OPT Workshop

International Student Services
Whitworth Office of International Education

First Things First…

Important Terms:

- DSO: Designated School Official (Whitworth International Student Advisor)
- USCIS: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- SEVIS: Student & Exchange Visitor Information System
- OPT: Optional Practical Training
- EAD: Employment Authorization Document (card)

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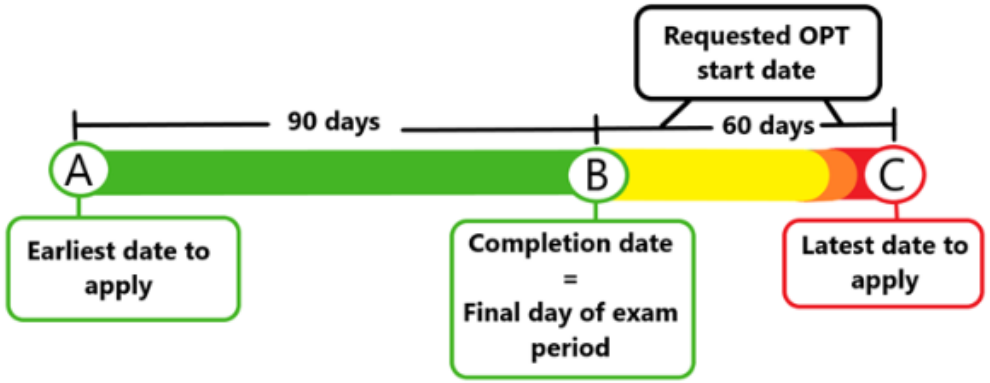
OPT: Optional Practical Training

Definition:
Employment authorization granted by USCIS for job/practical training that is directly related to the student's academic degree field.

Types of OPT:
- *Pre-Completion OPT (only for graduate students primarily)*
- *Post-Completion OPT (*most common type)*
- *STEM OPT Extension*

Eligibility:
- Post-Completion OPT
  - *Active F-1 status and in the final semester of your degree program*
  - *Does NOT require having a job at the time of application*
- STEM OPT Extension
  - *Students in their regular post-completion OPT period with a qualifying STEM degree and working for an E-Verify employer may apply for the STEM OPT Extension (24 additional months of work authorization)*
  - *Must apply by the end of your current OPT expiration date*



OPT: Optional Practical Training

Steps to Apply:

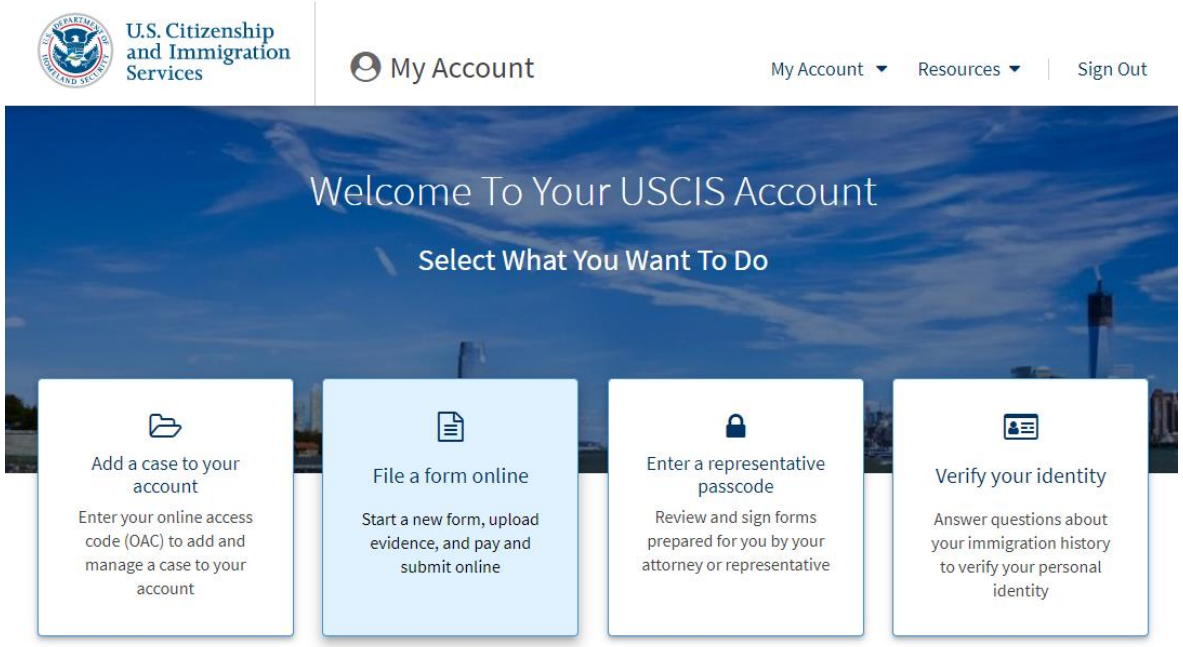
1. Meet with ISS advisor: ISS advisor will provide details about the OPT process.

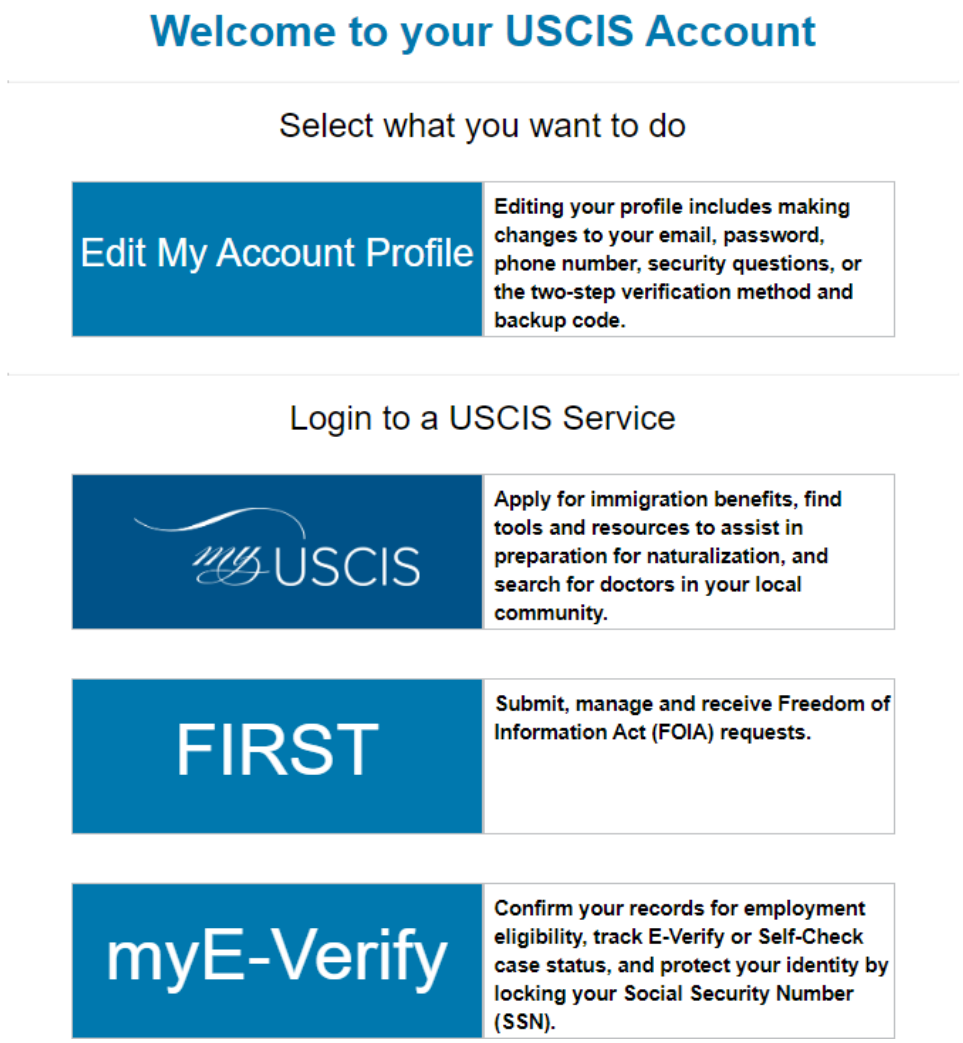
2. Request OPT I-20: ISS advisor will issue your OPT I-20 which endorses your eligibility to apply for OPT. Once issued, *you must submit your online OPT application within 30 days.*

3. Create an Online Account with USCIS: Follow the easy instructions outlined on the USCIS website: https://www.uscis.gov/file-online/how-to-create-a-uscis-online-account

OPT: Steps to Apply

4. <u>After Creating your Account:</u> Select the "my USCIS" button.
5. <u>Select "File a form online".</u>

