JMU Center for Global Engagement
International Student & Scholar Services
Holland Yates Hall | 800 South Main St., MSC 5731, Harrisonburg, VA 22807 | 540-568-5209 | isss@jmu.edu

Optional Practical Training: Post-Completion OPT

Optional Practical Training (OPT) provides an F-1 visa holder with an opportunity to gain 12 months of employment experience in his/her major area of study (with an option for a 24-month extension for STEM majors). The 12 months can be used all at once or in increments before graduation, using Pre-Completion OPT, or after graduating, using Post-Completion OPT. If you have used any Pre-Completion OPT time, you will have that amount of time *less* after graduation on Post-Completion OPT. Example: 3 months of Pre-Completion OPT = 9 months of Post-Completion OPT.

Employment while on OPT must be related to your major field of study. A job offer is not required to apply for OPT, but you must obtain authorization by USCIS prior to beginning employment. OPT is granted for specific dates and cannot be adjusted after it is approved. Once the application is submitted, please allow 90 days for processing.

There are three types of OPT: pre-completion, post-completion, and STEM Extension. The information in this document is for Post-Completion OPT only.

For more information, please visit the USCIS website on OPT.

Post-completion OPT is used after the F-1 visa holder has completed his/her program of study, however it is recommended that you apply 90 days before the program end date on your I-20 form. You may apply for Post-completion OPT up until 60 days after the program end date listed on your I-20, though this is not recommended.

To apply for Post-completion OPT: submit the Anticipated Degree Verification letter request form to the Registrar's Office, then prepare all of the documents as outlined in this packet. Complete the OPT Request application in the ISSS Student Portal (Terra Dotta) to get your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, in order to complete the OPT application process online.

The government takes at least 3 months to process OPT applications, which is why it is important to ***plan ahead!***

Post-Completion OPT Online Application Process

STEP 1 Submit **Anticipated Degree Verification** letter request (page 6) to the Registrar's Office

Once you submit the letter request to the Registrar's Office, you can begin Step 2 (below). When ISSS receives the Degree Verification letter from the Registrar, ISSS will upload the letter into your OPT Request.

STEP 2 Submit the **OPT Request** through the ISSS student portal (Terra Dotta)

You will need to pick a start date within the 60 days after the Program End Date on your I-20 form. See OPT Timeline in this packet (page 5).

Once approved, you will receive an OPT-endorsed I-20 from your ISSS advisor. This needs to be submitted within 30 days of your advisor's signature.

STEP 3 Begin OPT application by working on the **I-765 Form online** through the USCIS Portal

STEP 4 **Have ISSS check your I-765 Form**

It is strongly recommended that an ISSS advisor review your I-765 Form, especially if you have questions or concerns about the information you are submitting. Before submitting payment, you will be able to download a "Draft Snapshot" – send that PDF to ISSS for review.

STEP 5 Submit payment for **application fee = submit I-765 Form**

Once payment is submitted, your application has been submitted to USCIS! You will not be able to edit your application after you submit payment. The application fee is non-refundable and, if you need to submit the application again, you will need to pay the application fee again.

NOTE: if you submit the application without the valid OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, your application will be denied and you will need to apply again.

Advising available throughout process!

In-person: bring your laptop

Virtual: screen share capabilities

Documentation checklist for Post-Completion OPT application online:

- ☐ Screenshot or PDF of your most recent **I-94 Arrival Record**, which can be retrieved online
- ☐ Scans of front and back of any previous **Employment Authorization Document (EAD)** card(s), if previously issued
- ☐ Scans of previous CPT-endorsed and OPT-endorsed **I-20s**, if applicable
- ☐ Scan of **OPT-endorsed I-20 Form** (you will get this from ISSS)
- ☐ **Passport-sized photo** (2 inches by 2 inches) taken in the past 6 months, not used before
  - See additional specifications in application or Completion Guide below.
- ☐ Credit card, debit card, or bank routing information to pay the **$470.00 application fee**

Use the Completion Guide to help you complete the online I-765 application.

After OPT is filed:

You should receive three documents from USCIS:

1. Receipt notice (issued immediately after submitting online)
2. Approval notice
3. EAD Card (normally within 1-2 weeks after receiving the approval notice; scan front and back of the card to ISSS for your immigration file)

➔ If you receive an R.F.E. (Request for Evidence), contact ISSS immediately.

Employment Reminders

- You MAY NOT work before you receive the EAD card or before the start date on the EAD card.
  - You should receive the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) within 3-4 months from the date on the receipt notice. If it is not received in this time, contact ISSS.
- Employment must be directly related to your major field of study.
- You may not be unemployed for more than **90 days** in total while on OPT. If you have been unemployed for more than 90 days on OPT, then you will need to leave the U.S.
- Volunteering/working an unpaid internship for more than 20 hours per week in your major field of study may be considered employment.

➔ *Any violation of these and other employment regulations can cause your immigration status to be terminated.*

Reporting Requirements

While on OPT, you will remain in F-1 status under the sponsorship of James Madison University and, as such, you must maintain your immigration status:

- ➔ Report **employer name** and **address**, **part-time** (less than 20 hours per week) or **full-time** employment (20-40 hours per week), and **start date** to SEVIS through your SEVIS Portal Account as soon as you start employment.
  - You will need to provide a statement about how employment is related to your major.
- Update your SEVIS record of a change in employment immediately and report all criteria listed above, including end date of previous employment.
- Update your SEVIS record of a change of name or address within 10 days of the change.
- Keep all immigration documents safe and in valid status.

➔ *Any violation of these and other regulations can cause your immigration status to be terminated.*

Travel

Before departing the U.S., it is strongly recommended that you contact ISSS about your particular travel situation, as every situation is unique. Below are general guidelines to consider before departing the U.S. while on OPT.

Items needed for entry to the U.S. while on OPT:

- A valid passport; valid at least 6 months into the future

- A valid F-1 visa to reenter the U.S.
- Your most recent Form I-20 with travel signature from an ISSS staff member
- Your valid EAD (Employment Authorization Document)
- Letter for proof of employment

➔ **It is strongly suggested that you DO NOT travel outside of the U.S. while your OPT application is pending and before you secure employment.**

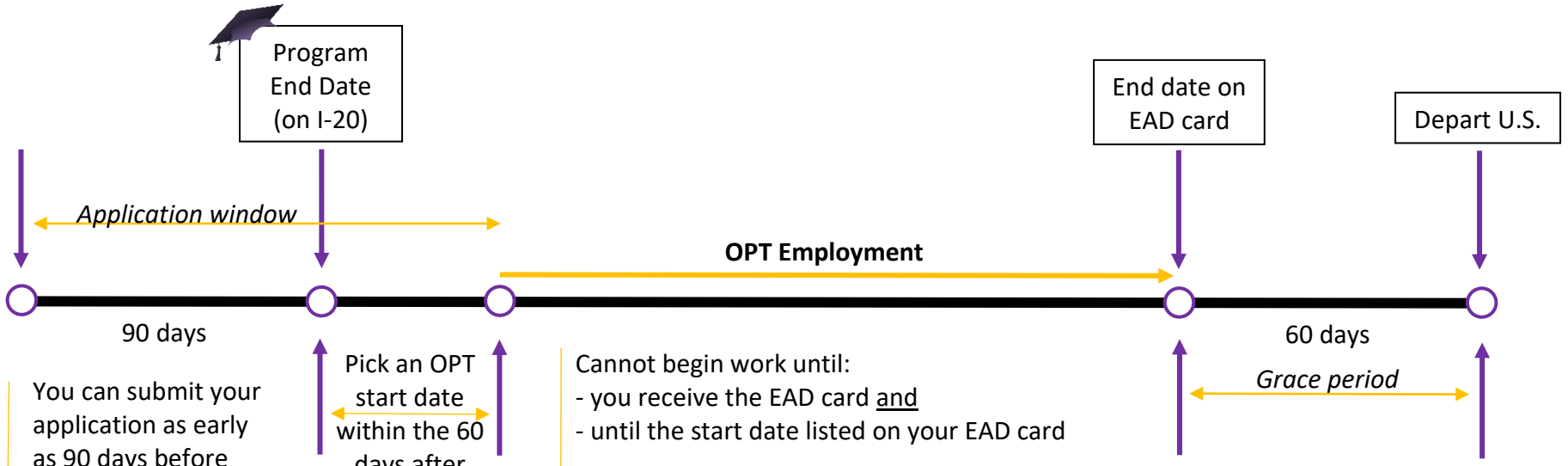
If you intend to leave the U.S. permanently, inform ISSS of your departure date.

