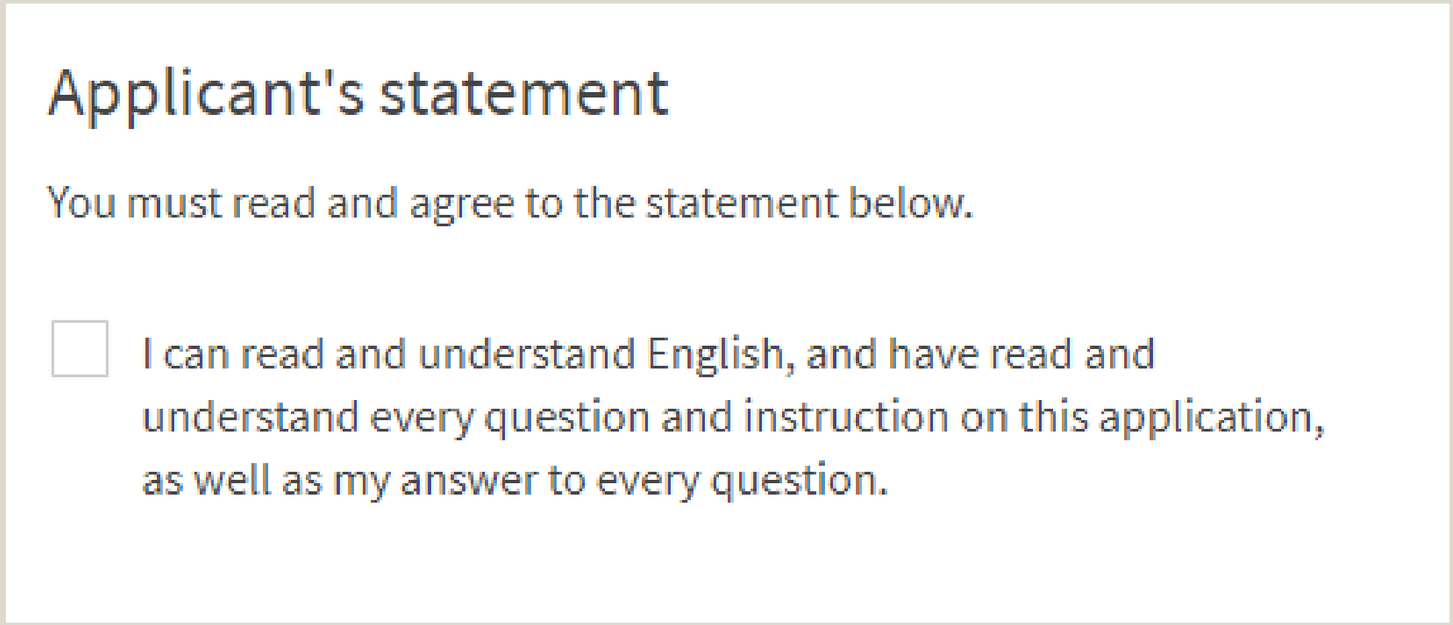
If you have renewed your passport since you last arrived in the US



View your draft snapshot and SAVE a copy of your application for your own records.

Step 26:
Review Application

Please triple check and review your application. The online I-765 form will indicate if there is any missing information.



Step 27:

Read and agree to the applicant's statement

Copies of any documents I have submitted are exact photocopies of unaltered, original documents, and I understand that USCIS may require that I submit original documents to USCIS at a later date. Furthermore, I authorize the release of any information from any and all of my records that USCIS may need to determine my eligibility for the immigration benefit that I seek.

I furthermore authorize release of information contained in this application, in supporting documents, and in my USCIS records, to other entities and persons where necessary for the administration and enforcement of U.S. immigration law.