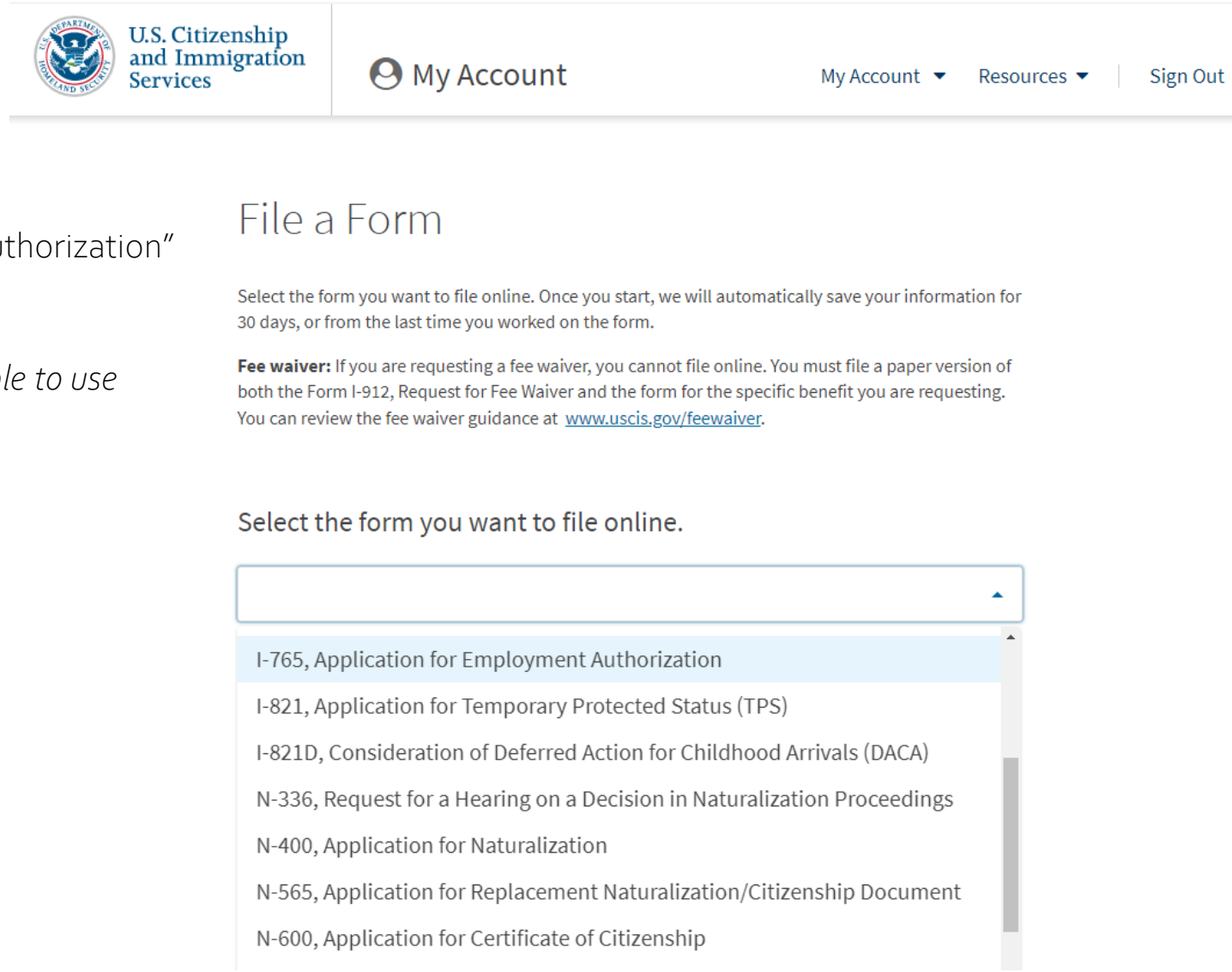




OPT: Steps to Apply

6. Select Form: "I-765, Application for Employment Authorization"

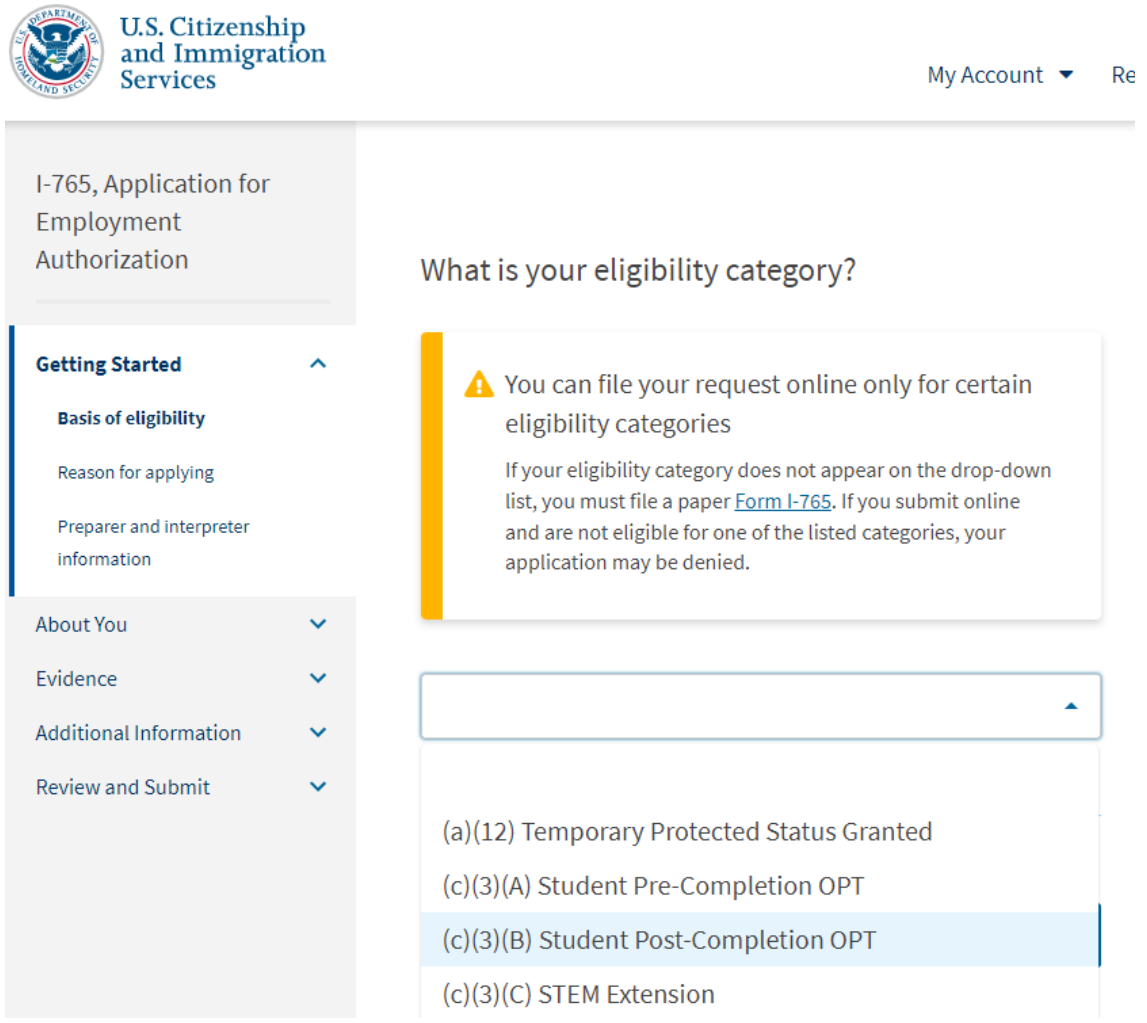
7. Click "Start Form"
   -The next page will provide a summary of who is eligible to use Form I-765, the required documents, and the filing fee.



OPT: Steps to Apply

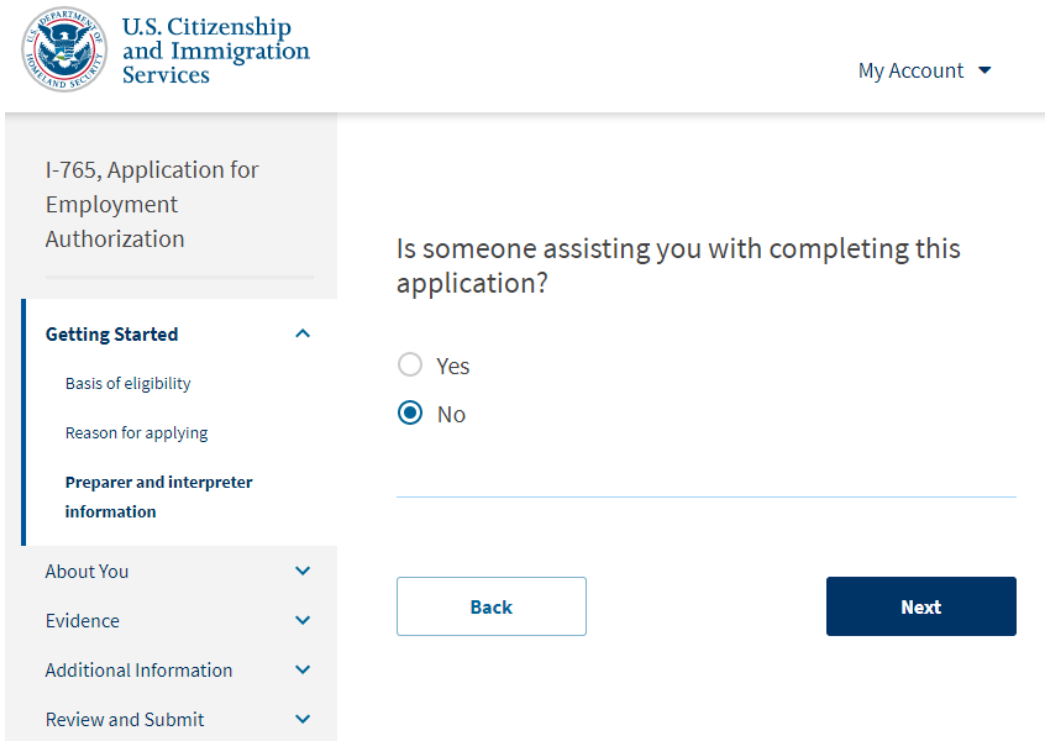
8. Eligibility Category: Select "(c)(3)(B) Student Post-Completion OPT"

