

# **Optional Practical Training (OPT): 24-Month STEM Extension Tutorial**

Congratulations on finishing your first year of OPT!

# Tutorial Outline

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- STEM Eligibility and Allowable Employment
- Application Process Overview
- OISS STEM I-20 Request Process & Required Documents
- Submitting the 24-Month Extension request to USCIS
- Maintaining your F-1 status, 6-month & Annual Reporting Requirements
- Frequently asked questions about employment
- Frequently asked questions about Travel & Re-entry

# Are you eligible for the 24-Month OPT STEM Extension?

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## Requirements:

- You must be a recipient of a U.S. Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degree in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, or math) designated degree program. [See this list of STEM Majors.](#) (You can check the CIP code listed on your I-20).
- You are currently authorized for 12-month OPT and have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment.
- You can apply based on any previous STEM degree from an SEVP accredited U.S. institution within the last 10 years.

# Are you eligible for the 24-Month OPT STEM Extension?

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## Requirements (continued):

- You must be employed or have a job offer related to your field of study from an [employer who is registered in the USCIS E-Verify Program. Must complete Form I- 983 with employer and all employers must have an EIN number.](#)
- Your employer can work with you to fully complete the [Form I-983](#) and abide by all [employer obligations](#), including [Department of Homeland Security site visits](#).
- You are applying no more than 3 months before your 12-Month OPT expires and no later than the expiration of your 12-Month OPT.

# Types of Allowable Employment

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- Must be a **bona fide** employee of the employer completing the Form I-983. The employer signing the I-983 must be the same entity to employ you and provide the practical training experience required by the I-983.
- Multiple employer arrangements, sole proprietorships, employment through "temp" agencies, employment through consulting firm arrangements that provide labor for hire, and other relationships that do not constitute a bona fide employer-employee relationship are **generally not supported**.
- Volunteer/unpaid positions and self employment are **NOT** supported by the 24-Month OPT STEM Extension.

# Application Process Overview

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## 1. Request OPT STEM I-20 from OISS.

The I-20 will be ready in 10 business days after submitting the OPT 24 Month STEM application and all supporting documents to OISS. Your I-20 will be emailed to you when it's ready. You must submit your application within 60 days of the issuance of the I-20.

## 2. Prepare and submit your application materials to the USCIS.

A complete application must be received by USCIS before the end date of your current OPT as noted on the EAD card. You must be in the U.S to file the OPT STEM application with USCIS.

# Application Process Overview

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## **3. Receive your STEM Extension Employment Authorization Document (EAD).**

To check current processing times, visit <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/> . Then choose Form I-765 > Form Category "Based on a request by a qualified F-1 academic student (c)(3)" > Field Office or Service Center "Potomac Service Center". However, you may continue to work on OPT for up to 180 days while the STEM application is pending.

## **4. Maintain your F-1 status while on OPT STEM Extension.**

You must report your home address [UCSBGlobal](#) and employer updates to [UCSBGlobal](#) within 10 days of any change. 24 Month STEM Extension students must also submit a validation report every six months and training evaluations every 12 months. Your I-20 travel signature on page 2 is only valid for 6 months while on OPT STEM. Failure to provide timely updates may result in termination of the F-1 record.

# Request STEM OPT I-20

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Complete the form I-983 and submit it with all the required materials for OISS of issue the I-20 (I-983, Current I-94, Current EAD and \$300 OISS processing fee receipt)

## Application Deadline

- USCIS must receive your application before the end date of your OPT.
- OISS recommends that you submit your STEM I-20 request at least 2 months before your current OPT EAD expires.
- You may apply as early as 90 days before your OPT EAD end date.

Your authorization to work will be automatically extended for 180 days while your OPT STEM application is pending.



# Complete Form I-983

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The formal training plan must clearly articulate the OPT STEM Learning objectives and affirm the employer's commitment to helping you achieve those objectives.

To fulfill this requirement, you and your employer must complete and sign [Form I-983](#) and then submit pages **1-5 (leave page 5 blank)** to OISS.

For more information, including a [detailed tutorial](#) and instructions visit the [STEM OPT HUB](#) or <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview>

# Note about the Form I-765

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Please note that the guidance provided within this tutorial is an interpretation of the instructions published within the USCIS Instructions for Form I-765.

The information provided in this tutorial is a supplement that we have created to answer any questions that may arise while completing the Form I- 765.

We urge all students to also review the guidance provided by USCIS:  
<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>.

# The Online I-765

- OISS strongly recommends all students use the online filing for the I-765. The following information is provided as a guide to fill out the I-765. The online form through USCIS will walk you through the information you need to provide. This should only be started once you know you are ready to submit your online application through the USCIS website.
- You MUST have an I-20 with the OPT STEM Extension notation on page 2 from OISS BEFORE starting the online application through USCIS.
- If you prefer to mail your application rather than submit it online, please contact your OISS advisor for further assistance.

**Alert:** We mistakenly rejected bona-fide-determination-related [Forms I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#), submitted without a fee or fee waiver from June 14 through Sept. 29, 2021. We may have accepted other Forms I-765 with an unnecessary fee.