The following two questions are of particular interest while traveling on OPT. The answers are from the ICE website on Travel. Again, consult the ISSS staff before traveling.

1. Can I reenter if my request for Post-Completion OPT is pending?
   Yes, but traveling during this time should be undertaken with caution. USCIS may send you a request for evidence while you are away, however, so you would want to make sure you have provided a correct U.S. address both to your DSO and on the application and would be able to send in requested documents. Also, if USCIS approves your OPT application, you will be expected to have your EAD in hand to re-enter the United States. Like a request for further information, USCIS can only send the EAD to your U.S. address.
2. Can I reenter if I left while on Post-Completion OPT?
   If USCIS has approved your OPT you will be expected to have your EAD in hand to re-enter the United States, in addition to your Form I-20, valid passport and visa, and a letter of employment... If you exceed the limits on unemployment while outside the United States, you will not be eligible to re-enter the United States in F-1 status.

https://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel

Post-Completion OPT Timeline



You can submit your application as early as 90 days before graduation.

Allow for at least 90 days for government processing.

You may apply up to 60 days after graduation.

Cannot begin work until:
- you receive the EAD card and
- until the start date listed on your EAD card

Cannot accrue more than 90 days of unemployment. Report employer name, address, and start date.

Report any change of address or employment.

If eligible, apply for STEM Extension *before* expiration of EAD card.

Stop working by end date on EAD card

Use grace period to prepare to leave the U.S., transfer to a new school, or change to another immigration status.

If you are staying in the U.S. for the grace period, you cannot re-enter the U.S. after leaving.

JMU Center for Global Engagement

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Enrollment Verification Request

PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY:

Name: _____ Student ID #:_____

Phone: _____ Email: _____@dukes.jmu.edu Date of Birth: _____

Expected Graduation Date (Month/Year) _____ Number of Copies 1

- *Future enrollment cannot be verified*
- *Verifications cannot be emailed*
- *Normal processing time is within five business days*

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(1) Request Information:

☐ Complete the form I provided (Must complete all student portions and sign before submitting)
☐ Provide me a Letter of Enrollment
☐ Provide me a Letter of Enrollment for Military I.D. Renewal
☐ International Invitation to Commencement (Must provide full names and relationship to the student)
☐ Degree Verification (JMU degree is conferred on student's transcript)
☑ Anticipated Degree Verification (Applied to graduate and on track pending successful completion of enrolled courses)
☐ Other (Please explain) _____

(2) Please check which semester(s) you are requesting verification for:

☑ Current semester
☐ Pre-registration for upcoming semester
☐ Past semester(s): _____

(3) Delivery Information (Verifications will NOT be emailed):

☐ Hold for Student Pick Up (Student must present valid ID or JACard when picking up the verification)
☐ I authorize the following individual to pick up my verification on my behalf _____
☐ Fax: (____) _____ ATTN: _____ Re: _____

☑ Mail: Recipient's Name: International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS)

Street Address: _____

City, State: _____ Country: _____ Zip Code: _____

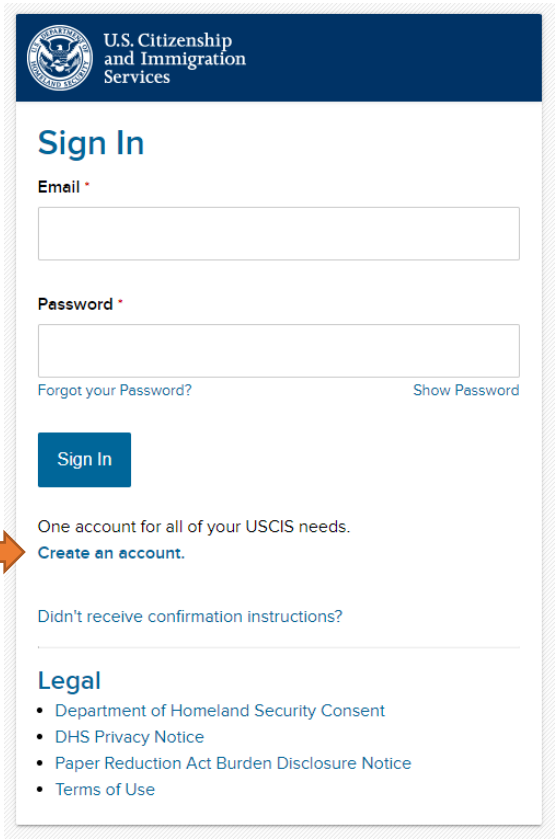
Signature (REQUIRED): _____ Date: _____

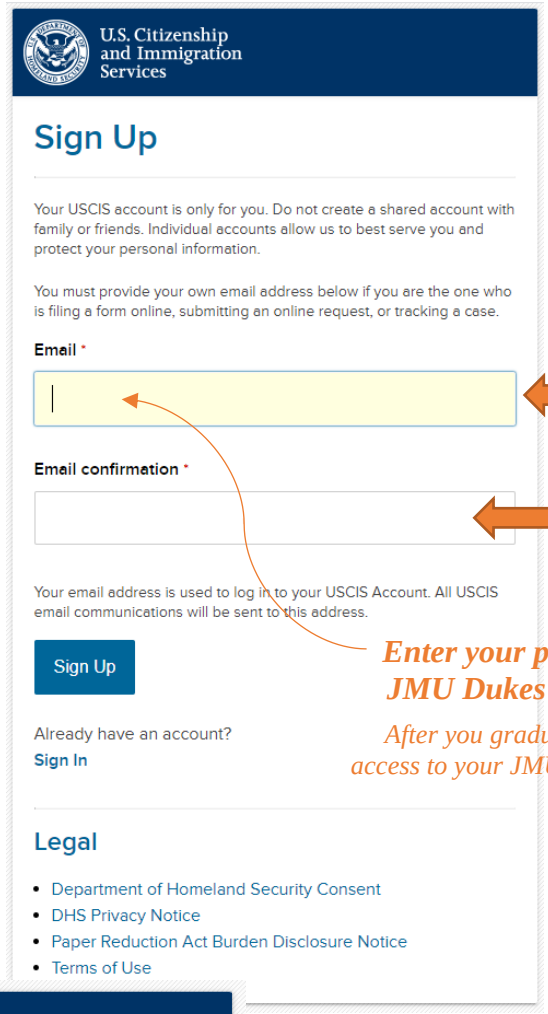
Submit to the Registrar's Office: 5th floor of the Student Success Center or registrar@jmu.edu

I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

After you have your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, complete online at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/.

You will first need to **create an account**.



