24 month STEM Optional Practical Training Extension

Part 1: General Information and Instructions:
Please review this section carefully. By submitting a STEM OPT request to the ISSS Office you are assuming responsibility for the information and requirements outlined in this packet.

24 Month STEM Eligibility Requirements:
F-1 students with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) degrees in fields listed on the STEM Designated Degree Program List are eligible for the 24-month OPT extension (list is available online, here https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf). On recent I-20s, you can find your degree CIP code (a 6 digit code formatted 00.0000) on page 1 of your I-20. If you are not sure have earned a degree in an eligible STEM field, please contact the ISSS Office. In addition to having earned a STEM eligible degree, the student must:

1) Be in status and currently authorized for Post-Completion OPT, including working full-time for a U.S. employer in a job directly related to your field of study.
2) Have successfully completed a bachelor’s, master’s or doctoral degree in a field on the STEM Designated Degree Program. Additionally, the degree student must meet the following degree requirements:
   • Your most recent degree must be from a currently accredited SEVP-certified school (UAlbany is SEVP certified)
   • You must have received your STEM qualifying degree: from a school in the U.S.; at a bachelor’s level or higher; and within 10 years of when you are applying for the STEM extension with USCIS. You cannot have previously used this degree for a STEM OPT extension.
   • The qualifying STEM degree’s CIP code (as defined by the institution which awarded the degree) must match the eligible program CIP codes on DHS’ list: https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf
3) At the time of application for the 24-month extension, you must have a job or a job offer for employment meeting the following eligibility requirements:
   • You are working full-time (20+ hours per week) in a paid position (commensurate to other similarly situated American employers) which directly relates to the STEM degree under which you are applying for the position
   • The employer must be e-Verified and must be willing to complete, submit, and maintain the Form I-983 Training Plan with you.

What Is E-Verify?
E-Verify is an Internet-based system operated by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA). It allows participating employers to electronically verify the employment eligibility of their newly hired employees. Contact your employer’s Human Resources office to determine if they are in E-Verify. ISSS does not have access to this information (https://www.uscis.gov/e-verify/what-e-verify).
Employer Obligations for STEM Extension:
In order for the student to be eligible for the STEM extension:
1. The employer must be registered in E-Verify and give its E-Verify number to the student.
2. The employer must develop a Training Plan (Form I-983) for the student. This plan must be submitted to ISSS. Any material changes to the plan must reported to ISSS within 5 business days.
3. The employer must agree to report the termination or departure of the student to the International Student & Scholar Office within 48 hours.

If you or your employer have questions about these responsibilities, we recommend they consult the STEM OPT hub online, here: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub

When to apply for the STEM extension:
Students may apply no earlier than 90 days before the current OPT EAD expiration date. USCIS must receive all materials before the current OPT EAD expires. USCIS must also receive the request within 60 days of when ISSS prints the new I-20 requesting STEM OPT.

How long is the OPT application process?
ISSS asks for 5-7 business days from the time a complete application is received to complete part 1 of the application process, the processing of the I-20 requesting STEM OPT. Processing time at USCIS is estimated to be 90 days. However, processing times vary widely depending on the time of year and the workload at the USCIS Lockbox to which you send your application.

Can I travel while my application is pending?
Travel outside of the U.S. while your STEM OPT application is pending can be risky. Please consult with ISSS if you need to travel while your application is pending. Once you have received your STEM EAD card, you will need the following to re-enter the United States after travelling: valid I-20 signed for travel within the past 6 months for travel; passport valid for 6 months into the future; valid F-1 visa; valid EAD(s); proof of continuing employment with STEM eligible employer (e.g. contract, offer letter, letter from employer, etc…)

Unemployment Periods While on STEM OPT:
Students on STEM OPT are allowed an additional 60 days cumulative unemployment, including weekends. This means that students on STEM OPT are allowed a total of 150 cumulative unemployment days between the STEM OPT and 12-month OPT periods. If you lose employment, you must complete the final evaluation section on the I-983 form (section 6) and report the loss of employment to ISSS within 5 business days. SEVIS has the capacity to track unemployment.

Changing Employers on STEM OPT:
Students are allowed to change employers while on STEM OPT, as long as the new employer meets all eligibility requirements, including that they are an e-Verified employer. The new employer must work with the student to complete, submit and maintain the form I-983 (this must be submitted to the ISSS office). Additionally, the student must ensure that he/she completes the form I-983 evaluation with the prior employer.