I understand that USCIS may require me to appear for an appointment to take my biometrics (fingerprints, photograph, and/or signature) and, at that time, if I am required to provide biometrics, I will be required to sign an oath reaffirming that:

1) I reviewed and understood all of the information contained in, and submitted with, my application; and

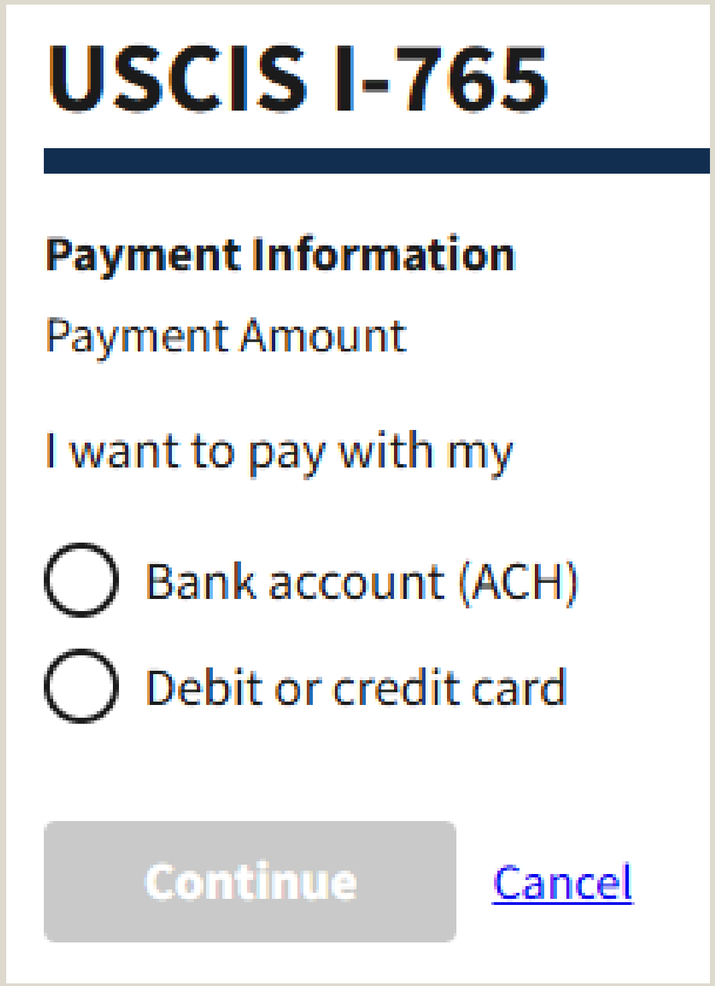
2) All of this information was complete, true, and correct at the time of filing.

I certify, under penalty of perjury, that all of the information in my application and any document submitted with it were provided or authorized by me, that I reviewed and understand all of the information contained in, and submitted with, my application, and that all of this information is complete, true, and correct.

☐ I have read and agree to the applicant's statement

Step 28:

Read and agree to the applicant's statement



Step 29:

Pay the $470 filling fee with either a bank account (account and routing number needed) or with a debit/credit card

Payment is taken the next business day, and must be within the 30 days of I-20 issue date

Step 30: Biometrics

On December 12, 2025, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) released a photo and biometrics update outlining new requirements for how photographs may be submitted and reused for immigration benefit applications. USCIS no longer accepts self-submitted photographs and is limiting when previously taken photos may be reused. USCIS now accepts only photographs taken at an Application Support Center (ASC) during a Biometrics Services Appointment (BSA), or by other USCISauthorized entities. This guidance is effective immediately and applies to all benefit requests filed on or after December 12, 2025.

Step 30: Biometrics

How the process works:



ASC Appointment Notice

CASE TYPE	NOTICE DATE
I765 - APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION	02/07/2026