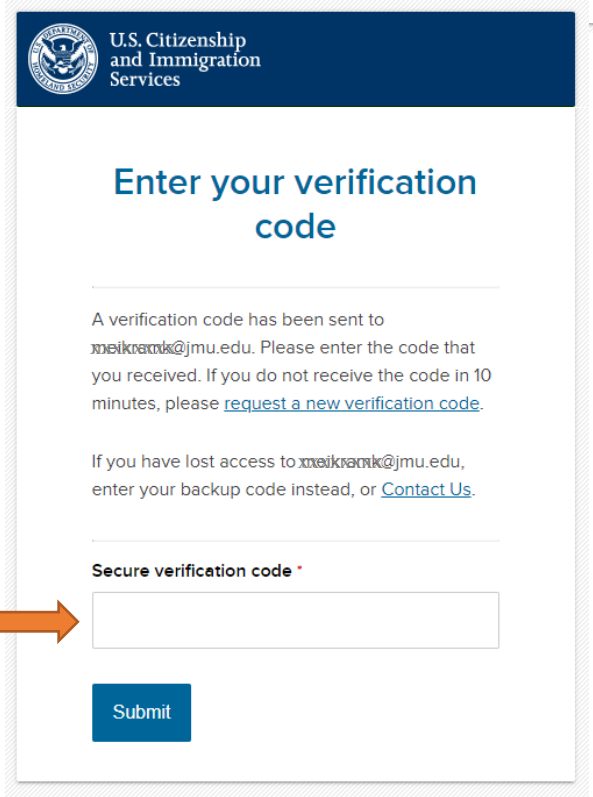


Enter your personal / non-JMU Dukes email address

After you graduate, you will lose access to your JMU Dukes account.

The USCIS system will send you a **confirmation email**.

Then they will send you a **verification code** to enter online.



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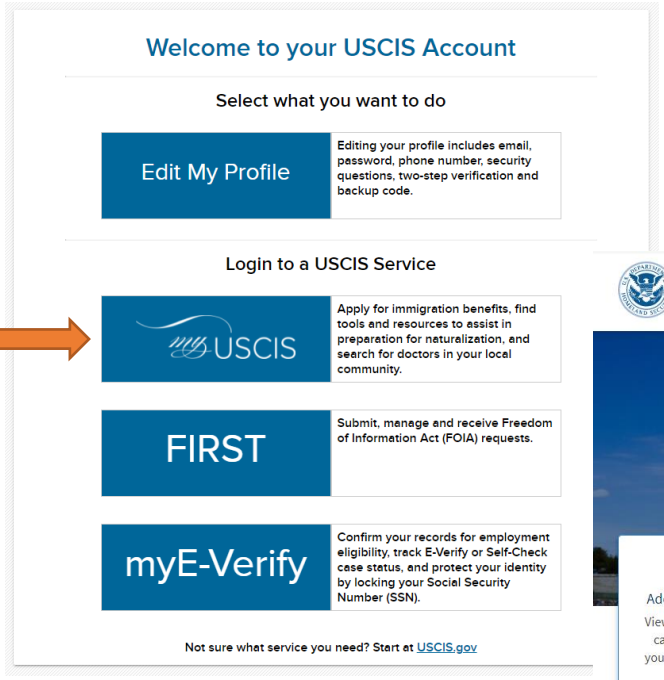
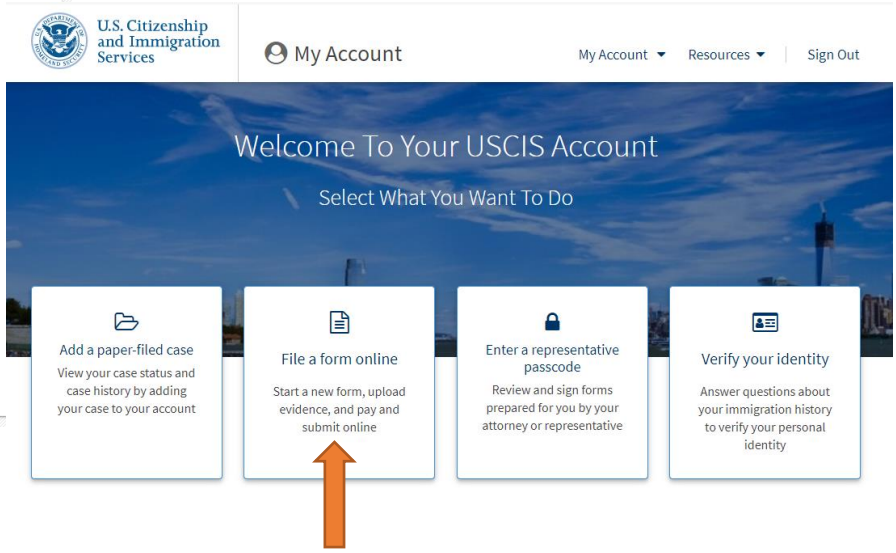
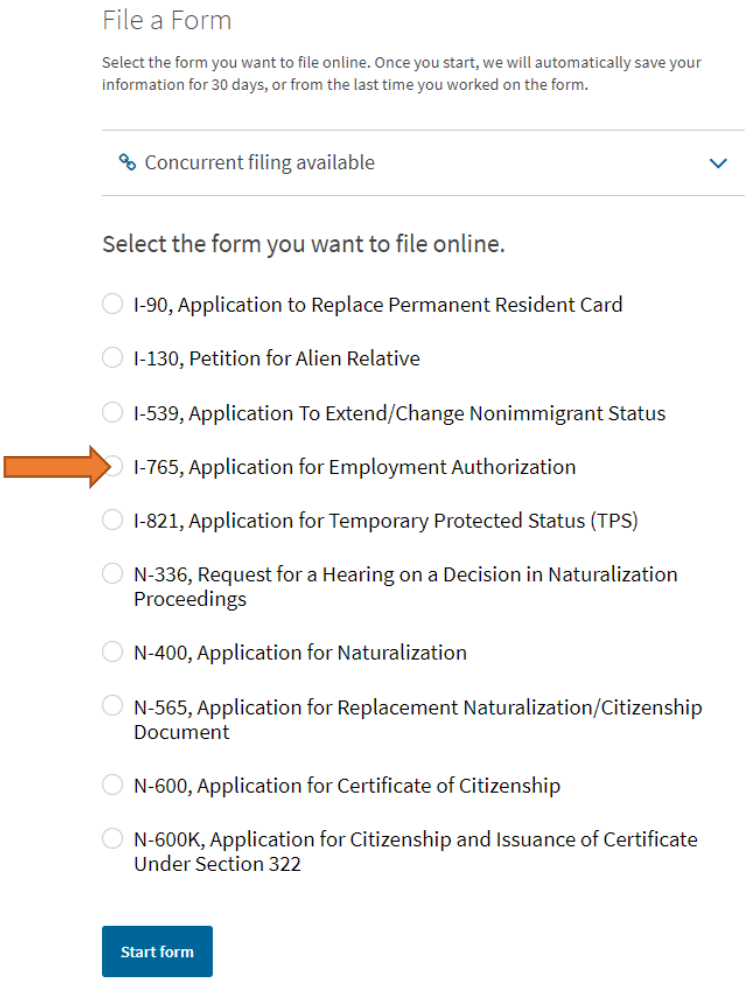






I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

After you have your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, complete online at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/.

Read the **instructions** Before You Start Your Application then click Next.

I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

- **Getting Started**
  - **Basis of eligibility**
  - Reason for applying
  - Preparer and interpreter information
- About You
- Evidence
- Additional Information
- Review and Submit

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.

*Select **(c)(3)(B) Student Post-Completion OPT** from the dropdown menu*

I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

- **Getting Started**
  - Basis of eligibility
  - **Reason for applying**
  - Preparer and interpreter information
- About You
- Evidence
- Additional Information
- Review and Submit

What is your reason for applying?

