

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

Congratulations on finishing your first year of OPT!

Tutorial Outline

- 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?

REQUIREMENTS:

1. 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).
2. You are currently authorized for 12-month OPT and have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment.
3. You can apply based on any previous STEM degree from an SEVP accredited U.S. institution within the last 10 years.
4. 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.
5. 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](#).
6. 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

1. 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.
2. 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**.
3. Volunteer/unpaid positions and self employment are **NOT** supported by the 24-Month OPT STEM Extension.

Application Process Overview

1. Request OPT STEM I-20 from OISS.

The I-20 will be ready for pick up 10 business days after submitting the OPT 24 Month STEM application and all supporting documents to OISS. Arrangements can be made to send you the new I-20 by mail.

2. Prepare, collect & mail your application materials to USCIS.

Allow approximately 1 week to gather and organize your materials for mailing. 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.

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

Average processing time at the USCIS is 90-120 days. 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 general address to your SEVP Portal and employer updates to OISS within 5 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

Complete the form I-983 and submit with all the requested materials to OISS.

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

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 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

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>.

Form I-765

In the "Reason for Applying" Select "Renewal of my permission to accept employment"

All information must be typed on a computer!

▶ **START HERE** - Type or print in black ink.

Part 1. Reason for Applying

I am applying for (select only one box):

- 1.a. Initial permission to accept employment.
- 1.b. Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document, or correction of my employment authorization document **NOT DUE** to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) error.

NOTE: Replacement (correction) of an employment authorization document due to USCIS error does not require a new Form I-765 and filing fee. Refer to **Replacement for Card Error** in the **What is the Filing Fee** section of the Form I-765 Instructions for further details.

- 1.c. Renewal of my permission to accept employment. (Attach a copy of your previous employment authorization document.)

Enter your name exactly as it appears on the biographical page of your passport.

Part 2. Information About You

Your Full Legal Name

- 1.a. Family Name (Last Name)
- 1.b. Given Name (First Name)
- 1.c. Middle Name

Form I-765

U.S. Physical Address

7.a. Street Number and Name

7.b. Apt. Ste. Flr.

7.c. City or Town

7.d. State 7.e. ZIP Code

Your mailing address may not be the same as your physical address. Physical address is where you actually live. Your mailing address may be a post office box.

Form I-765

Information About Your Last Arrival in the United States

21.a. Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record Number (if any)

21.b. Passport Number of Your Most Recently Issued Passport

21.c. Travel Document Number (if any)

21.d. Country That Issued Your Passport or Travel Document

21.e. Expiration Date for Passport or Travel Document
(mm/dd/yyyy)

22. Date of Your Last Arrival Into the United States, On or About (mm/dd/yyyy)

23. Place of Your Last Arrival Into the United States

24. Immigration Status at Your Last Arrival (for example, B-2 visitor, F-1 student, or no status)

25. Your Current Immigration Status or Category (for example, B-2 visitor, F-1 student, parolee, deferred action, or no status or category)

26. Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Number (if any)

- 21.a. Enter your I-94 Admission Record Number. Your most recent I-94 can be obtained at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>
- 21.b. Enter your most recently issued passport number. If you last entered the U.S. using an older passport, you should still enter your newest passport number.
- 21.e./22. Please enter the dates in a mm/dd/yyyy format
- 23. Your place of last arrival can be found in your I-94 Travel Record. For example: Los Angeles (LAX)
 - If you received [pre-clearance](#) at an international airport such as Calgary, Vancouver, Dublin, Bahamas, or Abu Dhabi, you should list the International Airport you entered from. For example: Calgary International Airport (CLG).
- 26. Your SEVIS Number can be found on the top left of your I-20

Most Recent I-94

Admission (I-94) Record Number :

Most Recent Date of Entry: 2018 September 16

Class of Admission : F1

Admit Until Date : D/S

Details provided on the I-94 Information form:

Last/Surname :

First (Given) Name :

Birth Date :

Passport Number :

Country of Issuance :

Please check your I-94 and confirm that all of the information is accurate.

**Class of Admission should be F-1.
Admit until Date should be D/S.**

Form I-765

Information About Your Eligibility Category

27. Eligibility Category. Refer to the **Who May File Form I-765** section of the Form I-765 Instructions to determine the appropriate eligibility category for this application. Enter the appropriate letter and number for your eligibility category below (for example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii)).

() () ()

28. (c)(3)(C) STEM OPT Eligibility Category. If you entered the eligibility category (c)(3)(C) in **Item Number 27.**, provide the information requested in **Item Numbers 28.a - 28.c.**

28.a. Degree

28.b. Employer's Name as Listed in E-Verify

28.c. Employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a Valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number

The Degree will be your degree level and major for example "Doctorate in Biology"

Enter your employer's name as it appears exactly in the E-Verify system. If it does not fit, you will type as much as can be typed then please use Page 7 to write the full name of the company.

