

## STEM OPT EXTENSION PROCESS

### Eligibility for the STEM OPT Extension

1. Be currently working in a period of post-completion OPT & have a bachelor's degree or higher degree in an [eligible STEM field](#)
  - Have received your most recent degree (which does not need to be STEM-related) from a currently accredited Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified school in the U.S.
  - Have received your prior, qualifying STEM degree in the U.S. within 10 years of applying for the STEM OPT extension.
  - The qualifying STEM degree must be on the Department of Homeland Security's [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#) at the time you submit your STEM OPT extension application (rather than at the time you received the degree).
2. You must have a paid job offer that meets the following requirements:
  - The job is with an employer enrolled in the USCIS [E-Verify](#) program. Double-check with your employer to see if they are enrolled in E-Verify; sometimes the USCIS E-Verify database is not correct. (The University of Washington participates in the E-Verify program. The UW E-Verify ID number is 293411.)
  - The job offers at least 20 hours of work per week
  - The job will provide formal training and learning objectives directly related to your qualifying STEM degree
3. Be able to complete the [I-983 Training Plan](#) with your employer. You are required to follow all the I983 Instructions: <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/i983Instructions.pdf>

### Employment Requirements during the 24-months STEM OPT Extension

1. You must work at least 20 hours per week for an employer that a) participates in the E-Verify program and b) agrees to follow all the employer requirements in the 24-month STEM rule.
2. Unlike the 12 month OPT, volunteer/unpaid work or self-employment is not permitted under the 24 month STEM OPT Extension regulation.
3. See STEP 7 of this STEM OPT Extension Application STEPS for more details!

### When to Apply for the 24-months STEM OPT Extension

1. USCIS must receive your STEM OPT extension application before your current 12-month OPT EAD card expiration date AND
2. Apply as early as 90 days before your current 12-month OPT EAD card expiration date.  
Example: If your EAD card shows your OPT ends on **Dec14th**, USCIS accepts applications **September 15<sup>th</sup>** but no later than **Dec13<sup>th</sup>**

Be aware that it can take our office up to 10 business days to process a request for a new I-20 (for your STEM OPT extension Application) AND allow sufficient time to mail your application to USCIS.

### Follow these STEM OPT Extension Application STEPS:

#### **STEP 1:** Confirm your 12-month OPT information is correct

1. Is your 12-month OPT information up-to-date? Check the [SEVP Portal](#).
2. If your current address and employment information is correct, proceed to Step 2 below.
3. If your current address and employment information is **not** correct email [iss@uwosh.edu](mailto:iss@uwosh.edu) to report your current address and missing Employment/Practical Training information.

**STEP 2:** Complete and submit your STEM OPT Extension I-20 Request by sending the following documents in one email to [iss@uwosh.edu](mailto:iss@uwosh.edu) or by dropping the applications package off at our office during regular office hours.

**Checklist of Required OPT Application Documents:**

- Completed OPT Application (=THIS FORM, just for our usage “do NOT submit to USCIS”)
- Copy of the STEM degree
- 2 Photos (passport size: Review number 2. C on page 8 of the “Required Documentation” section of [USCIS photo instructions](#); max 30days old; lightly print your full name on the back of both photos)
- Copy of current (and previous) Passport Photo Page (Passport must be valid for over 6 more months)
- Copy of current (and previous) US-Visa
- Copy of your Form I-94(which can be obtained at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94>)
- A copy of your current EAD card (front and back) and any previous EAD cards
- Copy of all I-20s (especially I-20 that include CPT approvals)
- Print a copy of the [UWO Accreditation \(valid until 2028\)](#) to provide evidence that UWO is currently accredited
- [I-983 Training Plan](#) (You and your employer must complete and sign Form I-983. We cannot provide advice to employers about the I-983 Training Plan requirements. Review the [I-983 Training Plan instructions](#) provided by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). This additional information is to supplement the instructions provided by SEVP.
  - UW Oshkosh SEVIS School Code: CHI214F20164000
  - Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information: Johannes Schmied 9204240775
  - Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: The CIP code is printed next to your major on page one of your I-20.
  - Date Awarded (Degree Date): Enter the date when the degree, upon which STEM OPT will be based, was awarded.
  - Employment Authorization Number: This is the USCIS# on your Employment Authorization Document (EAD card).
  - Page 5: Evaluation on Student Progress and Final Evaluation on Student Progress: *This page can be left blank when you submit your I-983 Training Plan to ISS to request your STEM OPT extension I-20.* You must complete these evaluations annually during your STEM OPT extension period; be sure to mark your calendar now.
- Completed [I-765 Form](#) (fill with BLACK INK!; see “I-765 Completion Guide” below)