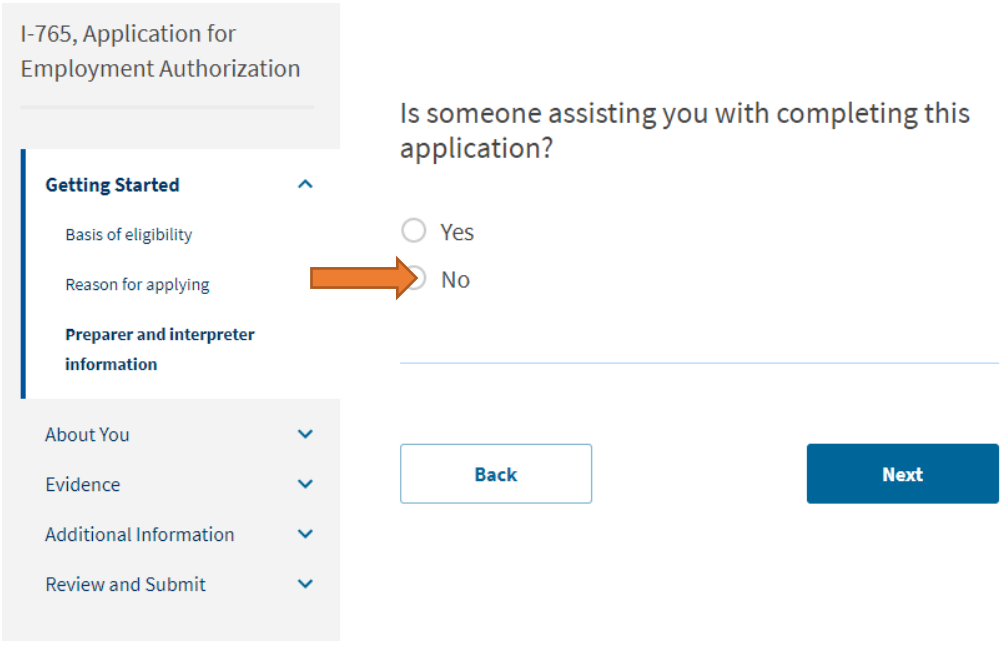
- ○ Initial permission to accept employment
- ○ Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document or correction of my employment authorization document NOT DUE to US Citizenship and Immigration Services error
- ○ Renewal of permission to accept employment

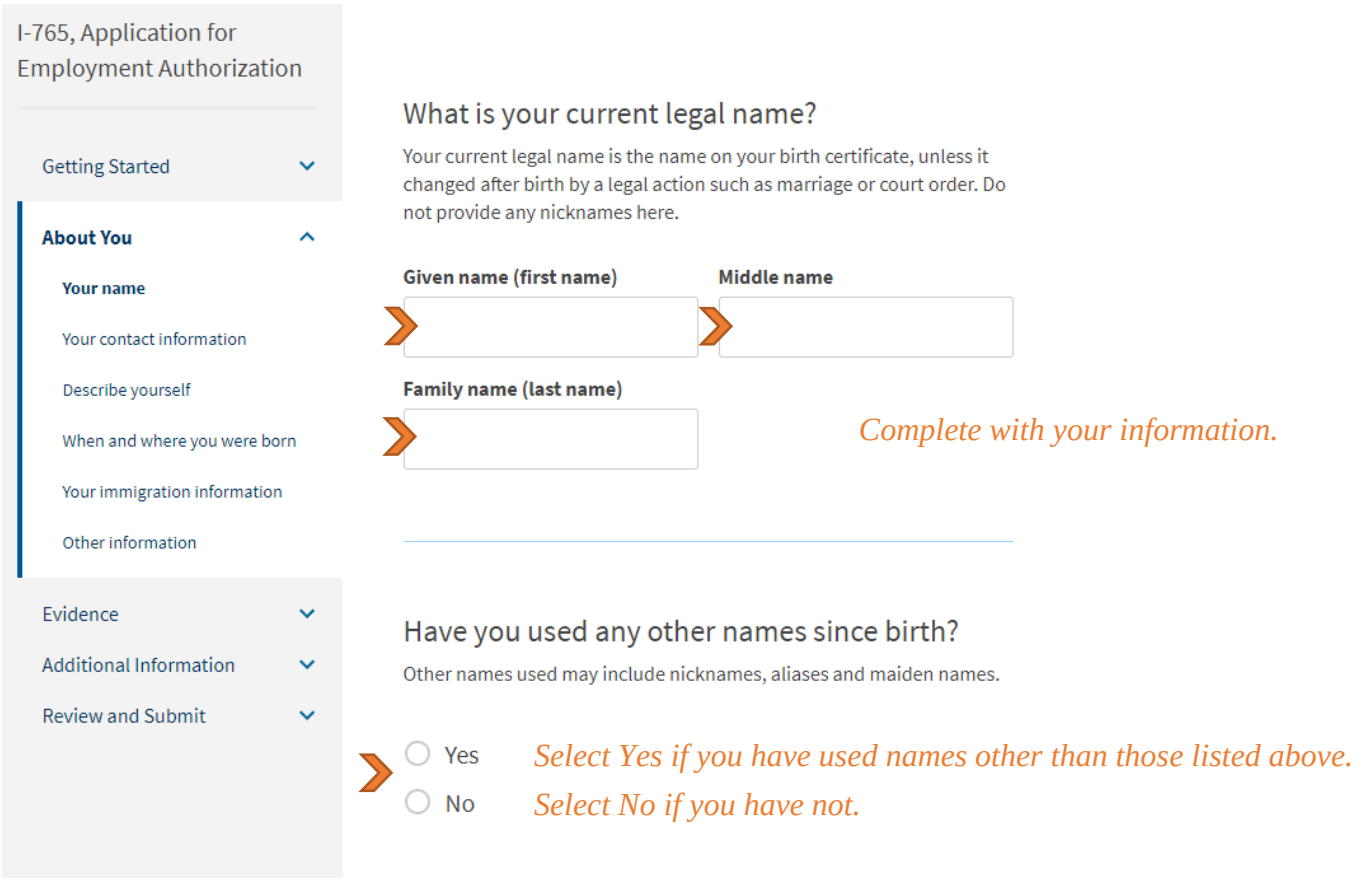
Have you previously filed Form I-765?

- ○ Yes — *Select Yes if you have.*
- ○ No — *Select No if you have not.*

I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

After you have your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, complete online at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/.





I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

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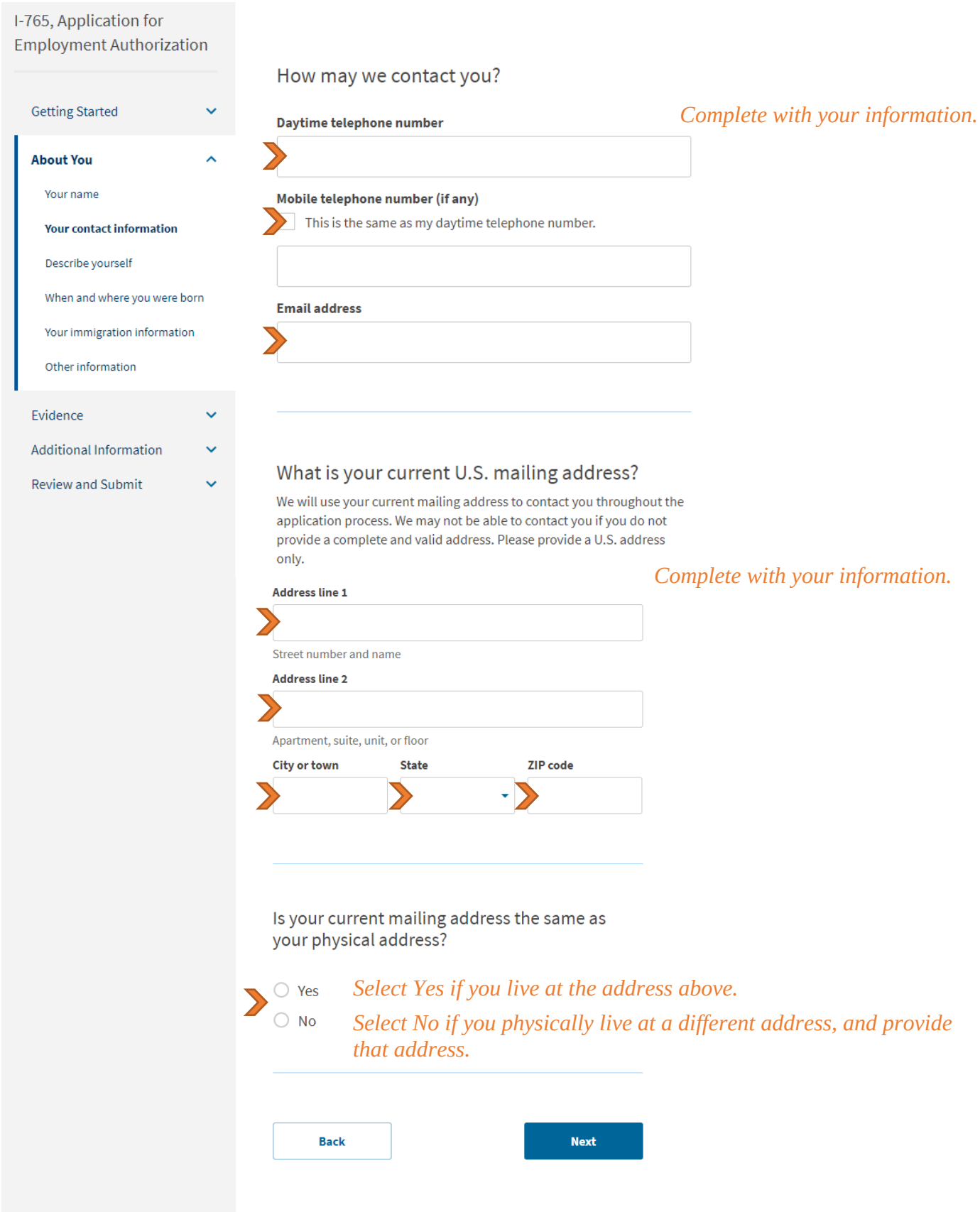


