24-Month STEM OPT Extension Checklist

You must now submit your request for work permission to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). USCIS will review your application and, if approved, issue a new Employment Authorization Document (EAD). USCIS processing time may take anywhere between two to four months. There is no guarantee of approval of the STEM OPT application. The STEM OPT application process and maintenance of status while on STEM OPT is the responsibility of the F-1 student. International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) provides guidance about OPT but is not responsible for delays, rejections, or denials by USCIS.

Filing Deadlines:

Applications can be filed up to **90 days** prior to the end of the current Post-Completion OPT. USCIS must receive the application before the current Post-completion OPT expires, and within **60 days** of the date the recommendation is entered in SEVIS. **DO NOT submit your STEM OPT application to USCIS without your new I-20 with the recommendation from the ISSS office.**

Online Application process:

After receiving the 24-month STEM OPT Extension I-20 from the ISSS Office, students must create or log into their existing myUSCIS account. https://myaccount.uscis.gov. Once logged in, students will navigate to File a Form and select "Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)". It is the student's responsibility to complete the Form I-765 application fully and accurately in accordance with USCIS instructions.

Please note that the USCIS online system guides you through what supporting documentation you must include and which section it should be uploaded. All documents must meet the filing requirements outlined by USCIS to ensure successful uploads within the system. Please be sure that all pictures or scans show the required information clearly. You must be physically present in the U.S. to file your application. The 24-month STEM OPT Extension category is (c)(3)(C).

You must have electronic copies of the following documents ready to upload when filing the Form I-765 through myUSCIS:

- ☐ Recent 2 x 2 passport style photo; (https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/how-apply/photos.html)
- ☐ Most recent Form I-94; (www.cbp.gov/i94)
- ☐ Current Post-Completion OPT EAD card (front and back);
- ☐ Page 1 & 2 of new I-20 with the STEM OPT recommendation with your ORIGINAL (ink) signature on page 1;
- ☐ Government-issued identity document showing your picture, name, and date of birth (i.e passport, visa);
- ☐ Previously issued I-20s showing OPT or CPT (these may be uploaded to additional documentation)
    - ○ Previous EAD if had OPT;

Diploma and/or official transcripts related to your STEM degree program uploaded under "College Degree".

NOTE: Most students will not need to upload any evidence or documentation into the "Institutional Accreditation" section as it only applies to students applying for STEM based on their prior degree program. If your current OPT I-20 is in a STEM field, you do not need to upload evidence into this section.

Filing Fee:

The filing fee for the I-765 is $470 and can be paid via credit card or direct bank withdrawal under the "Review and Submit" section of e-File system.

DO NOT PAY BEFORE APPLICATION IS FULLY COMPLETED AND REVIEWED. Payment officially submits application to USCIS.

Maintaining Status:

- Reporting requirements: Once your STEM OPT is approved you must continue the reporting requirements verifying your information every six months: legal name, residential/mailing address; employer name and address and status of employment experience. If there is a change to any of the above information before your 6-month update is due, you must report this change to ISSS within 10 days. You can find the OPT Update form online: http://www.k-state.edu/isss/students/f1/opt.html. Please be sure ISSS also has a copy of your most recent EAD.
    - SEVP will send you an email once your OPT is approved to set up an account for an SEVP Portal for reporting. The SEVP Portal is optional.
- Job/Employment requirements:
    - May not exceed 150 days of unemployment during the during the entire 36 month period (12 months of Post-completion OPT and 24 months of STEM).
    - Any and all employers must be registered with E-Verify.
    - A new I-983 must be executed, signed and submitted to ISSS within 10 days of beginning a new experience with a new employer OR if there is a material change to the current training experience outlined on the I-983.
        - Evaluation requirements: Student must complete two self-evaluations during the STEM period. The initial evaluation should be submitted 12 months after the STEM OPT start date. The final evaluation should be submitted at the conclusion of any employment or the end of the 24-month period.
    - Employment must be in a position related to the STEM degree for which the extension was approved.
        - You must provide a short explanation as to how your employments relate to your field of study. See below for examples taken from the SEVP Policy Guidance: Practical Training-Determining a Direct Relationship Between Employment and Student's Major Area of Study (https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/optDirectlyRelatedGuidance.pdf)
            - Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering: I work full time as an Electrical Engineer at ABC Corp., a government contractor. In my job, I analyze client requirements for electrical systems and provide them with cost estimates of such systems. My work requires understanding of electrical circuit theory, which I studied in-depth at the University of ABC.
            - PhD in Computer Science: I am employed as a Computer and Information Research Scientist at ABC Research Institute. I work as part of a team of scientists and engineers that designs experiments to test the operation of various software systems. My work builds on research in complex algorithms and machine learning, which I studied as part of my dissertation.
    - All employment must be at least 20 hours per week.
    - All work while on the STEM extension must be compensated- **volunteering/unpaid experiences do not qualify**.

Types of employment: Students must be bona fide employees of the employer signing the Training Plan, and the employer that signs the Training Plan must be the same entity that employs the student and provides the practical training experience. Therefore, some types of employment such as self-employment, sole proprietorships, employment through "temp" agencies or consulting firms for hire may not be permitted. The student may not provide the employer attestations required for the I-983 on his or her own behalf.

Employer reporting requirements:

An employer of an F-1 student approved for the 24-month STEM OPT extension must report to the DSO when a student is terminated or leaves employment, within 5 business days of the termination or departure. Additionally, the employer has a shared obligation with the student to submit a modified form I-983 when there has been a material change to the training plan described on the form I-983 on file with the DSO at the earliest available opportunity.

Travel Issues:

If you have filed for a change of status to H-1B, travel can be risky and you should consult the individual who filed the H-1B petition for any travel questions. Otherwise, students on STEM OPT extensions may travel abroad and seek reentry to the U.S. in F-1 status with a valid passport, a valid F-1 visa that permits multiple entries, a current Form I-20 endorsed for travel by a DSO within the last 6 months, STEM OPT EAD card and verification of employment.

Resuming Study:

If you plan to enroll in a new program as a full-time student, you must consult with your advisor in ISSS as to how your OPT STEM authorization may be impacted as well as the necessary paperwork.

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