- New I-20 issued by DSO AFTER review of the completeness of the Application package above (except “Payment”)
- \$410** Check or Money Order (payable to: Department of Homeland Security) or pay by credit card: <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450>
  - Review Fee here: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> and click on “Filing fee”
  - Make sure that you have enough money/credit available in your account to cover the application fee!

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ CITY, STATE ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ DATE Current Date \_\_\_\_\_ 0123

Dates on checks and money orders are critical!  
 • Write the current date. Do not write a future date.  
 • Date format should be Month Day Year - example: June 15 2017

PAY TO THE ORDER OF US Department of Homeland Security \$ 410.00  
 Four Hundred Ten and no cents \_\_\_\_\_ DOLLARS

BANK NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ CITY, STATE ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 FOR OPT Application \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

⑆0123456789⑆01234567890123⑆0123

- Form G-1145(<https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>): optional; it signs you up for email/text message notification of your Application’s arrival at USCIS)

Form I-765 Completion Guide – STEM OPT Extension:

- Part 1, Line 1, Applicants for the STEM OPT Extension must select “ 1.c. Renewal of my permission to accept employment”
- Part 1, Line 5, Important mail about your application, including your official receipt and Employment Authorization Document (approval card) will be mailed to this address. Use an address that you are 100% sure you will still be able to be reached at 3-5 months after today.

**Warning!** Government mail will not be forwarded to a new address by the U.S. Postal Service, even if you ask the U.S. Postal Service to forward your mail. The only way to change the address USCIS uses for your OPT-related mail is to submit an [official change of address](#) to USCIS using their website tool.

- Part 2, Line 5.a. If your mail is send to a friend please include an “In Care Of Name”
- Part 2, Line 8. The Alien registration Number is printed on your EAD (labeled ‘USCIS number’)
- Part 2, Line 12. All STEM OPT Extension applicants have to answer with “YES”
- Part 2, Line 27. For STEM OPT Extension enter: ( c ) ( 3 ) ( C )
- Part 2: Items 28.a.,b.,c.: STEM OPT Eligibility Details
  - a. Degree: write your degree level and major, for example: Bachelor’s in Biology.
  - b. Provide your employer’s name as it is listed in E-Verify
  - c. Employer’s E-Verify number—confirm this number with your employer; it is not public knowledge.
- Part 3, Line 7.a. Handwritten signature within the small box (not touching any lines!; with black ink!)

Part 6: Line 3 and following lines: Complete this section only if you had been CPT or OPT approved previously or have used a different SEVIS ID in F-1 status previously

For each of the items, complete **one** box in Part 6.

We suggest using the following to complete the Page Number, Part Number, and Item Number for any previous work authorization, as this information is required specific to Category (c)(3)(C) (per the [I-765 instructions](#), page 4): Page 3, Part 2, Item 27

**CPT:** Please list your CPT approvals. We suggest this format: **CPT Authorizations** (as a title to the section).

Employer; Start date – End date; Part-time or Full-time; Degree level (Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Doctorate). You can find your CPT details on the I-20 that was approved for each period of CPT.

**OPT:** Please list your past OPT approvals. We suggest this format: **OPT Authorizations** (as a title to the section).

Start date – End date; Degree level (Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Doctorate). Make sure to also include a copy of any previously issued EADs.