Complete with your information.

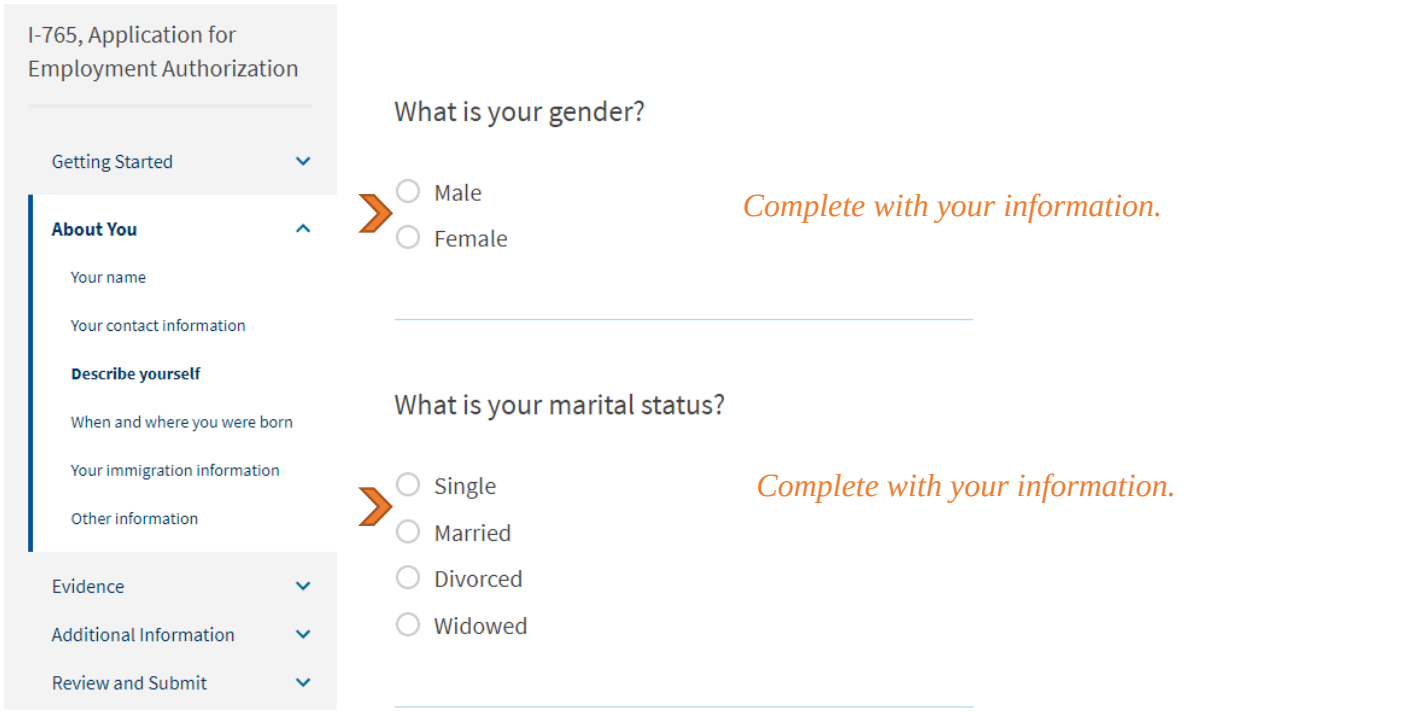
Complete with your information.

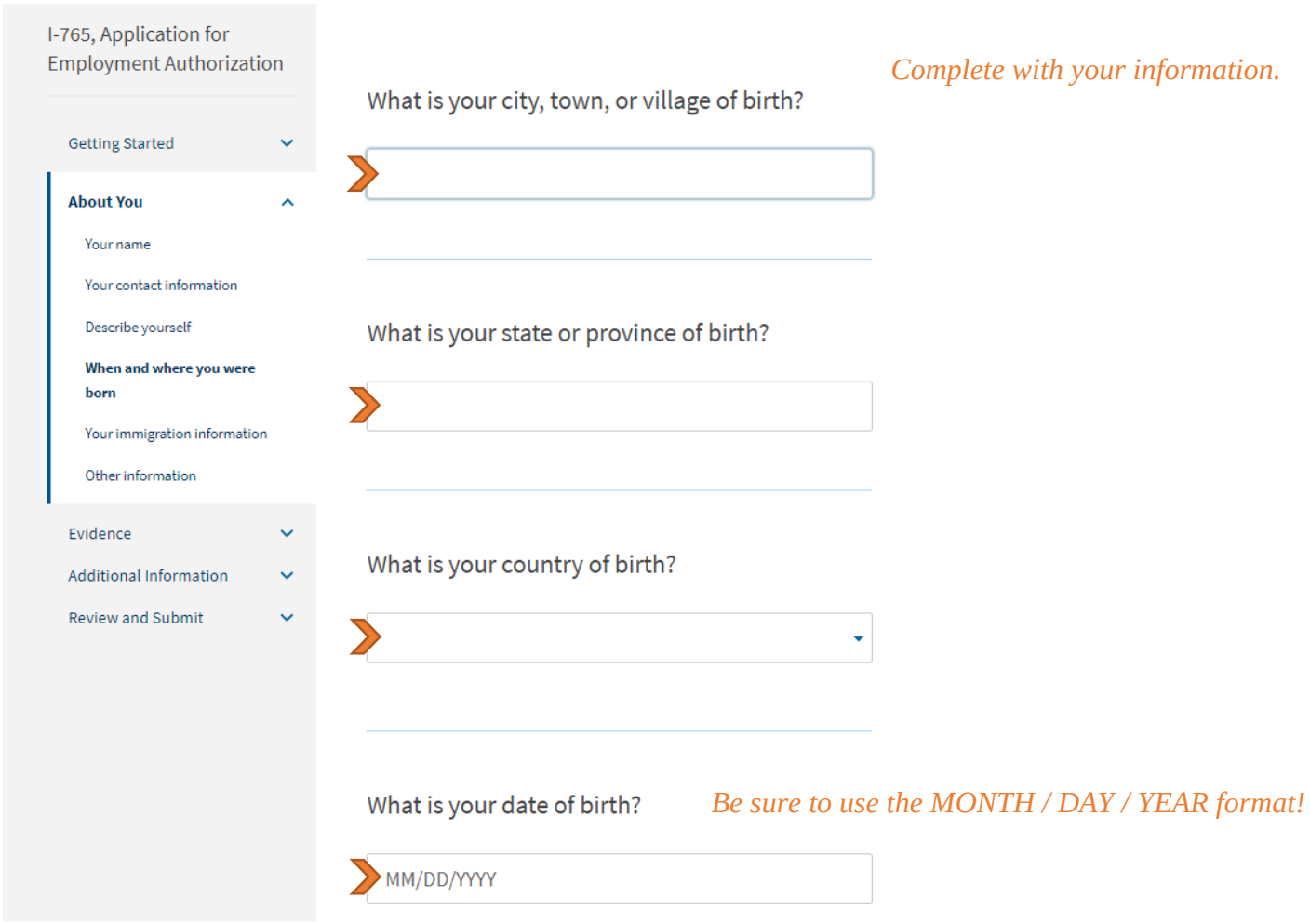
Select Yes if you live at the address above.