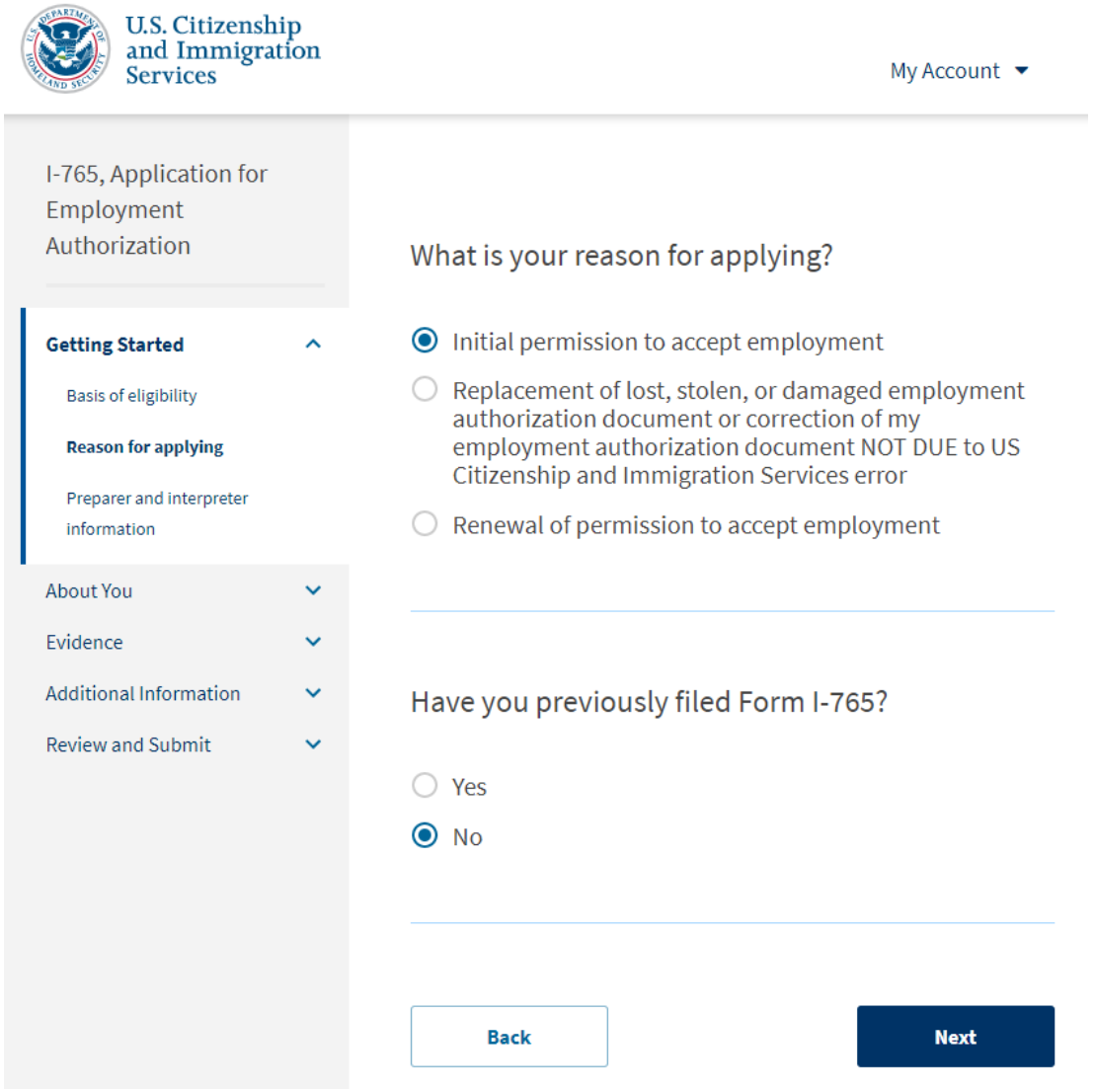
   Students applying for STEM OPT Extension would select "(c)(3)© STEM Extension"