**Previous SEVIS IDs:** Please list your other SEVIS IDs you have used in the past. We suggest this format: **Previous**

**SEVIS IDs** (as a title to the section). SEVIS ID: N00...; program start date – program end date; Degree level (Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Doctorate). (Use **Page 3, Part 2, Item 26** to label your response in Part 6).

| 4.a. Page Number                                   | 4.b. Part Number | 4.c. Item Number | 5.a. Page Number                    | 5.b. Part Number | 5.c. Item Number | 3.a. Page Number          | 3.b. Part Number | 3.c. Item Number |
|--|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 3  | 2                | 27               | 3                                   | 2                | 27               | 3                         | 2                | 26               |
| 4.d. CPT Authorizations                            |                  |                  | 5.d. OPT Authorizations             |                  |                  | 3.d. Previous SEVIS ID's: |                  |                  |
| Microsoft; 06/12/2015 - 09/01/2015; PT; Bachelor's |                  |                  | 07/05/2016 - 07/04/2017; Bachelor's |                  |                  | N0000012345, Associate's  |                  |                  |
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**STEP 3:** A Designated School Official (DSO) at the OIE reviews your application documents and issues a new I-20 with a STEM OPT Extension Recommendation printed on page 2. Once the new I-20 is ready you will receive an email.

Once the OIE has reviewed your application and the I-20 is issued you will RECEIVE an email to pick up your I-20 at the OIE front desk.

**STEP 4:** Pick up your new I-20; sign it; make a copy of the new I-20; keep the original and send the I-20 copy along with the payment and the complete STEM OPT Extension Application (see checklist on page 1) to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Phoenix Lockbox for adjudication

**For U.S. Postal Service (USPS):**

USCIS  
P.O. Box 21281  
Phoenix, AZ 85036

**For FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:**

USCIS  
Attn: NFB AOS  
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S  
Suite 100  
Phoenix, AZ 85034

USCIS must receive your application there within 60 days of the STEM OPT Extension recommendation!

**STEP 5:** Wait for positive USCIS adjudication (OPT approval notice & OPT card arrival).

If the STEM OPT extension is approved, an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will be issued valid for the employment start and end dates that you request with this application.

If you plan to **travel abroad** during the application process or after your OPT is approved please review **Bulletpoint 6** of the **appendix!** If you have questions or you need a travel signature please contact [iss@uwosh.edu](mailto:iss@uwosh.edu) right away.

An applicant who completed all steps above is allowed to continue their employment until the STEM OPT extension is adjudicated. If the STEM OPT application is still pending with USCIS beyond 180 days after the standard OPT ended, the student must stop working until USCIS approves the STEM OPT application.

**STEP 6:** Once you received the OPT card you are required to send a copy of the front and back of the Employment Authorization Document (EAD-Card) to [iss@uwosh.edu](mailto:iss@uwosh.edu)

**STEP 7:** Ensure you comply with all **STEM OPT Extension employment limitations**

1. Once the STEM OPT Extension is approved employment authorized until the last day of the new EAD card.
2. A job that serves as the basis for the 24-month STEM OPT extension, as well as any subsequent jobs engaged in during the STEM OPT extension period, **must meet certain conditions to constitute a STEM OPT "qualifying" job**
  - a. F-1 status is dependent on full-time employment while on STEM OPT Extension.
    - i. Work **MUST** be a OVER 20 hours/week in order to not count towards unemployment
  - b. Counting of Unemployment Days:
    - i. A student may not be unemployed for an aggregate of more than 150 days.
    - ii. Each day (including weekends) during the period since the regular OPT authorization began that the student did not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment.

- iii. Time spent outside the United States during an approved period of post-completion OPT counts as unemployment, unless the student is either employed during a period of leave authorized by an employer or traveling as part of the employment.
- iv. If you exceed a total of 150 days of unemployment or you fail to report your employer to [iss@uwosh.edu](mailto:iss@uwosh.edu) in time your SEVIS record will be terminated and you are required to leave the country immediately.
- c. Employment must be directly related to your major field of study and degree.
- d. The employment must be paid
- e. The terms and conditions of a employment opportunity during the period of the 24-month OPT extension, including duties, hours, and compensation, must be commensurate with terms and conditions applicable to the employer's similarly situated U.S. workers in the area of employment. (8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(C)(8))
- f. The student on a STEM OPT extension cannot not replace a full- or part-time, temporary or permanent U.S. worker (8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(C)(10)(ii))
- g. The job must be in the context of a bona-fide employer-employee relationship (e.g. prohibits self-employment)
- h. The job must comply with "all applicable Federal and State requirements relating to employment." (See Employer Attestation 4.e. of Form I-983 Section 4)