Select No if you physically live at a different address, and provide that address.

I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

After you have your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, complete online at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/.





I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

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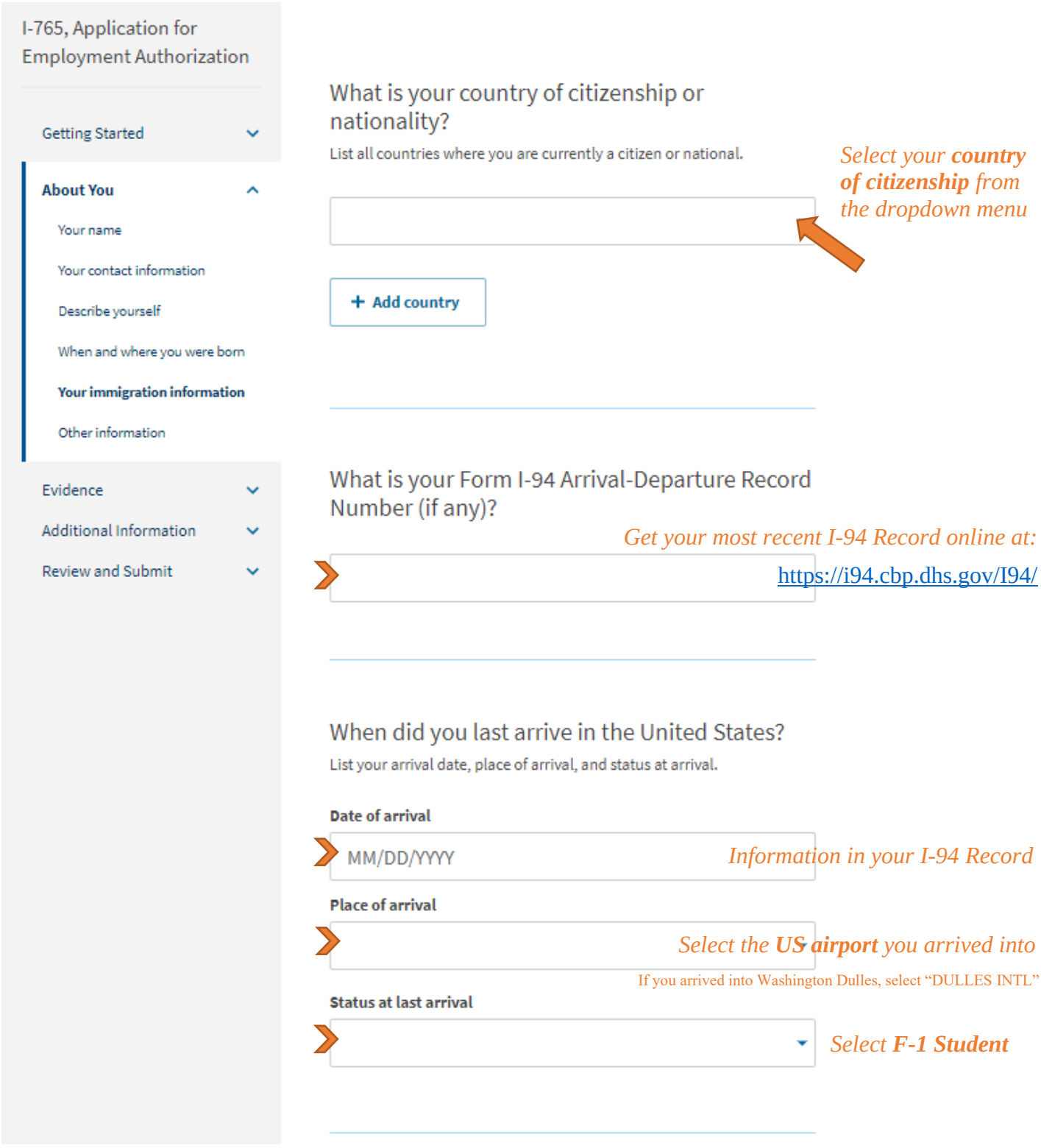


I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

After you have your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, complete online at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/.

[Section continued.]

Complete with your information.

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?

What is your current immigration status or category?

*Select **F-1 Student***

What is your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Number (if any)?

Use the "Additional Information" section to include all previously used SEVIS numbers.

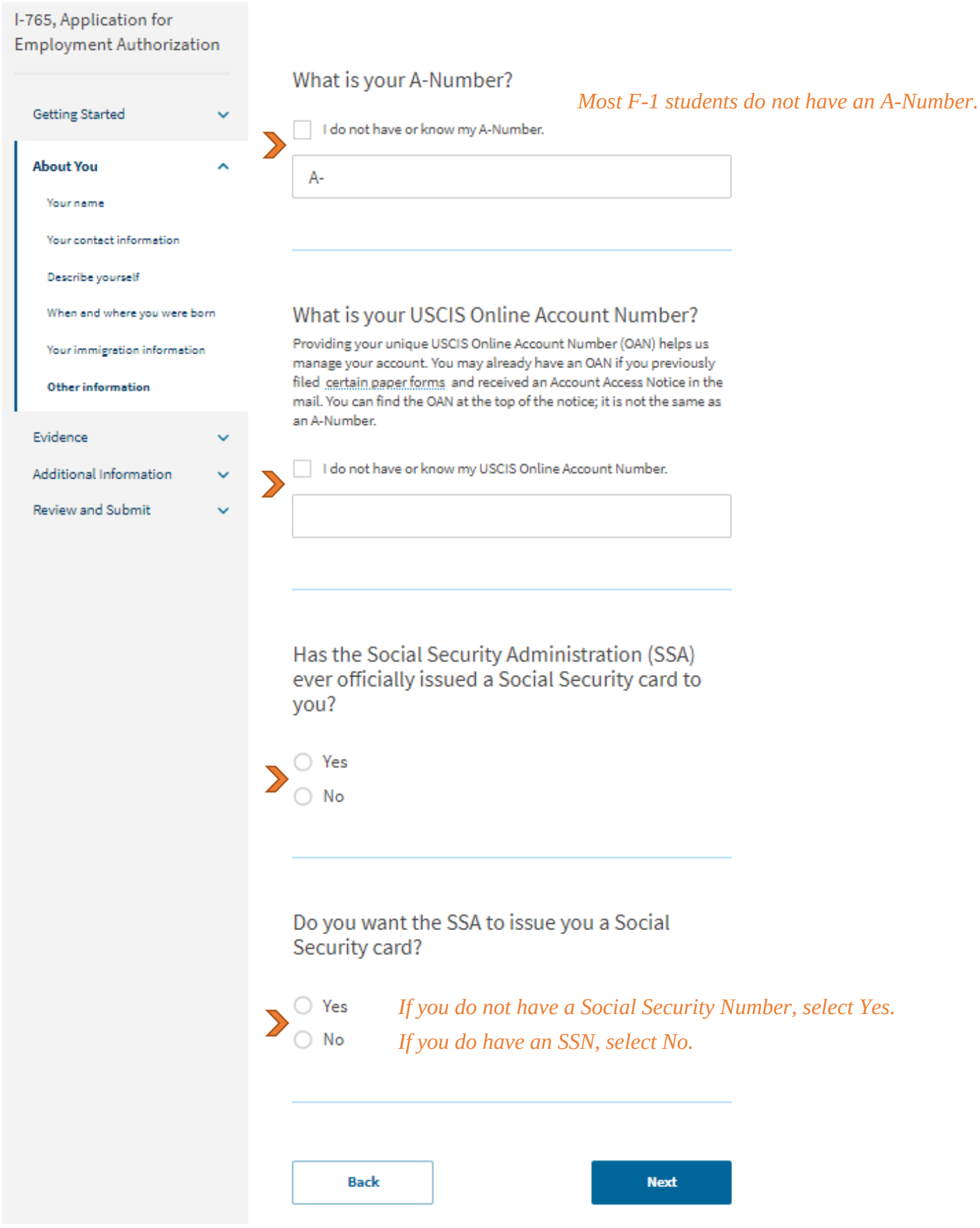
N-

*Enter your **SEVIS ID** number found on your I-20 Form*

Back Next

I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

After you have your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, complete online at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/.



