

## USCIS Expands Online Filing to F-1 Students Seeking OPT

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The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that F-1 students seeking optional practical training (OPT) can now file Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization online if they are filing for: pre-completion OPT, post-completion OPT, or STEM OPT. The online filing option comes in the midst of USCIS' significant backlogs in issuing receipt notices and adjudications for these types of applications.

The update is particularly useful for students seeking STEM OPT employment authorization, who are permitted to establish employment authorization for Form I-9 purposes by presenting an expired OPT EAD card with Form I-20 endorsed by the student's designated school official, but require evidence that the STEM OPT application was timely filed to get the endorsed Form I-20. By filing online, students should receive electronic filing receipts quickly and be able to use these receipts to confirm filing to their designated school officials; thereby being able to secure STEM OPT employment authorization even prior to receiving the official STEM OPT EAD card.

Finally, the option to file Form I-765 online is only available to F-1 students seeking OPT-based employment authorization. USCIS will deny any online applications for non-OPT categories and retain related fees.

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