**STEP 8: Comply with all 24-Month STEM OPT Extension reporting requirements:**

Students on STEM OPT are REQUIRED to complete ALL of the following to [iss@uwosh.edu](mailto:iss@uwosh.edu)

1. Report **any new employment, change of name, address, phone number or interruption of employment within 10 days of a change** until the STEM OPT Extension end date.
2. **6-month STEM OPT Report:** If there have been no changes in employment, STILL submit a 6-month STEM OPT Report to confirm your SEVIS information (Employer, Address, phone number) every 6 months.
3. **I-983 Annual Evaluation:** Send the first self-evaluation (page 5) within twelve months
4. **I-983 Final Evaluation:** Upload the final self-evaluation at the end of practical training
5. **Changes in Employment/Practical Training:** Report employment changes within 10 days. Upload I-983 Final Evaluation (old position) and new I-983 Training Plan (new position).
6. 24-month STEM OPT: Do not exceed 150 days of unemployment.
7. **Address changes:** Report within 10 days of moving.
8. **Final departure from the U.S.** (if earlier than your STEM OPT Extension end date)

Summary of Reporting Requirements: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/assets/sevpstemoptreportingrequirementsfinal.pdf>

|  |            |             |
|--|------------|-------------|
| Family Name  | First Name | Middle Name |
| <p><i>"I have been informed of <b>STEM OPT Extension employment limitations and STEM OPT Extension reporting requirements</b> and I will comply with them. I understand that if I don't meet these requirements my F-1 status will expire. I am aware that this would lead to the <u>"accrual of unlawful presence"</u> in the U.S. which can prevent me from being able to reenter the US in the future."</i></p> <p>Please sign here: _____ (Student's signature required)</p> |            |             |



## Appendix:

1. Employer Noncompliance: If you believe your STEM OPT employer is not complying with the terms and conditions of the 24-month STEM OPT extension regulations, the Form I-983 instructions, and the completed Form I-983 on file with ISS, you may:
  - a. Contact the Student and Exchange Visitor Program at the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) by following the instructions found on [ICE.gov](https://ice.dhs.gov).
  - b. Report violations through this [Homeland Security Investigations tip submission form](#)
2. Multiple Employers: The Department of Homeland Security has commented that although working for [multiple employers](#) is not prohibited, each employer must employ the student for no less than 20 hours per week, and must fully comply with the requirements of the new 24-month STEM rule.
3. FYI: Keep in mind that you are no longer on the university's health insurance plan when you are on OPT since you are no longer a student.
4. TRAVEL DURING OPT: Reentry to the US during OPT is possible if
  - the student presents a Form I-20 endorsed by the DSO within the preceding 6 months
  - the student presents an unexpired EAD, and
  - the student is returning to resume employment.
  - the student has a valid VISA to enter the US.
  - Students engaged in post-completion OPT may not also attend school full-time.
5. Students engaged in post-completion OPT may not also attend school full-time.
6. **Travel and OPT: Students have many questions about whether or not it is okay to travel while OPT is processing and/or during the OPT period. Here are the rules about travel and OPT, depending on your situation:**

### 1. During your final quarter, after you submit your 12-month OPT application:

You can travel and reenter the U.S. as a student during your final registration quarter. You will use the new I-20 with the OPT recommendation printed on page 2, along with the other regular travel documents. If you plan to return to the U.S. **before** the expiration date of the new I-20 (your program completion date), it does not matter whether your OPT application is still processing or is approved, and whether or not you have a job offer yet.