OPT: Steps to Apply

9. Select "Initial permission to accept employment" and "No".
10. Is someone assisting you? -Select "No"

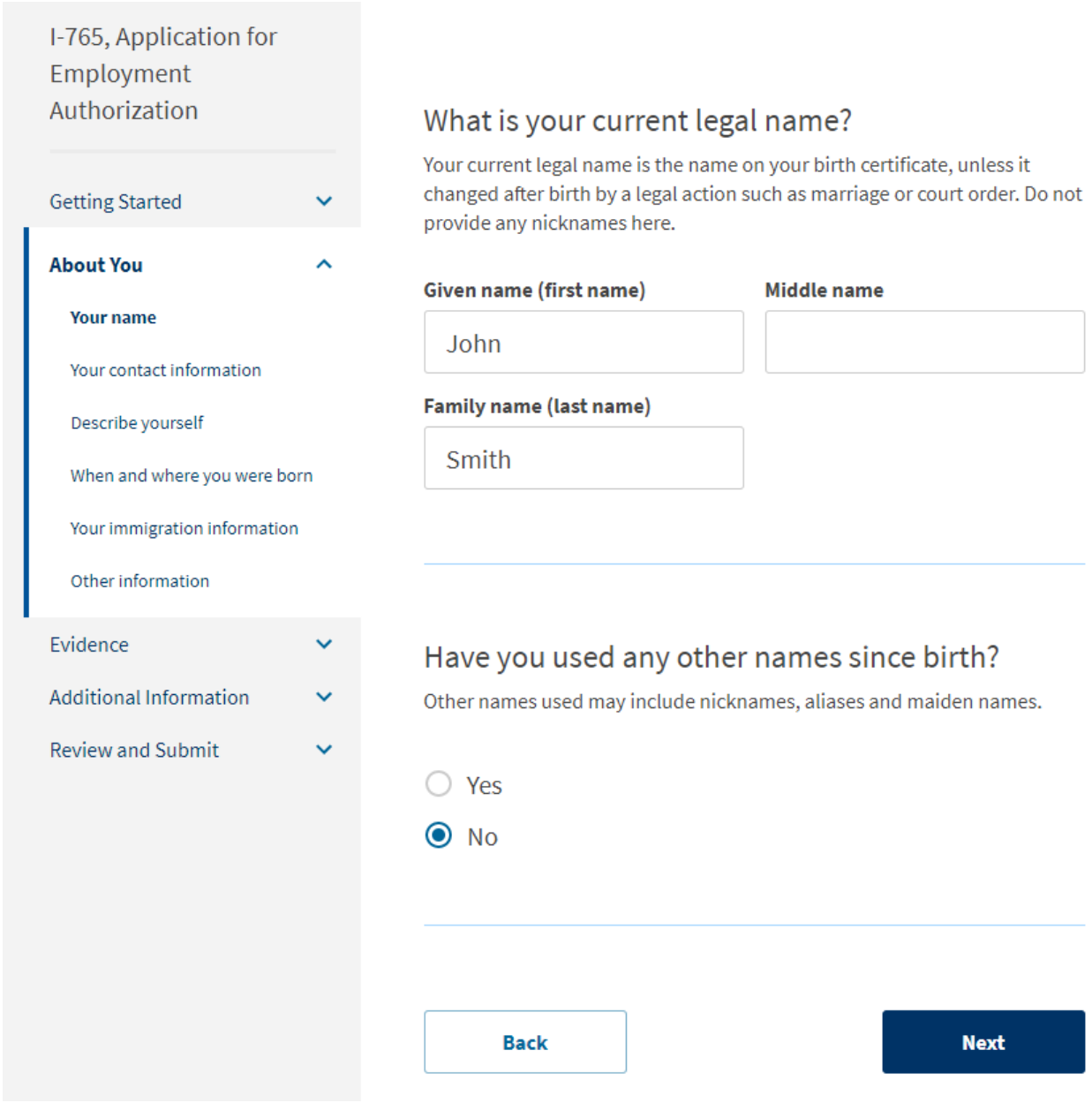




OPT: Steps to Apply

11. Complete the "About You" sections:

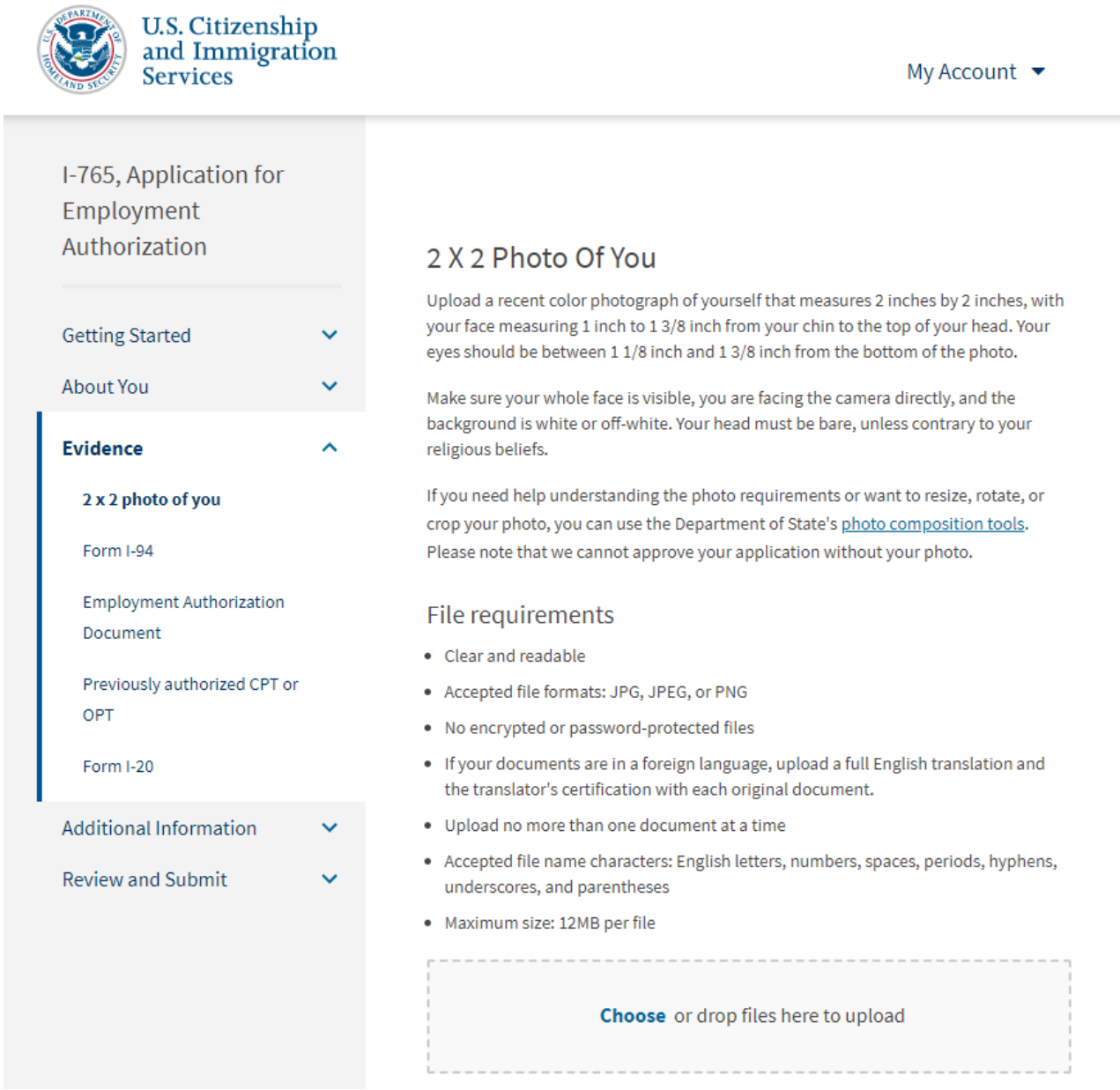
- *Your name*
- *Your contact information*
- *Describe yourself (gender, marital status)*
- *When and where you were born*
- *Your immigrant information (country of citizenship, I-94 #)*
  - **Remember: When it asks for your immigration status/category, you are "F1"*
- *Other information*
  - *"A-Number" (mark "I do not have")*
  - *"USCIS Online Account Number" (mark "I do not have")*
  - *Social Security Number*



OPT: Steps to Apply

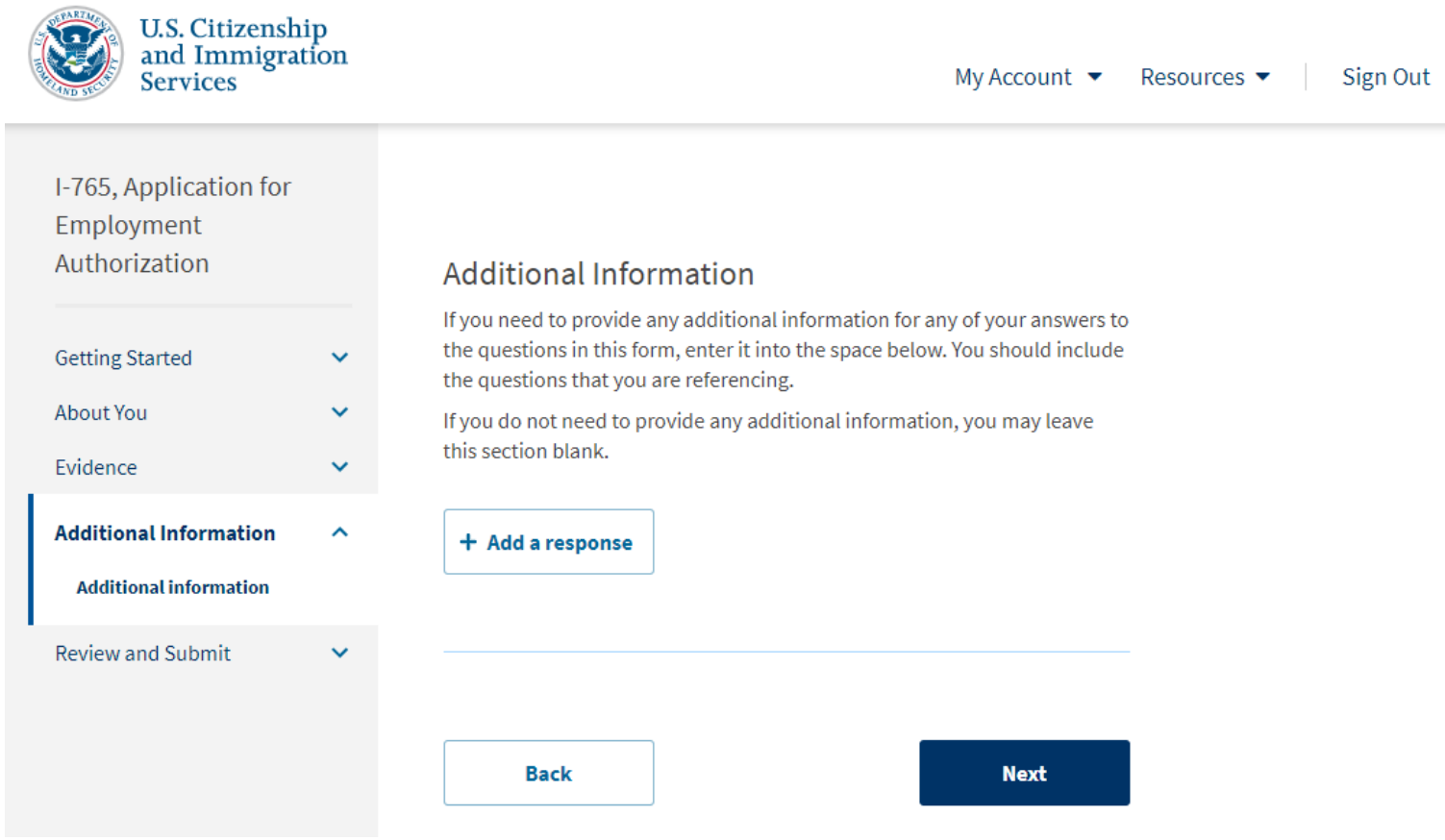
12. Complete the "Evidence" sections:

- ***2x2 Photo:*** *standard passport photo style (Walgreens)*
- ***Form I-94****: Go to https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94*
- ***Employment Authorization Document:*** *If you have never had an EAD (likely true for all students), then upload the photo page of your passport.*
- ***Previously authorized CPT:*** *Scan and upload a copy of any I-20 you previously received for CPT authorizations*
- ***Form I-20:*** *Scan and upload a copy of the "OPT I-20" you received from the ISS advisor*