I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

After you have your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, complete online at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/.

I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

- Getting Started
- About You
- **Evidence**
  - **2 x 2 photo of you**
  - Form I-94
  - Employment Authorization Document
  - Previously authorized CPT or OPT
  - Form I-20
- Additional Information
- Review and Submit

Read the instructions!

2 X 2 Photo Of You

Upload a recent color photograph of yourself that measures 2 inches by 2 inches, with your face measuring 1 inch to 1 3/8 inch from your chin to the top of your head. Your eyes should be between 1 1/8 inch and 1 3/8 inch from the bottom of the photo.

Make sure your whole face is visible, you are facing the camera directly, and the background is white or off-white. Your head must be bare, unless contrary to your religious beliefs.

If you need help understanding the photo requirements or want to resize, rotate, or crop your photo, you can use to the Department of State's photo composition tools. Please note that we cannot approve your application without your photo.

File requirements

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, or PNG
- 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

…then upload your photo

Back **Next**

I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

After you have your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, complete online at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/.

I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

- Getting Started
- About You
- **Evidence**
  - 2 x 2 photo of you
  - **Form I-94**
  - Employment Authorization Document
  - Previously authorized CPT or OPT
  - Form I-20
- Additional Information
- Review and Submit

Read the instructions!

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

…then upload your I-94

Back **Next**

I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

After you have your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, complete online at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/.

I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

- Getting Started
- About You
- **Evidence**
  - 2 x 2 photo of you
  - Form I-94
  - **Employment Authorization Document**
  - Previously authorized CPT or OPT
  - Form I-20
- Additional Information
- Review and Submit

Read the instructions!

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

…then upload scans of your previous EAD card, passport main biographic page, or F-1 visa

Back | Next

I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

After you have your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, complete online at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/.

I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

- Getting Started
- About You
- **Evidence**
  - 2 x 2 photo of you
  - Form I-94
  - Employment Authorization Document
  - **Previously authorized CPT or OPT**
  - Form I-20
- Additional Information
- Review and Submit

Read the instructions!

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.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file

