How F-1 Students Seeking Optional Practical Training Can Avoid Form I-765 Delays

If you are an F-1 student seeking optional practical training (OPT), here are tips to help you avoid U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) processing delays with your Form I-765, *Application for Employment Authorization*.

➢ **Check USCIS' website for updates before you submit Form I-765.** USCIS sometimes updates its forms, filing guidance, fees, or filing locations. Checking its website will allow you to see the most up-to-date instructions you need to follow. You can also sign up for USCIS' form update emails. USCIS may reject your form if you do not follow the most current guidance.

➢ **Make sure Form I-20, *Certification of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status*, is signed, dated, and endorsed for employment authorization.** You and your designated school official (DSO) must both sign and date the *School Attestation* and *Student Attestation* sections on the first page of Form I-20.

➢ **Apply online.** Here are some of the many benefits of filing online:

- USCIS receives online forms faster than paper forms. When you submit your Form I-765 online, USCIS will issue you an electronic receipt notice with a receipt number immediately.

- You can see all notices in your USCIS online account under the "Documents" tab, such as a request for evidence or a decision notice. USCIS will still mail these notices to you as well (and to your attorney if you have one).

- In your online account profile, you can sign up to receive automatic case updates via email or text message so you will know when USCIS has taken action on your case. Having easy access to all USCIS correspondence is one of the best benefits of filing online.

- You can update your mailing and physical address through your USCIS online account.

➢ **Submit your Form I-765 within 30 days or 60 days of the *Date Issued* by the DSO on the Form I-20.** The DSO must indicate on the second page of the Form I-20 whether you are seeking OPT or an OPT extension for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) students.

- If you are seeking OPT, you must submit your Form I-765 within 30 days of the *Date Issued*.

- If you are seeking a STEM OPT extension, you must submit Form I-765 within 60 days of the *Date Issued*.

➢ **Submit a properly completed Form I-20 together with Form I-765 at the same time.** You can upload the Form I-20 when submitting Form I-765 online. If you experience technical difficulties, you can also upload the Form I-20 as unsolicited evidence under the "Documents" tab in your USCIS online account before USCIS begins adjudicating your Form I-765. USCIS will deny your Form I-765 if you do not include a Form I-20 that has been signed and properly endorsed for the type of work authorization requested.

➢ **Update your mailing address with both USCIS and the U.S. Postal Service (USPS).** Changing your address with USPS will *not* change your address with USCIS. You must update your address with both agencies separately.

- To update your address with USCIS, go to its How to Change Your Address page. Follow the instructions on the webpage to update your address on all your pending cases. Update your address as soon as possible to ensure USCIS mails your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) to the correct address. USPS will not forward your EAD to a new address.

- To update your address with USPS, go to its Official USPS Change-of-Address page.
- Display your name on or in your mailbox. USPS will not deliver your EAD if your name is not listed on the mailbox.

You may also want to register for Informed Delivery through USPS to get previews of your mail in transit. Please note that USPS only keeps tracking information for 120 days.