OPT: Steps to Apply

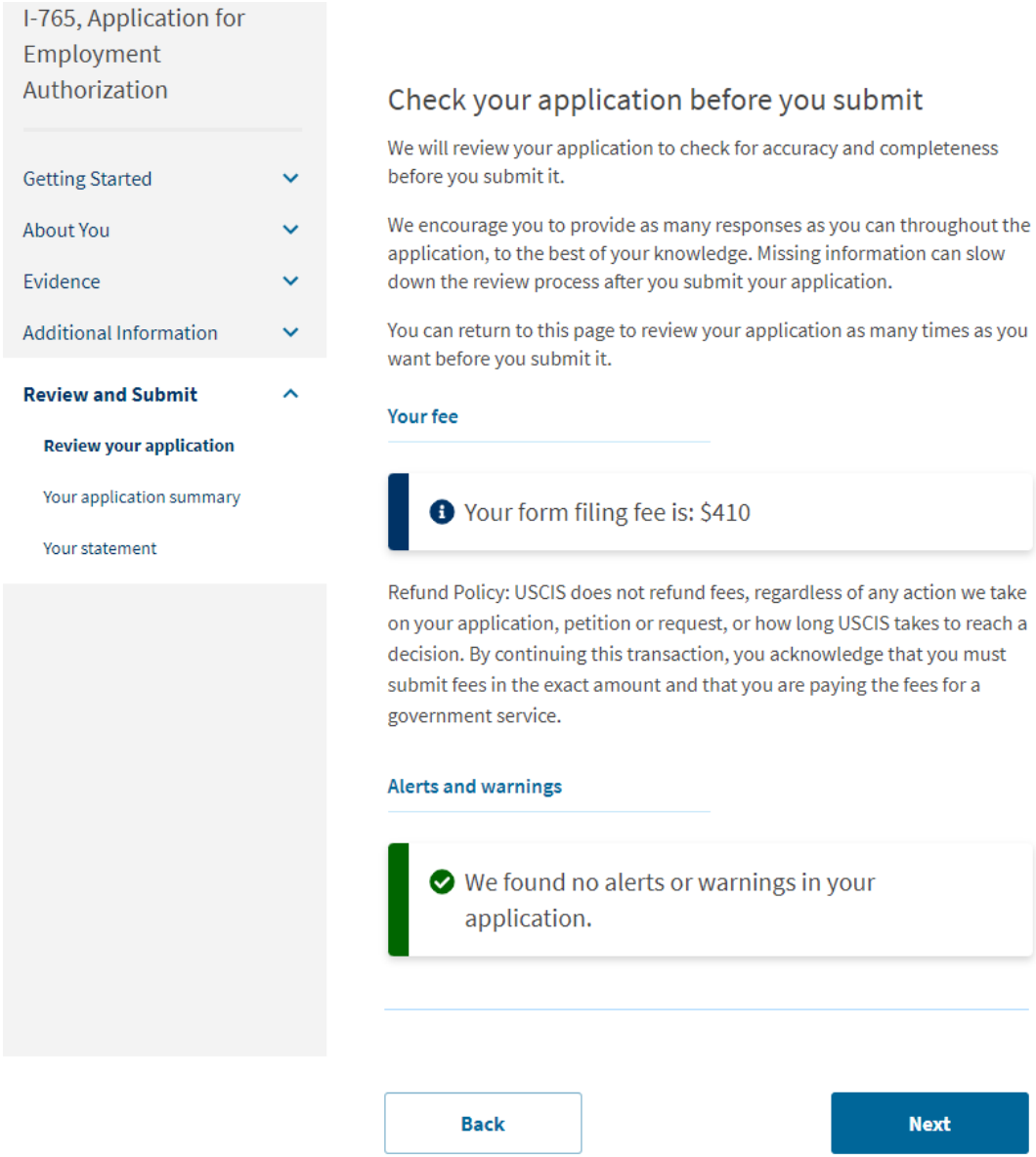
13. Additional Information section: Leave blank



OPT: Steps to Apply

14. Review and Submit:
- *Note the filing fee: $410*
- *Note any alerts/warnings about missing items in your application*
- *Review your application summary (you can download/print it)*
- *Electronically sign the agreement*
- *SUBMIT.*

15. Pay Filing Fee:
Once you have submitted the online OPT form, you will be directed to pay the fee via credit card, debit card, or bank account.



OPT: Optional Practical Training

<u>After Your Application is Submitted:</u>
USCIS will email you confirmation of receipt of your application. Check your email regularly (and Spam folder).

<u>When Your Application is Approved:</u>
USCIS will mail you your EAD card. <u>You may not begin work until you receive your EAD card.</u>

<u>Reporting Requirement – Your OPT Employer:</u>
You are required to notify the international office (iss@whitworth.edu) once you receive a job offer for OPT and begin work. Our office must update SEVIS with your OPT employer information.

Unlike H-1B visa, an OPT employer does not have any "sponsorship" requirements –there is no fee or paperwork for them.

You have a 90-day grace period to find an OPT employer. If you cannot find a job within the 90 days after your OPT start date, then your OPT is terminated and you must depart the U.S.

STEM OPT Extension

Definition:

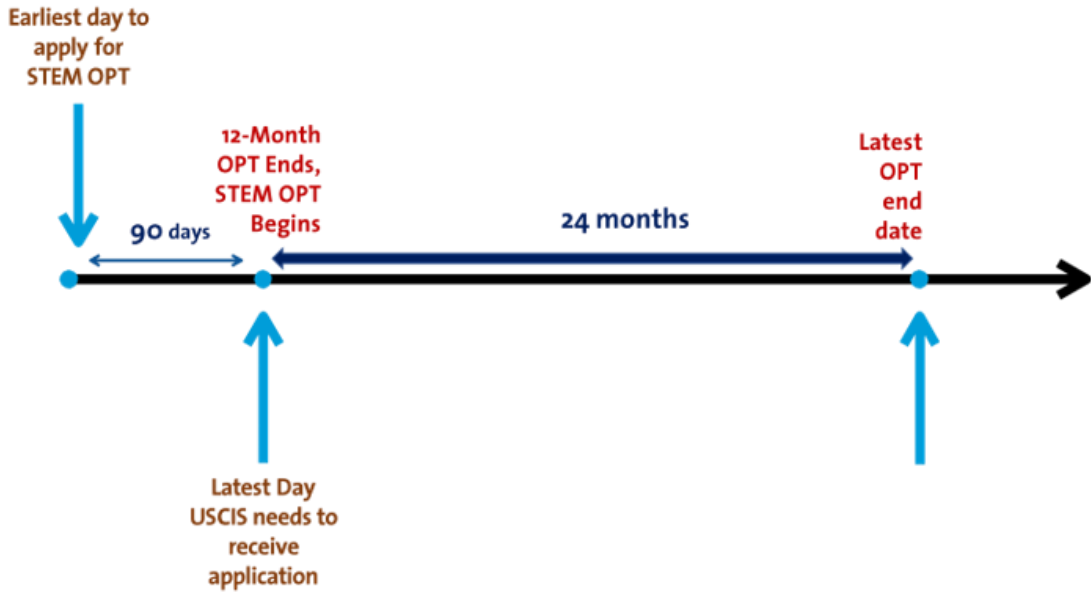
STEM OPT Extension allows students with qualifying STEM degrees to extend their OPT authorization for an additional 24 months.

Eligibility:

- Be in active F-1 status
- BE currently working in OPT
- Have a bachelor's degree in an eligible STEM field
- Have a paid job offer with an employer enrolled in the E-Verify program

When to Apply:

- You can request your STEM OPT I-20 from ISS as early as 90 days before the expiration date listed on your current OPT EAD card. USCIS must receive your online STEM OPT application before your EAD card expiration date.



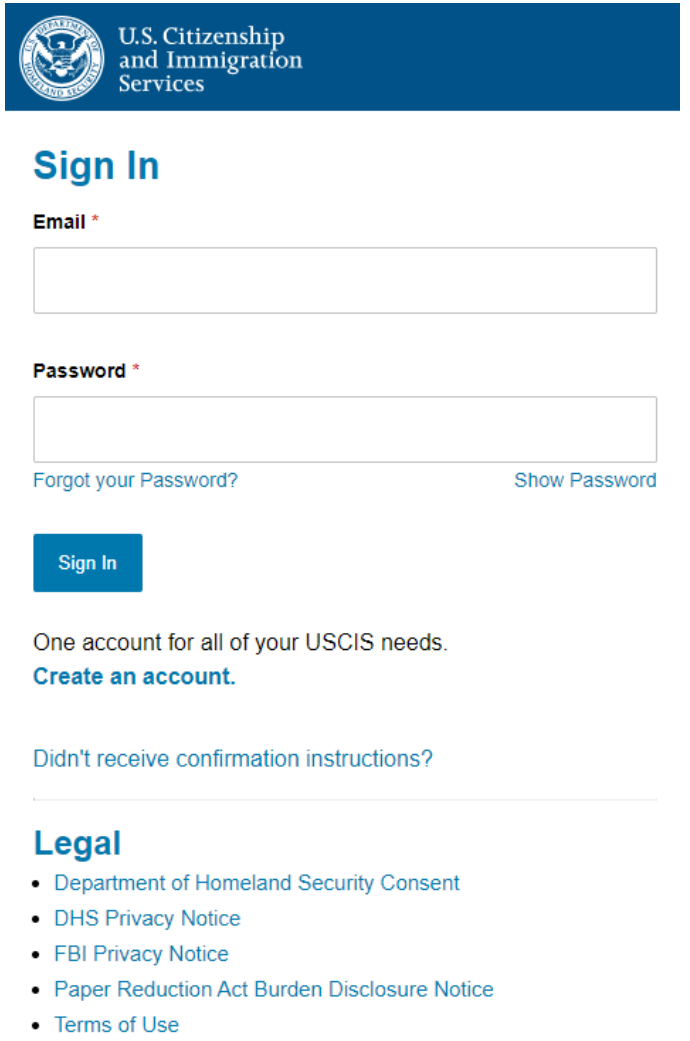
STEM OPT Extension

Steps to Apply:

1. Complete I-983 Training Plan: This is as required document which outlines your intended STEM OPT work plan, job duties, employer info, etc.
   Download form & instructions here: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/additional-resources/form-i-983-overview

2. Request STEM OPT I-20: An ISS advisor will issue your STEM OPT I-20 only after we have received a copy of your completed I-983 form.