APPLICATION/PETITION/REQUEST NUMBER	USCIS A#	CODE
IOE12345678		2

ACCOUNT NUMBER	TCR	SERVICE CENTER	PAGE
12345678		YSC	1 of 2

Norm Niner
9201 University City Blvd
Charlotte, NC 28223

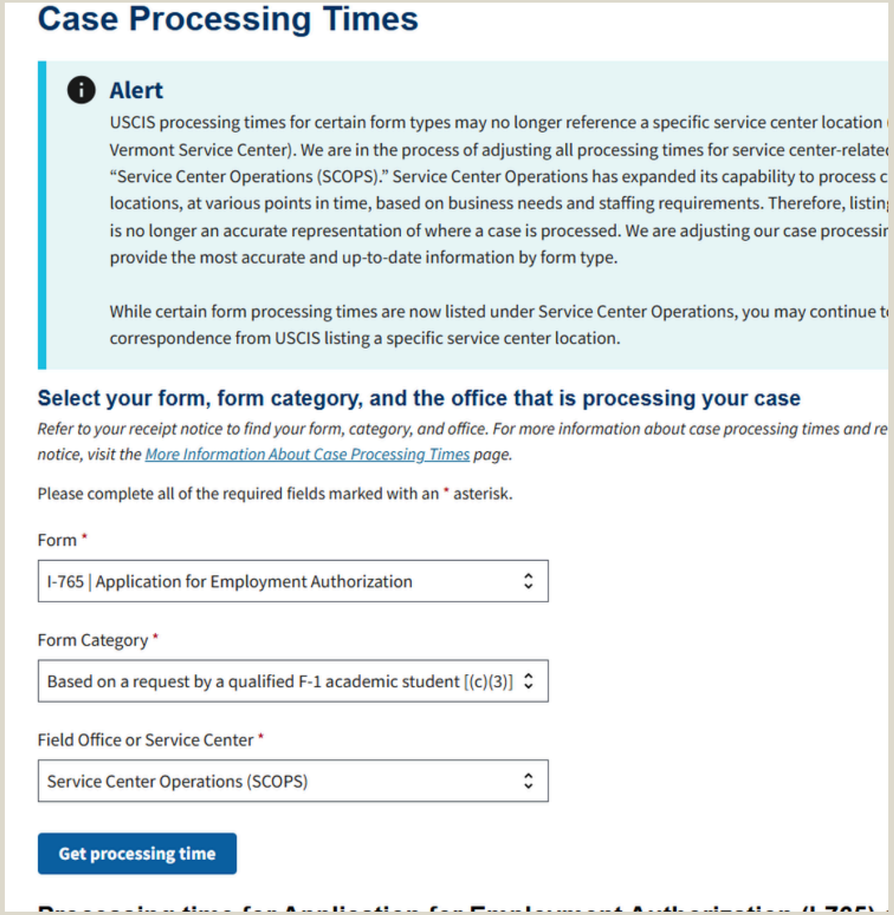
READ THIS ENTIRE NOTICE CAREFULLY. To process your application, petition, or request, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) must collect your biometrics. Please appear at the Application Support Center (ASC) at the date and time specified.
TO REQUEST THAT USCIS RESCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT, SEE THE INSTRUCTIONS AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS NOTICE. IF YOU FAIL TO APPEAR AS SCHEDULED, USCIS WILL CONSIDER YOUR BENEFIT REQUEST ABANDONED AND IT MAY BE DENIED.

APPLICATION SUPPORT CENTER	DATE AND TIME OF APPOINTMENT
USCIS CHARLOTTE 910 E Arrowood Rd Charlotte NC 28217	02/24/2026 03:00PM

1. You will be notified via your USCIS Account that you have received a request for a Biometrics Appointment.
2. Within a few days, you should receive the actual appointment information: time, date, location. The day of your appointment, do not enter the building more than 15 minutes before your appointment time.
3. What to bring to your appointment: passport, ASC Appointment Notice (appointment information), and completed Applicant's Information Worksheet (AIW, second page of your ASC Appointment Notice).
4. During the appointment, they will verify your identity by taking your photo, collecting your signature and possibly taking your fingerprints. Once you complete these steps, you are DONE! There is nothing to be uploaded after this.
5. You should receive a USCIS case decision in the next few weeks.

Students have reported that these appointments take less than an hour to be completed. This will now be the new normal for OPT and STEM OPT applications that are pending with USCIS so please be mindful to check your USCIS online account periodically.