### 2. After graduation, while your 12-month OPT application is processing:

After your final quarter ends, you can travel and reenter the U.S. while your 12-month post-completion OPT application is processing, with or without a job offer. You must carry your OPT receipt notice from USCIS, your OPT I-20, and the other regular travel documents. **However, be aware of these risks:**

- USCIS sometimes sends a request to OPT applicants asking for more information or for you to correct a problem with your documentation. These requests are sent by postal mail, so it might be difficult for you to respond if you are not inside the U.S. It is your application, so ISS does not have the authority to respond for you.
- After your OPT application is approved, you must also have proof of employment and your EAD in order to reenter the U.S. If the OPT application is approved while you are abroad, and if you do not yet have proof of employment or your EAD, this could jeopardize your return to the U.S.
- You must have a valid F-1 visa to travel during the OPT year (except for short trips to Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean). It is risky to apply for an F-1 visa while your OPT application is pending. If your current F-1 visa is expired, we recommend waiting until your OPT application is approved and you have a job offer before applying for a new F-1 visa.

### 3. After graduation, and after your 12-month OPT application is approved:

After graduation, if your 12-month post-completion OPT has been approved and your EAD issued, you can travel and reenter the U.S. **only if you have proof of employment.** If you are still looking for practical training opportunities, you should not travel internationally.

For travel, carry the following documents with you:

- OPT I-20 signed for travel by an international student adviser within the last **6 months**
  - Proof of employment in your field of study (letter of employment, written job offer)
  - EAD card (on the EAD card, there is a statement "Not Valid For Reentry." This means the EAD card cannot be used by itself for reentry to the U.S.)
  - Valid passport
  - Unexpired F-1 visa
- You can apply for an F-1 visa during your OPT year. Follow the regular procedures to apply for an F-1 visa outside of the U.S. For the F-1 visa application, plan to provide the documents listed above, as well as proof of financial ability to stay in the U.S. and proof of continuing ties to your home country.

After the OPT approval start date, time spent outside the U.S. will count as unemployment against the 90-day limit. However, travel while employed either during a vacation authorized by an employer or as part of your employment will not count as unemployment. Please keep your primary ISS adviser informed of any travel plans while on OPT that may affect your status.

If you have dependents in F-2 status who will travel without you, be sure they carry a photocopy of your EAD card and proof of your employment along with their updated F-2 I-20 that is properly signed for travel.

#### 4. During your pending or approved STEM OPT extension period (if applicable).

If your STEM OPT extension application is already **approved**, the travel document requirements are the same as those required during the 12-month OPT period (see the list above in scenario #3)

If your STEM OPT extension application is **pending** with USCIS, it is okay to travel internationally. This is true even if your 12-month OPT EAD is already expired.

The preamble to the 24-month STEM OPT rule [\[81 FR 13103 par. 774\]](#) states:

"Students on STEM OPT extensions (including those whose application for a STEM OPT extension is pending) may travel abroad and seek reentry to the United States in F-1 status during the STEM OPT extension period if they have a valid F-1 visa that permits multiple entries and a current Form I-20 Certificate of Eligibility endorsed for reentry by the DSO within the last six months. The student's status is determined by CBP upon admission to the United States or through a USCIS adjudication of a change-of-status petition."

It is also possible to apply for a new F-1 visa during this time. The Foreign Affairs Manual, which instructs U.S. Department of State officials regarding visa issuance, states at [9 FAM 402.5-5\(N\)\(6\)\(e\)](#)

"As the STEM OPT extension is automatic for the first 180 days following regular post-completion OPT (when the student has properly filed Form I-765), the student may not necessarily have a renewed EAD. Therefore, any students having automatically authorized employment through the OPT extension may not be able to present a valid EAD when they apply to renew their visa. However, F-1 students in this situation can request an updated I-20 from the DSO, annotated for the STEM OPT extension, as well as proof that the I-765 petition was filed in a timely manner. You must confirm that the student's electronic SEVIS record contains the same information as the updated hard copy Form I-20 before issuing a visa."

For reentry to the U.S. with a pending STEM OPT application, you should carry:

- STEM OPT I-20 signed by an ISS adviser within the last six months
  - USCIS receipt notice for your STEM OPT application
  - Proof of employment
  - Valid passport
  - Unexpired F-1 visa
- You can apply for an F-1 visa while the STEM OPT application is pending (up to 180 days pending status). Follow the regular procedures to apply for an F-1 visa outside of the U.S. For the F-1 visa application, plan to provide the documents listed above, as well as proof of financial ability to stay in the U.S. and proof of continuing ties to your home country.