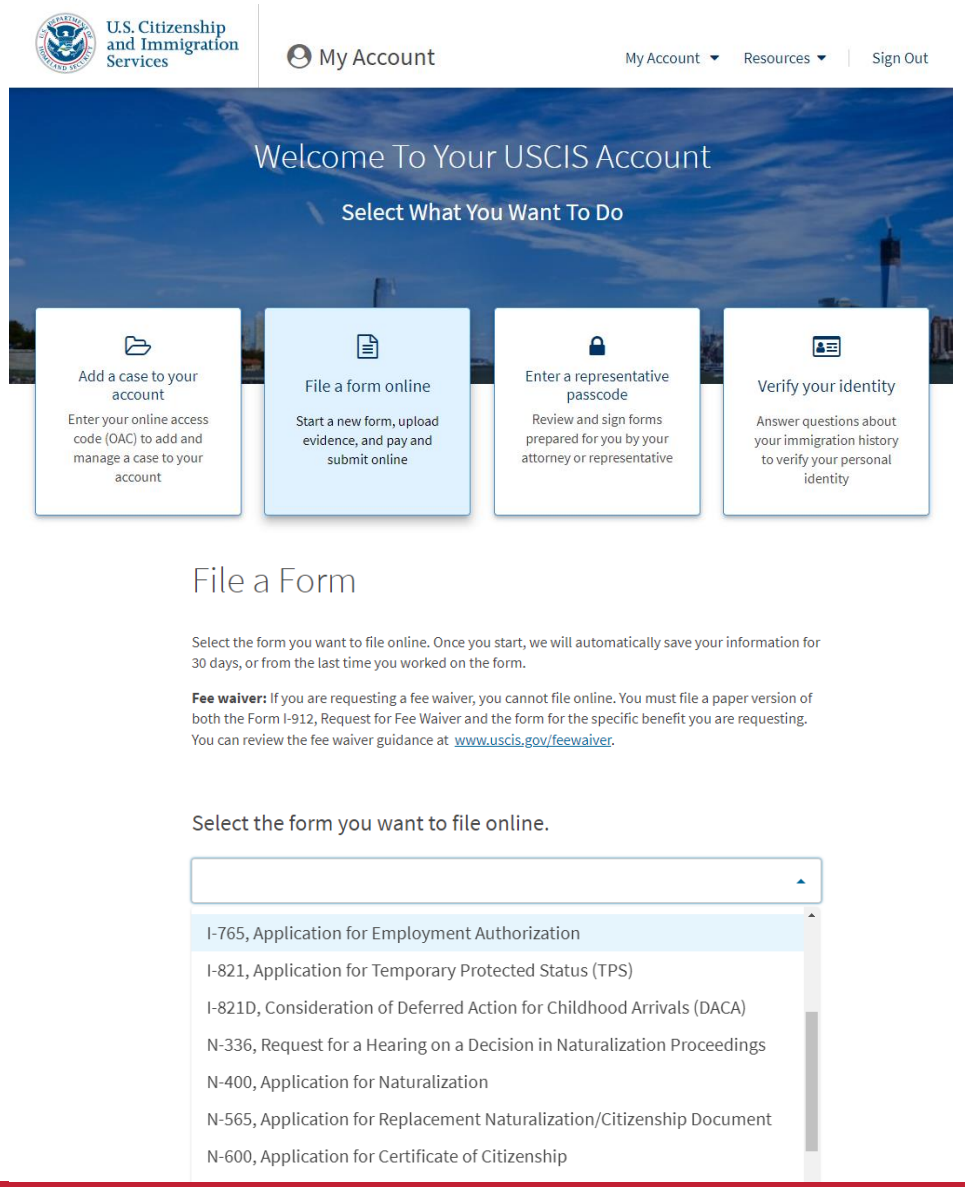
3. Login to your USCIS Account: www.uscis.gov



STEM OPT Extension

Steps to Apply:

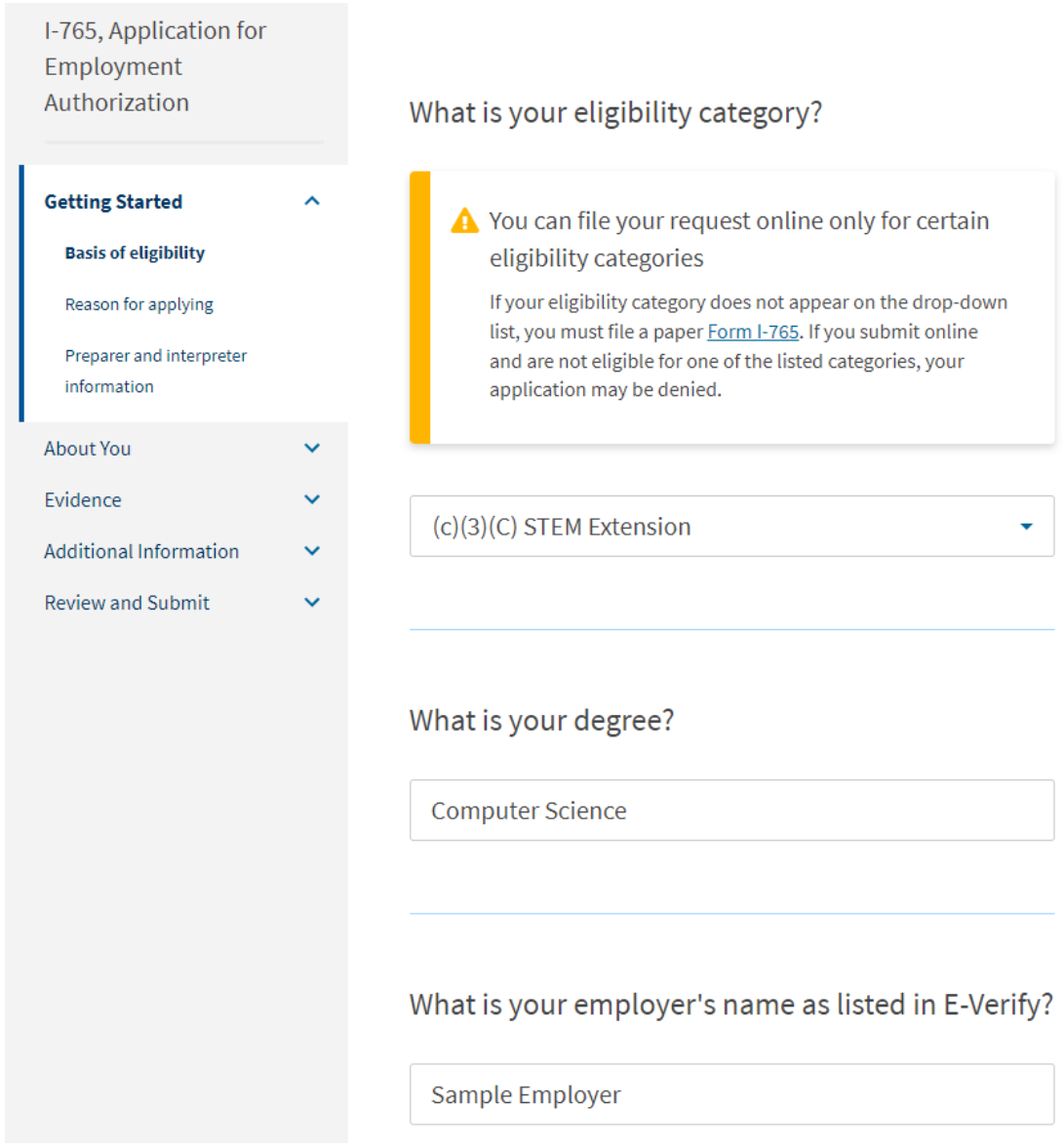
4. Select "File a form online"
5. Select "I-765, Application for Employment Authorization"
6. Click "Start Form"



STEM OPT Extension

Steps to Apply:

7. Eligibility Category: Select "(c)(3)(C) STEM Extension" and complete the remaining fields.

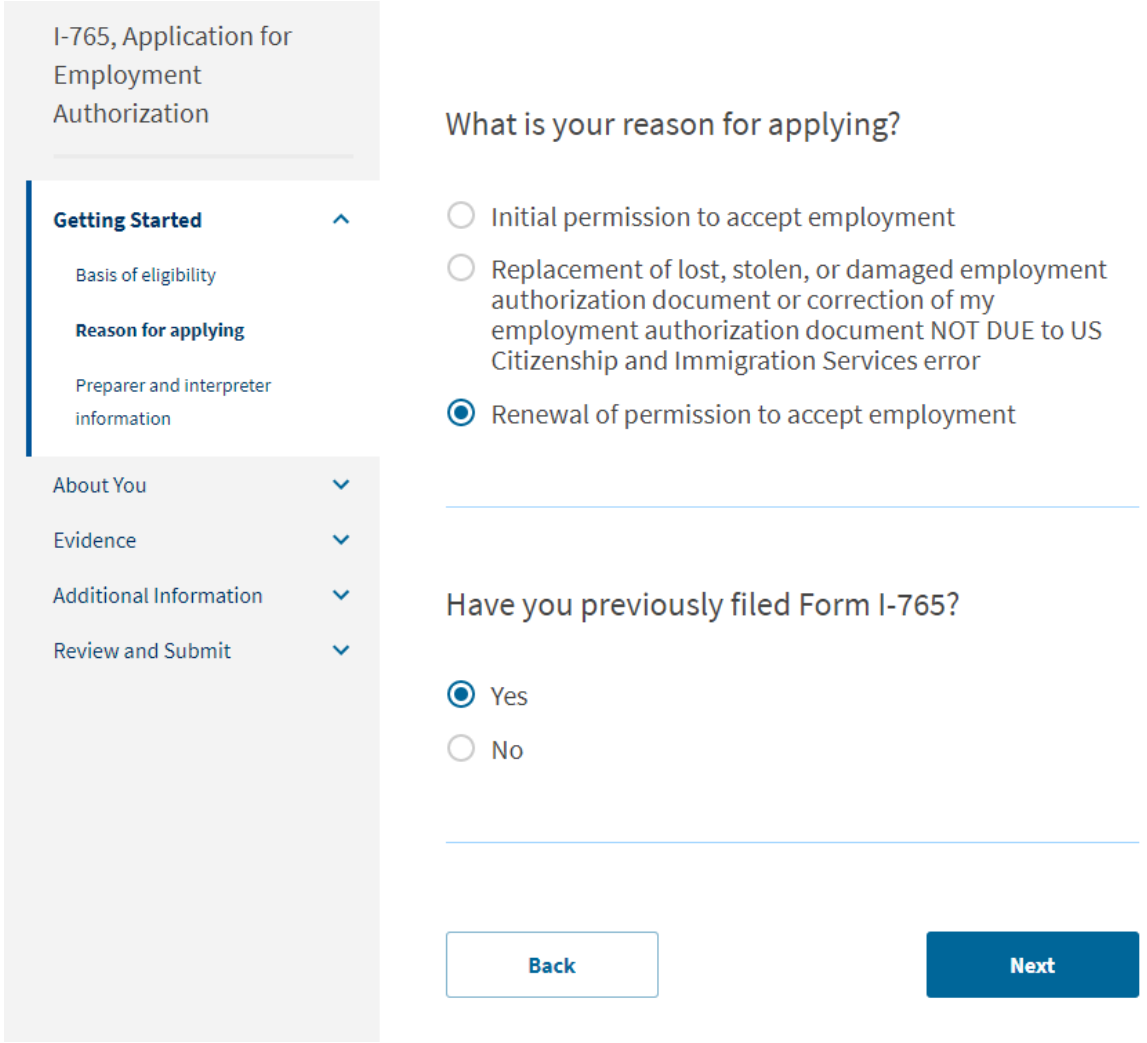


STEM OPT Extension

Steps to Apply:

8. Reason for applying?: Select "Renewal of permission to accept employment".

   Select "Yes" to the second question –you previously filed Form I-765 when you originally applied for OPT.



STEM OPT Extension

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9. Complete the "About You" sections:

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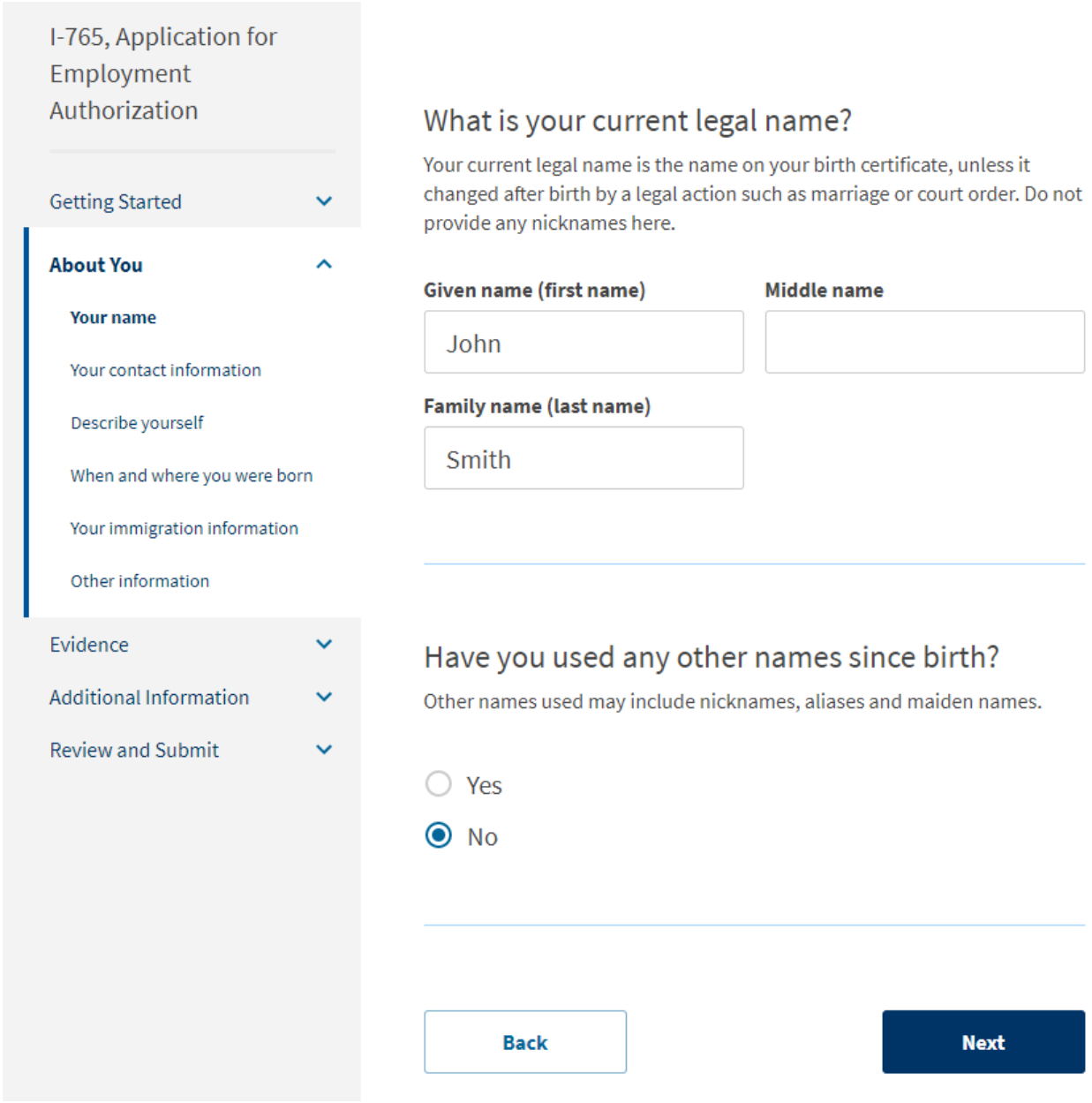

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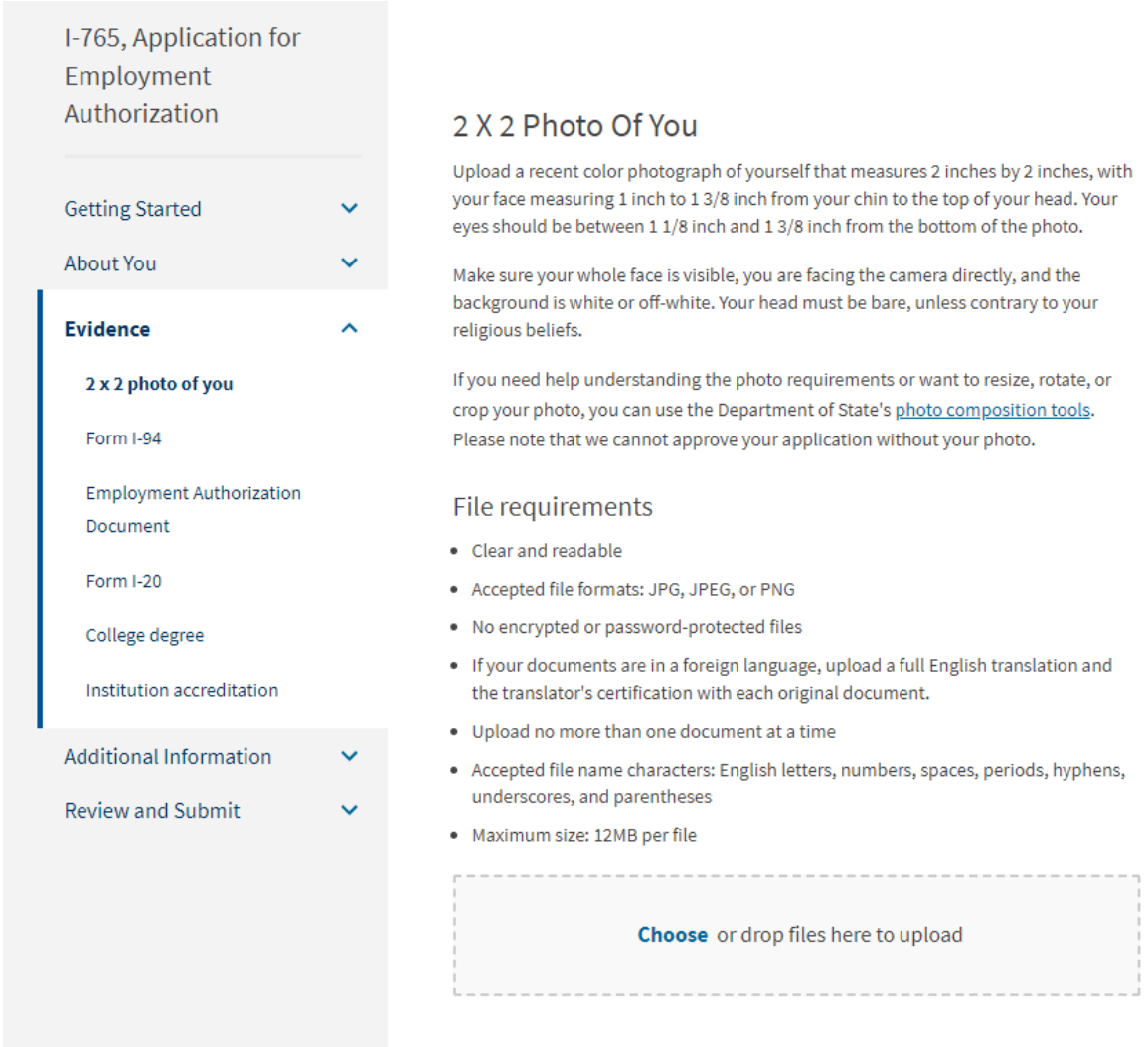
- ***Employment Authorization Document:*** *Scan and upload the front and back of your current OPT EAD card*
- ***Form I-20:*** *Scan and upload a copy of the "STEM OPT I-20" you received from the ISS advisor*
- ***College Degree:*** *Upload copy of official transcript showing your degree name as evidence that you earned a STEM degree*
- ***Institution Accreditation:*** *This is only required if your STEM degree was earned at a previous institution (not Whitworth). If you are applying for STEM OPT based on your earned STEM degree from Whitworth, you do not need to upload anything in this section.*