Page 7; Part 6. Additional Information

Page 7 is used to provide additional information to USCIS. You will use this section to:

- Provide all previously used SEVIS numbers (from I-20s or DS-2019s you have previously held)
 - UCSB only has access to SEVIS ID's for UCSB students. If you attended another school under a different SEVIS ID and do not know the number, you may need to contact your previous school for information or documents.
- Provide evidence of any previously authorized CPT or OPT and the academic level at which it was authorized.
 - State whether the CPT was full or part time
 - You will attach copies of the corresponding I-20's / EAD cards to your application. If you no longer have a copy, you may contact OISS or your previous school to request information or documents.
- The full name of your company as listed in E-Verify

Part 6. Additional Information

If you need extra space to provide any additional information within this application, use the space below. If you need more space than what is provided, you may make copies of this page to complete and file with this application or attach a separate sheet of paper. Type or print your name and A-Number (if any) at the top of each sheet; indicate the Page Number, Part Number, and Item Number to which your answer refers; and sign and date each sheet.

1.a. Family Name (Last Name)

1.b. Given Name (First Name)

1.c. Middle Name

2. A-Number (if any) ▶ A-

3.a. Page Number 3.b. Part Number 3.c. Item Number

3.d.

4.a. Page Number 4.b. Part Number 4.c. Item Number

4.d.

5.a. Page Number 5.b. Part Number 5.c. Item Number

5.d.

6.a. Page Number 6.b. Part Number 6.c. Item Number

6.d.

7.a. Page Number 7.b. Part Number 7.c. Item Number

7.d.

3.a. Page Number 3.b. Part Number 3.c. Item Number

3.d.

3.a. Page Number 3.b. Part Number 3.c. Item Number

3.d.

What Should Your STEM OPT Application to USCIS Include?

- Application fee (\$410 check/money order)
- Two U.S.-style passport photos
- Original Form G-1145
- Original Form I-765
- Copy of updated I-20 with OPT recommendation on page 2
- Copy of current EAD card
- Copy of STEM degree certificate/diploma
- Official Transcripts
- Copy of all CPT/OPT I-20s issued
- Copy of I-94
- Copy of passport information page
- Copy of U.S. F-1 visa

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

STEM Reporting Requirements

Address changes

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

Employment changes

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

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

Reporting Your Information

Reportable Information to SEVP Portal:

- 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

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

- Any change of the employer's **Employer Identification Number**, (also known as the company's Federal Tax ID number). This could result from a change in the 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 as 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

6 Month Validation

- STEM OPT students must submit a validation report to OISS every six months starting from the date the 24-month extension begins and ending when the student's F-1 status ends. This means 4 validations in total over 24-month OPT STEM Extension. [See Page 5 of the I-983.](#)
- **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

- STEM OPT students must submit an annual evaluation of Student Progress. Your employer must review and sign the self evaluation. [See Page 5 of the 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.

Example: Your STEM Extension starts on January 10, 2017. Your annual January 10, 2018 and January 10, 2019. Mark these dates.

Frequently Asked Questions: Employment

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.

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.

What counts as unemployment?

- Each day during the period when OPT authorization begins and ends that the student does not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment.

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.

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 we do NOT recommend this. You must submit a new OPT 24-Month STEM Request and I-983 to OISS. An advisor will update your information you must submit an amended Form I-765 and I-20 copy to the appropriate USCIS Service Center, providing the new employer's E-Verify number and a copy of the USCIS receipt notice for the first Form I-765. A brief letter explaining the submission should also be included. There is no fee associated with submitting the amended Form I-765.

Frequently Asked Questions: Travel & Re-entry

Can I travel outside the US during my approved OPT period?

Yes. However, if the student whose approved period of OPT has started travels outside of the US while unemployed, the time spent outside the United States will count as unemployment against the 90/150-day limits.

- *If a student travels while employed either during a period of leave authorized by an employer or as part of their employment, the time spent outside the US will not count as unemployment.

Can I travel outside the US while my 24-month STEM Extension OPT is pending?

OISS does not recommend international travel after the expiration date of your 12-month OPT and while your STEM OPT application is pending. All international travel during this time is at your own risk. Re-entry to the United States is at the discretion of Customs and Border Protection officers.

Can I renew my visa while on OPT STEM?

Yes, you are eligible to renew your visa while on OPT STEM. Remember, that you are still applying for an F-1 non-immigrant visa which means you must demonstrate ties to your home country. Be advised that you **MUST** have an approved STEM EAD to apply for a new visa.

What documents do I need to re-enter the U.S?

If you are eligible for travel, you will need:

- A valid passport with unexpired F-1 visa stamp (if applicable)
- Form I-20, signed on page 2 by OISS Advisor within the last 6 months
- Unexpired EAD Card.
- Proof of employment (or employment offer)

STEM OPT Hub

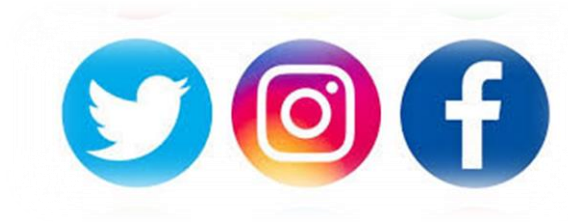
There's more information online!

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

Stay Connected!

Social Media

- ✓ [Facebook](#)
- ✓ [Instagram](#)
- ✓ [Twitter](#)



Walk-In Advising

- Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday
 - 10 AM – 12 PM and 1 PM – 4 PM

Email: oiss@sa.ucsb.edu