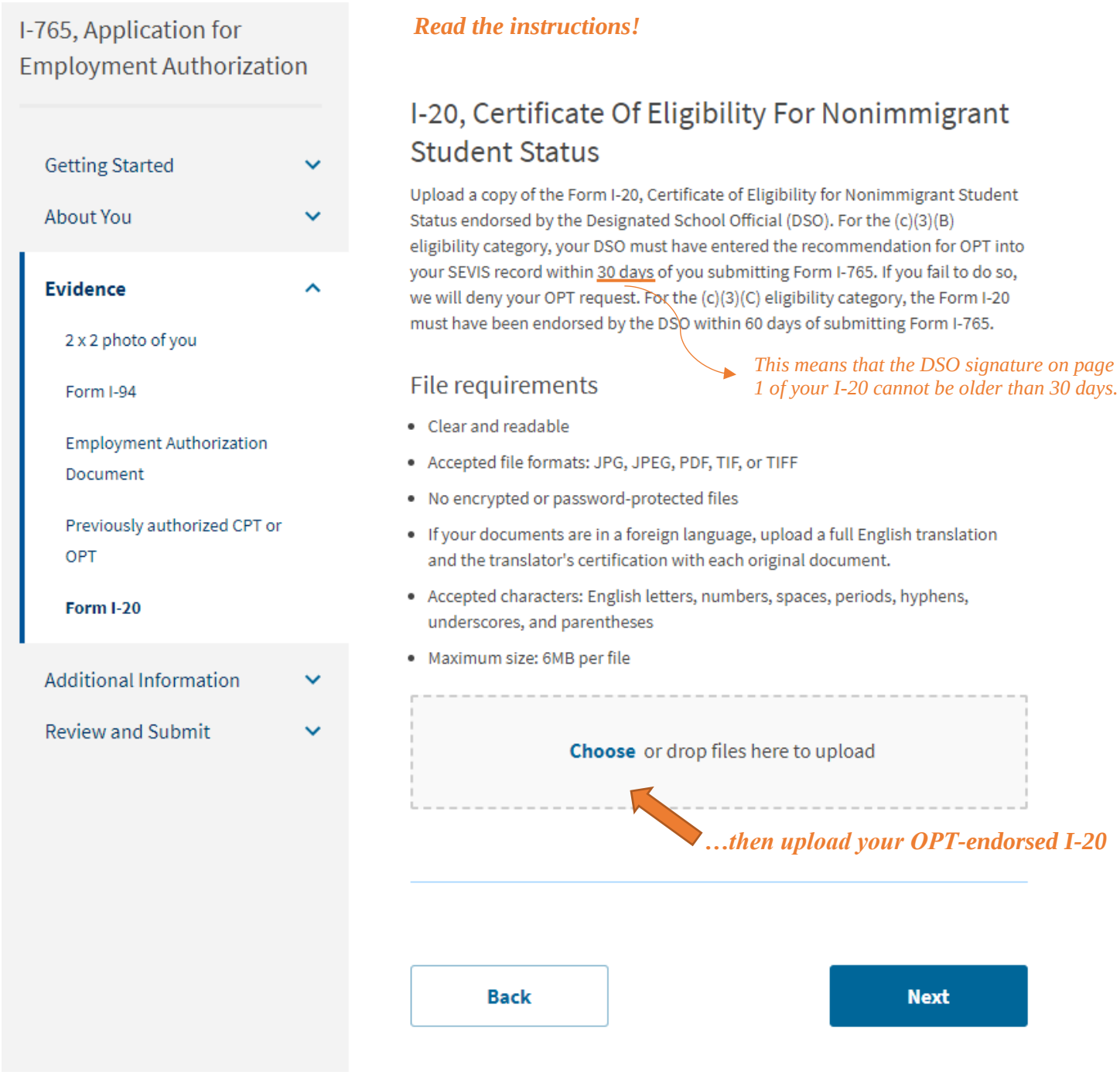
Choose or drop files here to upload

…then upload your previous CPT and/or OPT documents

Back **Next**

I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

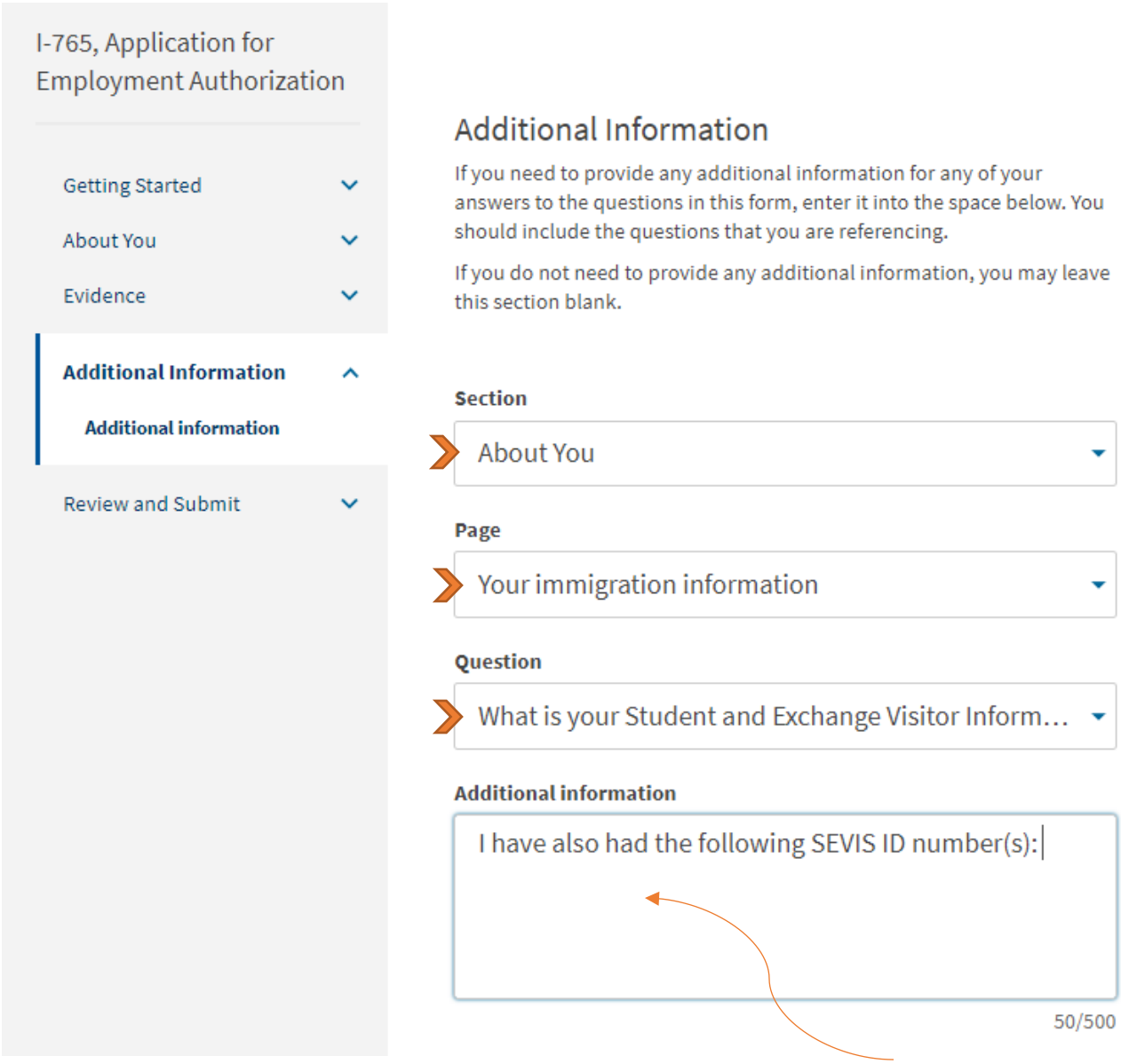
After you have your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, complete online at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/.



I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

After you have your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, complete online at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/.

*If you have had other **SEVIS ID numbers**, should be included in this section.*



*Type in "I have also had the following SEVIS ID number(s):" and list any other SEVIS ID number or numbers you have had. SEVIS ID numbers start with **N00**…*

I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

After you have your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, complete online at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/.

Carefully review all of your information before you pay the application fee. *Once the fee is paid, you cannot make corrections.*

I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

- Getting Started
- About You
- Evidence
- Additional Information
- **Review and Submit**
  - **Review your application**

If you would like an ISSS advisor to review this, download the ***"Draft Snapshot"*** *and email it to an ISSS advisor before you click submit.*

Check your application before you submit

We will review your application to check for accuracy and completeness before you submit it.

We encourage you to provide as many responses as you can throughout the application, to the best of your knowledge. Missing information can slow down the review process after you submit your application.

You can return to this page to review your application as many times as you want before you submit it.

Your fee

Your form filing fee is: $470

Refund Policy: USCIS does not refund fees, regardless of any action we take on your application, petition or request, or how long USCIS takes to reach a decision. By continuing this transaction, you acknowledge that you must submit fees in the exact amount and that you are paying the fees for a government service.

Alerts and warnings

You have one or more alerts and warnings based on the information you provided in your application.

A red alert means you have incomplete responses or inconsistent data. You cannot submit your application with any alerts.

There are errors in About You: Your name

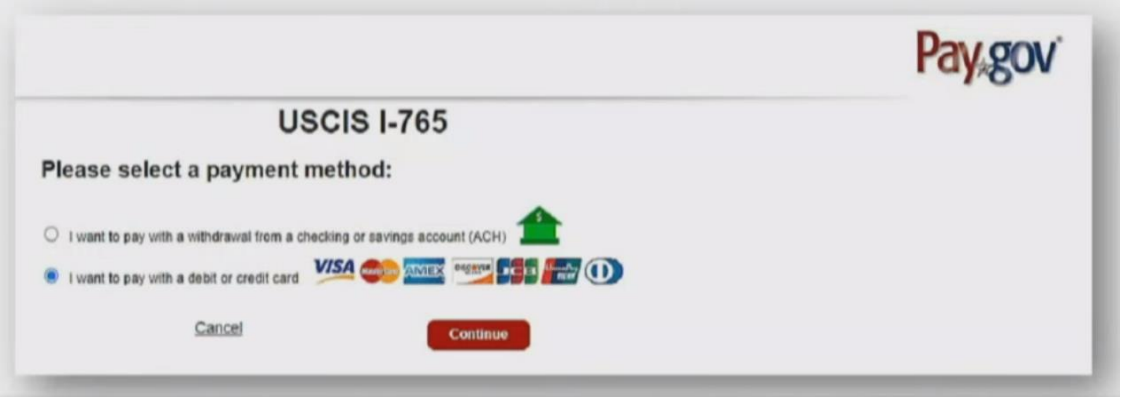
Edit my responses

This section will also alert you to ***missing*** *or* ***incorrect information****.*

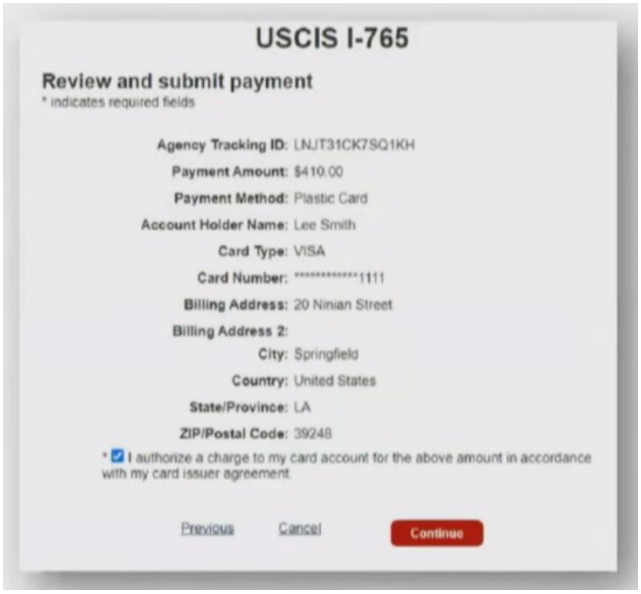
I-765 Completion Guide for Post-Completion OPT

After you have your OPT-endorsed I-20 Form, complete online at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/.

After you agree to the **Application Statement**, where you digitally sign and submit the form, you will be directed to **pay.gov** site, a secure government portal, to pay for the application fee.



Enter the payment information. Make note of the form type and agency tracking ID at the top. Once you hit "Continue" to pay the fee, your I-765 Form will be submitted.



You will receive a confirmation message that your form has been submitted.

Click on "Go to My Cases" to see your case information and receipt notice.

All notices will be posted to your account and mailed to the mailing address that you entered:

- Receipt Notice
- Request for Evidence (RFE) – *if you receive this, let ISSS know immediately!*
- PDF of completed I-765 Form – *email to your ISSS advisor to add to your immigration file.*
- Decision letter

Let ISSS know if you have any questions during this process!