STEM OPT Extension

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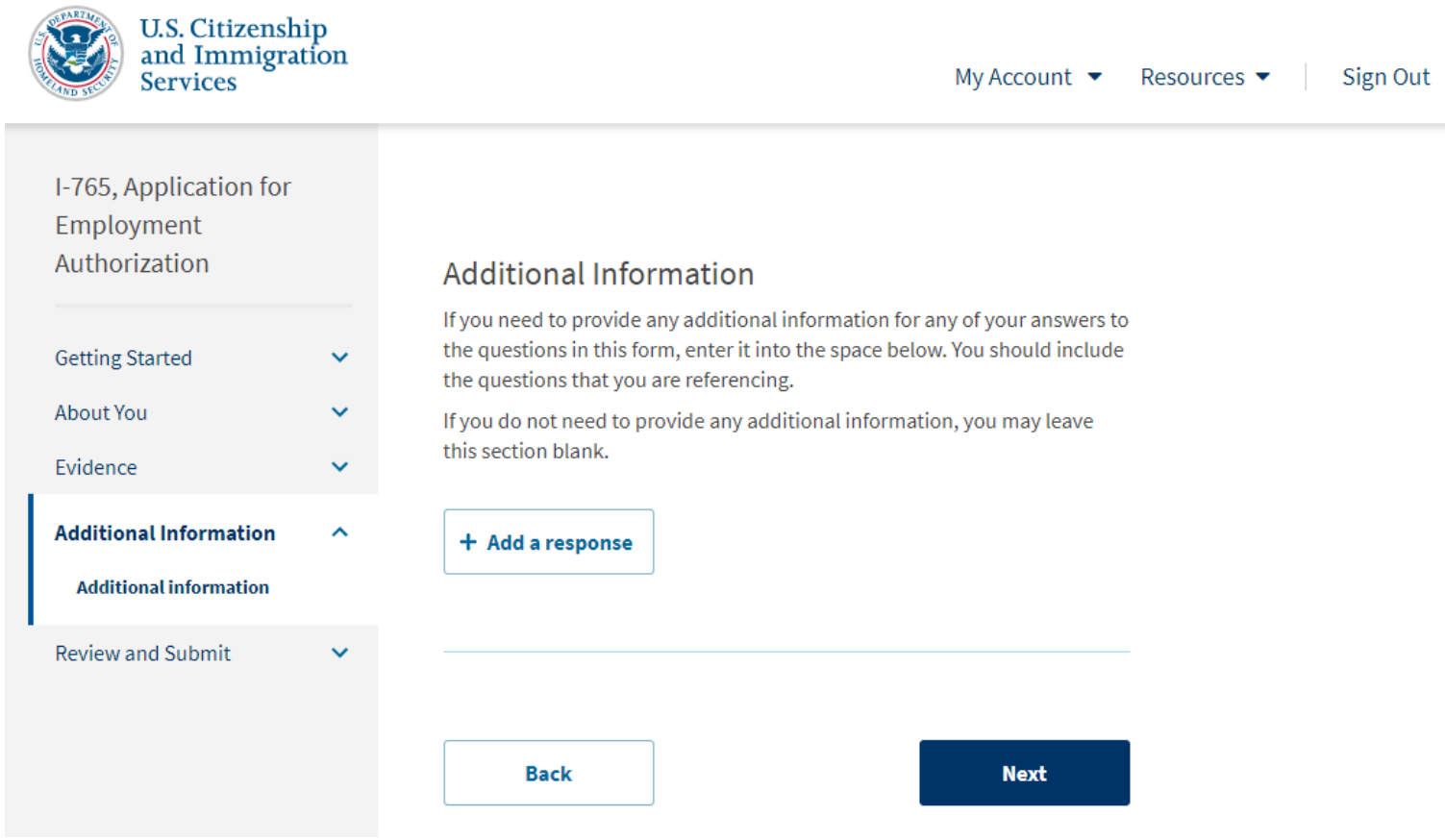

STEM OPT Extension

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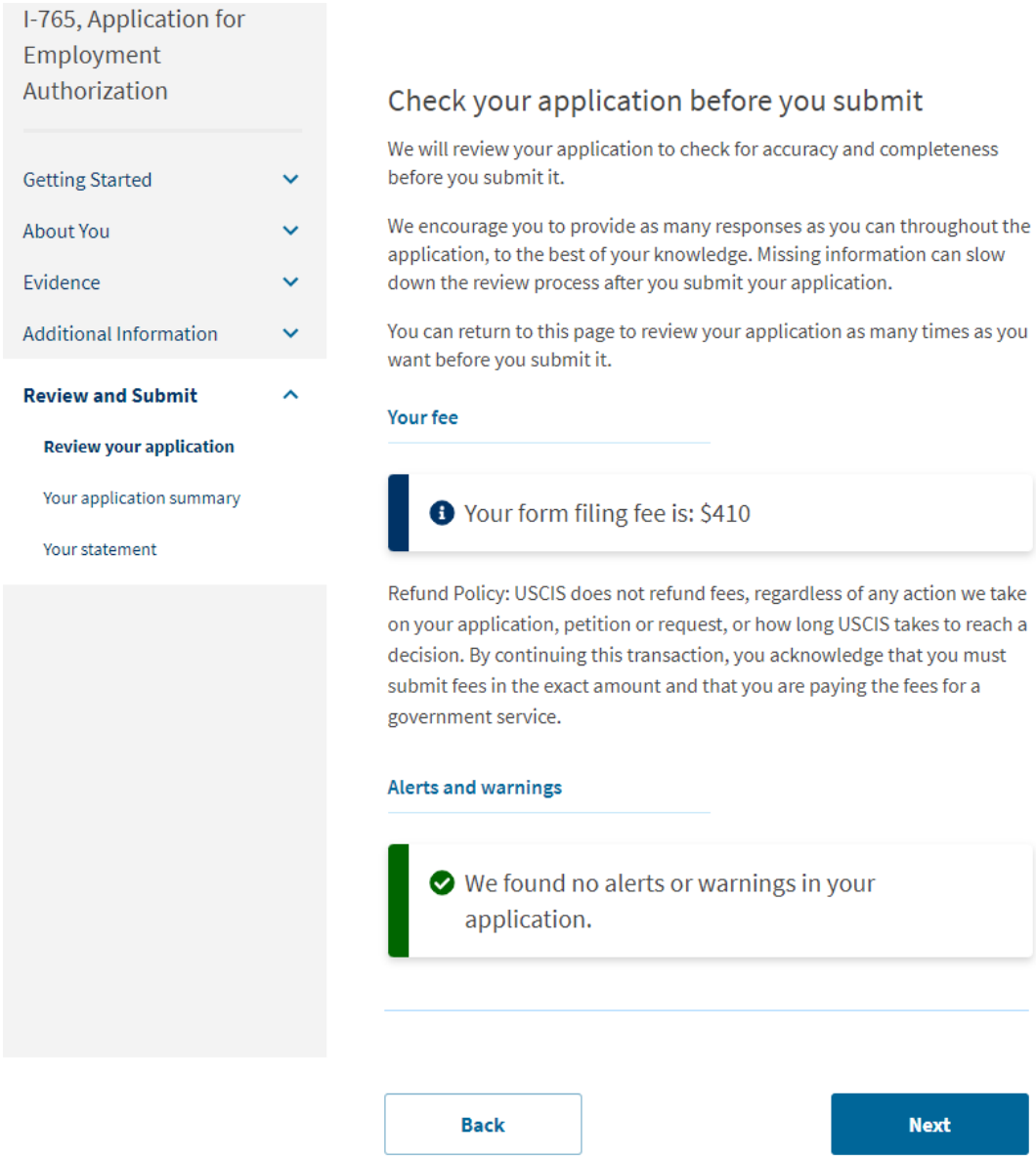

STEM OPT Extension

After Your Application is Submitted:
USCIS will email you confirmation of receipt of your application. Check your email regularly (and Spam folder).

When Your Application is Approved:
USCIS will mail you your EAD card. You may not begin work until you receive your EAD card.

RFE & Denied Applications:
If you receive a "Request for Evidence" (RFE) or denied application, notify ISS immediately (iss@whitworth.edu).

STEM OPT Reporting Requirements:
You must submit an address and employer validation report to ISS (iss@whitworth.edu) every 6 months from the start of your STEM OPT. We will mark this off in SEVIS.

After Your STEM OPT Period:
You are granted a 60-day grace period after the end date listed on your EAD card to either depart the United States, apply to a new academic program, or apply to change status to different visa category.

Questions?

Resources:

International Student Services website
https://www.whitworth.edu/cms/administration/international-student-services/
Email: iss@whitworth.edu
Advising Hours: Tuesdays 10am-12pm