[See more](#) ▾

**Alert:** We are implementing the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland's Sept. 11 preliminary injunction in *Casa de Maryland Inc. et. al. v. Chad Wolf et. al.*

[See more](#) ▾

Certain noncitizens who are in the United States may file Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, to request an [Employment Authorization Document](#) (EAD). Other noncitizens whose immigration status authorizes them to work in the United States without restrictions may also use Form I-765 to apply for an EAD that shows such authorization.

[File Online](#)

## Online Filing Benefits

 Case status alerts and secure messages

 See all case correspondence

 Check your case status and update personal information

 Upload evidence

# The Online I-765 (continued)

- Please look for the File Online button about halfway down this page:  
<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
- You may need to create a USCIS Online Account before being able to submit your application.
- The application will walk you through the process and indicate the documents you need to submit. This tutorial may include more documents than are required. Please only submit what USCIS asks you to submit in your online application.

**Alert:** We mistakenly rejected bona-fide-determination-related [Forms I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#), submitted without a fee or fee waiver from June 14 through Sept. 29, 2021. We may have accepted other Forms I-765 with an unnecessary fee.

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[File Online](#)

## Online Filing Benefits

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 Upload evidence

# The Online I-765

An official website of the United States government [Here's how you know](#)



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

My Account ▼ Resource

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.

- (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** 
- (c)(11) Parole
- (c)(19) Temporary Protected Status Pending
- (c)(33) Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

Make sure to select the  
(c)(3)(C) eligibility category.

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Office of International  
Students & Scholars

Questions? Visit [oiss.ucsb.edu](https://oiss.ucsb.edu) or email [oiss@sa.ucsb.edu](mailto:oiss@sa.ucsb.edu)

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# The Online I-765

Be sure to select the option “Renewal of permission to accept employment” for the question “What is your reason for applying?”

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

My Account ▾ R

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
- No

[Back](#) [Next](#)

# Important Information About Mailing Address

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It is important to note that the mailing address you indicate on this application is where all your important documents will be mailed. This includes your Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card) and Social Security Card (if you chose to receive one). If you are using your current mailing address, please make sure that you are staying in that home for at least 6 months after submitting your application to USCIS.

If you are using a friend or family member's mailing address, you will want a trusted individual who will look out for your important mail. They should write your name on a card taped to the inside of the mailbox so the mail carrier sees you can receive mail at their home.

Not sure about your future mailing address? You may want to look at a Post Office (PO) Box. For example, you can reserve a PO Box through USPS:

<https://www.usps.com/manage/po-boxes.htm>

# Current UCSB OPT STEM Extension I-20

The screenshot shows the USCIS website interface for the I-765 application. The top navigation bar includes the USCIS logo, the text "U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services", and a "My Account" dropdown menu. The main content area is titled "I-765, Application for Employment Authorization". On the left, a sidebar menu lists various steps: "Getting Started", "About You", "Evidence", "Additional Information", and "Review and Submit". The "Evidence" section is expanded, showing a list of required documents: "2 x 2 photo of you", "Form I-94", "Employment Authorization Document", "Form I-20", "College degree", and "Institution accreditation". The main content area is titled "I-20, Certificate Of Eligibility For Nonimmigrant Student Status" and contains instructions for uploading a copy of the Form I-20. Below the instructions, there is a "File requirements" section with a bulleted list of rules. At the bottom of the page, there is a dashed box with the text "Choose or drop files here to upload".

An official website of the United States government. [Here's how you know.](#)

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

My Account

I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

Getting Started

About You

**Evidence**

- 2 x 2 photo of you
- Form I-94
- Employment Authorization Document
- Form I-20**
- College degree
- Institution accreditation

Additional Information

Review and Submit

I-20, Certificate Of Eligibility For Nonimmigrant Student Status

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

Choose or drop files here to upload

This is where you will upload your OPT STEM Extension I-20 issued by an OISS advisor AFTER you have submitted your OPT STEM Extension request on UCSBGlobal.

You must see an OPT STEM Extension recommendation on page 2 of the I-20 in order to apply for the OPT STEM Extension.



# College Degree

You may upload a copy of your diploma or transcripts in this section, as long as your selection shows your STEM field of study.

The screenshot shows the USCIS website for the I-765 application. The header includes the USCIS logo and the text "U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services". A navigation menu on the right contains "My Account" and "Resc". The main content area is titled "I-765, Application for Employment Authorization". A left-hand navigation menu lists sections: "Getting Started", "About You", "Evidence", "College degree", "Additional Information", and "Review and Submit". The "Evidence" section is expanded, showing options for "2 x 2 photo of you", "Form I-94", "Employment Authorization Document", "Form I-20", "College degree", and "Institution accreditation". The "College degree" section is selected, displaying instructions: "Upload evidence the degree that is the basis for the STEM OPT extension is in one of the degree programs currently listed on the [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#) or a copy of your prior STEM degree." Below the instructions are "File requirements" listed as bullet points: "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", and "Maximum size: 12MB per file". A dashed box contains the text "Choose or drop files here to upload". At the bottom of the page are "Back" and "Next" buttons.

