



Optional Practical Training (OPT) STEM Extension

General Information

You are eligible to apply for a 24-month extension, beyond the initial 12 months of OPT, if you meet all of the following conditions:

- You are currently approved for post-completion OPT.
- You completed a bachelor's or master's degree in a science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) field. Visit the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement website for the STEM Designated Degree Program List, <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/>
- You have a job or job offer from an *E-Verify employer*, <http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify>
- Your STEM OPT employer will provide you with formal training and learning objectives.
- You will work a minimum of 20 hours per week.

When to Apply?

For 24-month STEM extension

- Apply **BEFORE** your current OPT authorization expires, up to 90 days before its expiration.

Benefits while STEM OPT I-765 is pending

If a student's regular post-completion OPT expires after a STEM OPT I-765 is properly and timely filed, the student's employment authorization is considered automatically extended for up to 180 days while the STEM OPT application is pending.

How to Apply?

Step 1: Complete the Form I-983 training plan with your STEM OPT employer:

<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/i983.pdf> Instructions for filling out Form I-983 are available here: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview>

Step 2: Submit the following to ISS (by mail or in person):

- ✓ Completed Form I-765: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf> (read tips for completing Form I-765 below)
- ✓ Completed and signed Form I-983. The ISS advisor will review Form I-983 for completeness and to confirm that the form:
 - Explains how training is directly related to the qualifying STEM degree
 - Identifies goals for student, including knowledge, skills, techniques, and explains how the goals will be achieved
 - Describes the evaluation process for student
 - Describes methods of oversight and supervision generally applicable to students
- ✓ Your current mailing address.

Step 3: The ISS advisor will issue a new I-20 with a recommendation for the extension and will mail it back to you. Mail to USCIS the following:

- ✓ Original Form I-765
- ✓ \$410 application fee
 - check or money order payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" OR
 - Form G-1450: Authorization for Credit Card Transaction
- ✓ Two passport-style photos (read photo specification section below, lightly print your name and I-94# on back with a pencil or felt-tip pen)
- ✓ Photocopy of the front and back of your I-94 card or print-out of I-94, <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>
- ✓ Photocopy of valid passport photo page and passport expiration date
- ✓ Photocopy of all previous EAD cards (front and back)
- ✓ Photocopy of current F-1 student visa.
- ✓ Photocopy of new I-20 (make sure to sign the first page in blue ink before copying!)
- ✓ Original employment confirmation letter on company letter head
- ✓ Copy of STEM degree (official transcript, unofficial transcript, or copy of diploma showing level and program of study)
 - To request an official transcript, visit this link:
https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/secure_area/Transcript/to_bridge.asp?t=140011&LoginHome=to_home.asp
 - To print out an unofficial transcript, log-in to Banner:
https://banweb.plu.edu/pls/pap/twbkwbis.P_WWWLogin
 - Click on Student Services
 - Click on Student Records
 - Click on Academic Transcript

Step 4: Be sure to mail your application to the USCIS Service Center, serving the area of your current residence. To find the address, review the I-765 instructions: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765instr.pdf>

Before sending out your application, make a copy of everything!

Photo specifications:

- U.S. Department of State Guidelines, <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/photos/photos.html>
- The two photos should have a white or off-white background.
- They should be unmounted, printed on thin paper, glossy, and not re-touched.
- The photos should show a passport-style, full-face image, with both ears visible.
- Taken with a neutral facial expression or a natural smile, with both eyes open.
- No glasses allowed.
- No hats or head coverings, unless you wear it daily for religious purposes.
- The photo should not be larger than 2 x 2 inches, with the distance from the top of the head to just below the chin about 1 3/8 inches.
- Lightly print your name and your I-94 number in pencil or felt-tip pen on the back of each photo.
- Photographs must have been taken within the last 30 days and not previously used.

Tips for completing Form I-765:

Type or print legibly in black ink. When leaving any section blank, put N/A (not applicable).

- Part 1, Item 1:
 - Check box 1.c. for STEM OPT application
- Part 2, Items 5.a. - 5.f.:
 - Your Notice of Action and EAD will be mailed to the address you provide. If your mail will be sent to someone other than yourself, please include an “In Care Of Name.”
- Part 2, Item 12:
 - Check "yes"
- Part 2, Item 21.a.:
 - Find your 11-digit I-94 number at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/> Some students may have been issued an I-94 card (a small white card in your passport) upon their arrival in the U.S.
- Part 2, Items 22, 23, 24, 25:
 - Use the information from your I-94 record. In some cases, you may have made recent short trips to Canada or Mexico, which are not reflected in your current I-94 record. This is standard and it will be fine to use your existing I-94 information. If you have changed to F-1 status within the U.S., include a copy of your Approval Notice.
- Part 2, Item 27:
 - 24-month extension for STEM degree recipients: (c)(3)(C)
- Part 2, Item 28 (for 24-month extension for STEM degree recipients):
 - On “Degree” section, list your degree level and major as it appears on your I-20, as best you can in the available space (for example, BS Computer Sci, or Master Fin Math).
 - You must fill out “Employer’s Name as listed in E-Verify” and “Client Company Identification Number” sections.
- Part 3, Applicant’s Statement:
 - Check box 1.a.
- Part 3, Applicant’s Contact Information: Provide phone number(s) and email address
- Part 3, Applicant’s Signature: Sign the form in black ink.

IMPORTANT: Special reporting requirements during STEM OPT extensions

There are enhanced reporting requirements for students approved for a 24-month STEM OPT extension. It is the student's responsibility to meet the following reporting requirements:

- **Validating SEVIS information** – every 6 months STEM OPT students must work with ISS to confirm that their SEVIS record accurately reflects the following information:
 - Legal name
 - Residential or mailing address
 - Employer name and address
 - Status of current employment

Note: students must report changes to name, address, employer and loss of employment to ISS within 10 days of any change through this [online form](#).

- **Annual Self-Evaluations** – STEM OPT students must do an annual self-evaluation about the progress of their training experience. The student and their employer must sign the self-evaluation before the student submits it to ISS to be added to the student's record.
- **Material Changes to the Form I-983 Training Plan** – STEM OPT students must notify ISS of material changes or deviations from the original Form I-983, including, but not limited to:
 - Any change of the employer's Employer Identification Number (EIN).
 - Any reduction in student compensation that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked.
 - Any significant decrease in hours per week that a student engages in a STEM training opportunity.
 - Changes to the employer's commitments or student's learning objectives as documented on the Form I-983.

Note: as long as the STEM OPT student and employer meet the regulatory requirements and the modified Form I-983 meets the specified requirements, the student's employment authorization will not cease based on a change to the training plan.

- **Changing Employers** – when a STEM OPT student changes employers, the new employer must be enrolled in E-Verify before the student begins to work for pay. The student must submit a new Form I-983 to ISS within 10 days of starting the new practical training opportunity. In cases where the period of time between employers is longer than 10 days, the student must first report the loss of employment to ISS and later submit a new Form I-983.
- **Unemployment** – STEM OPT students must report the termination of their employment within 10 days of the event. STEM OPT students are allowed an additional 60 days of unemployment beyond the 90 days allowed during the initial period of post-completion OPT.

Still Have Questions?

Contact Heather Jacobson, Coordinator of International Student Services

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To make an appointment, please visit <https://hjacobson.youcanbook.me/>