Check USCIS processing times for Form I-765: (click picture)



Case Processing Times

Alert

USCIS processing times for certain form types may no longer reference a specific service center location (
Vermont Service Center). We are in the process of adjusting all processing times for service center-relate
"Service Center Operations (SCOPS)." Service Center Operations has expanded its capability to process c
locations, at various points in time, based on business needs and staffing requirements. Therefore, listin
is no longer an accurate representation of where a case is processed. We are adjusting our case processir
provide the most accurate and up-to-date information by form type.

While certain form processing times are now listed under Service Center Operations, you may continue t
correspondence from USCIS listing a specific service center location.

Select your form, form category, and the office that is processing your case

*Refer to your receipt notice to find your form, category, and office. For more information about case processing times and re
notice, visit the More Information About Case Processing Times page.*

Please complete all of the required fields marked with an * asterisk.

Form *

I-765 | Application for Employment Authorization

Form Category *

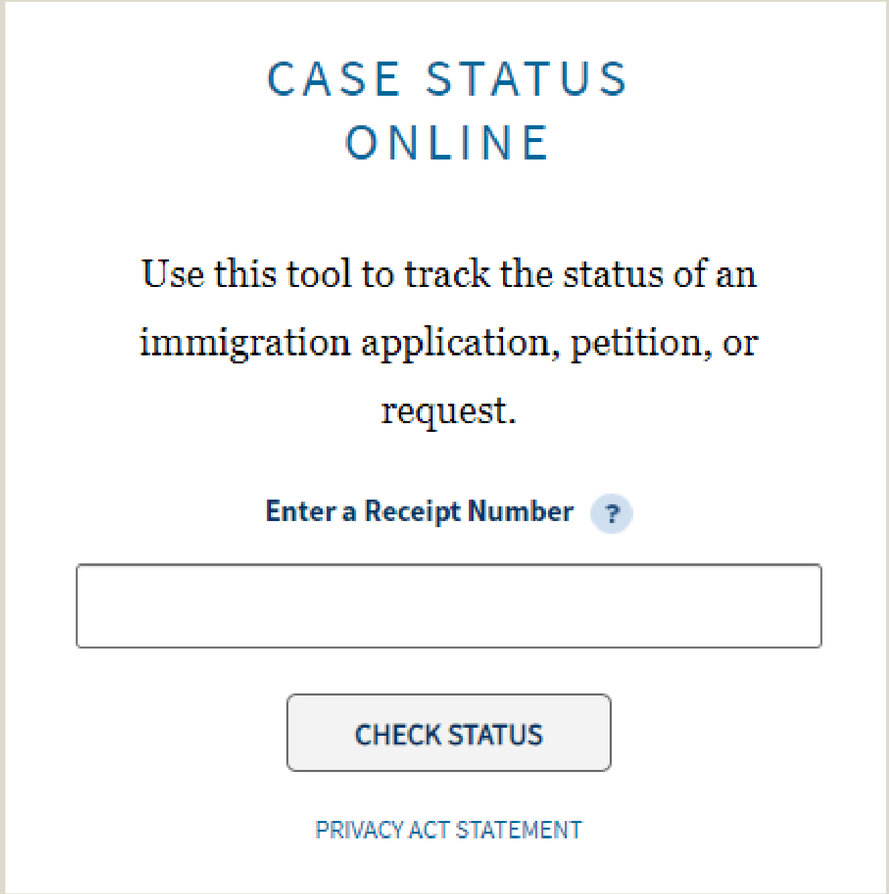
Based on a request by a qualified F-1 academic student [(c)(3)]

Field Office or Service Center *

Service Center Operations (SCOPS)

Get processing time

How to check the status of your case: (click picture)



CASE STATUS ONLINE

Use this tool to track the status of an immigration application, petition, or request.

Enter a Receipt Number ?

CHECK STATUS

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT


Congratulations- you just successfully applied for OPT online! ISSO sends you best wishes while you wait for approval.
Wow, thanks ISSO for walking us through it step by step! I will be sure to check my case status routinely and email you if I have any questions!