# Institution Accreditation

An official website of the United States government [Here's how you know.](#)



My Account ▾ Res

I-765, Application for  
Employment Authorization

Getting Started ▾

About You ▾

**Evidence** ▲

2 x 2 photo of you

Form I-94

Employment Authorization  
Document

Form I-20

College degree

**Institution accreditation**

Additional Information ▾

Review and Submit ▾

## Institution Accreditation

Upload evidence that the institution that granted your STEM degree is currently accredited by the U.S. Department of Education and certified by the Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP), if this STEM OPT extension is based on a previously earned STEM degree.

### 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

Back

Next

If you are applying for the STEM Extension based on a degree you received from UCSB, you may skip this section.

If you are applying based on a degree received at another institution, please contact OISS for further assistance.

# What Should Your STEM OPT Application to USCIS Include?

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- U.S.-style passport photo taken within the past 30 days. Please see <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/how-apply/photos.html>
- Copy of updated I-20 with OPT STEM Extension recommendation on page two
- Copy of current EAD card
- Copy of STEM degree certificate/diploma and/or official transcripts
- Copy of I-94
- Copy of passport information page

\*Do not send your I-983 to USCIS. You and your employer should each keep it for your records.

# STEM Reporting Requirements

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## Address changes

While you are on STEM OPT you are required to keep your living address updated. Please report all address updates to [UCSBGlobal](#).

## Employment changes

If you change employers or employment status while on STEM OPT, you must submit a new I-983 to UCSBGlobal or alert us of unemployment within 10 days.

**Material changes** to your [Formal Training Plan](#).

# Reporting Your Information

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## Reportable Information to UCSBGlobal:

- Living Address
- Phone Number

## Reportable Information to OISS:

- Material changes to current employment/employer
- Termination of current employment
- New employment/employer
- Change of email address
- Change of visa status

# Reporting Material Changes to Your Form I-983 Formal Training Plan

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## Material changes may include (but are not limited to):

- Any change of the employer's **Employer Identification Number** (Federal Tax ID number). This could result from a change in employer's ownership or structure
- Any **reduction in your compensation** that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked
- Any significant decrease in **hours per week** that you engage in a STEM training opportunity
- Changes to the **employer's commitments** or your **learning objectives** documented on the Form I-983

If there are any of these Material Changes, a revised I-983 needs to be submitted to OISS within **10 business days**

# 6 Month Validation

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- STEM OPT students must submit a validation report to UCSBGlobal every six months starting from the date the 24-month extension begins. This means 4 validations in total over 24-month OPT STEM Extension.
- **Your F-1 record may be terminated if you fail to report every 6 months.**

## **You are responsible for meeting this requirement!**

When you receive your STEM Extension, immediately mark your calendar to show 6 month deadlines.

**Example:** Your STEM Extension starts on January 10, 2018. Your validations are due on July 10, 2018, January 10, 2019, July 10, 2019, and January 10, 2020. Mark these dates.

# Annual Evaluations of Student Progress

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- STEM OPT students must submit an annual evaluation of Student Progress. Your employer must review and sign the self evaluation for the first year and the final evaluation for the second year. [See pg. 5 of I-983 Form.](#)
- **Your F-1 record may be terminated if you fail to report each 12 months**

## You are responsible for meeting this requirement!

When you receive your STEM Extension, immediately mark your calendar to show 12 month deadlines. You can report to OISS 30 days in advance.

**Example:** Your STEM Extension starts on January 10, 2023. Your evaluation are due January 10, 2024 and January 10, 2019.



# Frequently Asked Questions: Employment

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## **What is considered full-time employment on the 24-month OPT STEM Extension?**

Students must work over 20 hours per week for an E-Verify employer in a position directly related to the STEM degree, following the goals and objectives stated in the I-983 training plan.

## **I have two part-time jobs. One of the employers is enrolled in E-Verify but the other is not. Is this allowed?**

No, only full time employment is allowed at your STEM-eligible E-Verify registered employer.

# Frequently Asked Questions: Employment

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## **How many days of unemployment am I allowed while on the 24-month STEM Extension?**

Students who receive a 24-month OPT STEM extension are given an additional 60 days of unemployment for a total of 150 days over their entire post-completion OPT period

## **Can I continue to work while my 24-month STEM Extension OPT is pending?**

If a student's EAD expires while the STEM Extension application is pending, the student is authorized to work until USCIS makes a decision about the application, but not more than 180 days from the date the student's initial OPT EAD expires.

# Frequently Asked Questions: Employment

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## **What documents should I present to my employer once my 12-month OPT expires and my OPT STEM is pending?**

You should present the employer with the expired EAD card, the form I-20 recommending the student for STEM Extension, and proof of the timely filing with USCIS.

## **Can I switch employers while my OPT STEM application is pending?**

Yes, but you should contact your OISS STEM OPT advisor immediately for next steps.

# STEM OPT Hub

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## There's more information online!

Visit the Department of Homeland Security [STEM OPT HUB](#) for more information, help completing forms, and answers to Frequently Asked Questions.