Reporting Requirements While on STEM OPT:
- Keep the “Help USCIS Serve You Better” EAD card cover sheet. (If you ever need to request another card, you should submit this sheet). Keep any EAD cards permanently for your personal records.
- Keep the following information up to date in your MyUAlbany (update with 10 days of any changes):
  - Legal name; residential address (SEVIS USA address); email address; phone number
- Notify ISSS about the following information within 5 business days of any change: Changes to employer/company name; address of employer, including work site location; when employment changes or terminates (start and end dates); change in status (e.g.) change of visa status, permanent residency, etc…); Material changes to I-983 Training Plan, including, but not limited to: change in employer’s EIN, reduction in student compensation that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked, any significant (continued…)
decrease in hours per week student engages in training opportunity, changes to the employer’s commitments or student’s learning objectives as documented on form I-983. **Student is required, with their employer’s cooperation, to submit an amended I-983 reflecting these changes to the ISSS Office.**

- Every 6 months, complete the OPT Data Form available on the ISSS website: [http://www.albany.edu/isss/assets/OPT_data_form.pdf](http://www.albany.edu/isss/assets/OPT_data_form.pdf)
- Submit the evaluations on the Form-I-983 training plan (Section 6). The first should be done within the first year of STEM employment with the I-983 employer. The final evaluation should be done at the end of the second year of STEM employment or when your employment with that employer ends, whichever comes first.

### Part 2: OPT STEM Extension Application Procedures

**Step 1 – Submit the following documents to ISSS. Only complete applications will be accepted:**

1. The completed **OPT STEM Extension Request Form** (see page 6)
2. Completed **OPT Data Form**, available on line at [http://www.albany.edu/isss/assets/OPT_data_form.pdf](http://www.albany.edu/isss/assets/OPT_data_form.pdf)
   a. For detailed instructions on how to complete the I-765, see page 5.
5. A copy of the student’s current **OPT EAD card**, front and back
6. Current I-94 (cardstock version in passport if most recent, or electronic version available at [https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov))

All of this information may be submitted to ISSS by e-mail, fax, mail or in-person. It takes **5-7 business days** for an ISSS advisor to process your request. A new I-20 with a recommendation for your OPT extension will be created. The new I-20 will be mailed to you as per your instruction on the OPT STEM Extension Request Form.

**Step 2 – Submit your complete application to USCIS:**
Submit the following documents to USCIS in order to receive a new Employment Authorization Document card. This must be done within 60 days of the creation of the I-20:

1. Original Form **I-765** with your signature **in ink**
2. A **photocopy** of the **new I-20** with the ISSS advisor's recommendation for STEM Extension Optional Practical Training
3. A photocopy of your most recent **I-94**:
   a. Current I-94 (cardstock version in passport if most recent, or electronic version available at [https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov))
4. A photocopy of the photo page (identification page) of your **passport**. Also include any extra pages that record extensions of the validity of your passport
5. A photocopy of the **F1 visa page** of your passport (even if the visa has expired)
6. A photocopy of **ALL** previous I-20s that have been issued to you
7. A photocopy of all previous EAD cards, including current EAD, front and back
8. Photocopy of your diploma **OR** an official transcript giving evidence that you have graduated from the academic program for which you are currently on OPT and (if based STEM extension on previously earned STEM degree) a photocopy of your diploma **OR** an official transcript giving evidence that you have graduated from a STEM eligible program. (Continued…)
9. Two passport type photographs. For complete photo requirements, please review this website: [http://www.albany.edu/isss/forms.php#photo](http://www.albany.edu/isss/forms.php#photo). We recommend writing your name and I-94 number on the back of the photos in pencil.

10. A money order, certified check or personal check made payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
   a. Applications mailed and post-stamped **on or after** December 23, 2016: payable to the amount of $410.00

11. **Optional but Recommended:** Form G-1145

12. **Optional but Recommended:** Official job offer letter on company letterhead with an employer’s signature.

Note: Take a copy of the entire application before sending for your records. We recommend sending documents by **certified mail** with a return receipt OR **express mail** (so that you have a tracking number) to the U.S. Service Center with jurisdiction over your current residence. USCIS must receive the application within 60 days of when the new I-20 was printed. You do not need to send the form I-983, though USCIS can request the information on the form I-983 at a later date if needed.

**If you live in:**

**Mail your application to:** USCIS Phoenix Lockbox

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries, including USPS express:
- USCIS
- PO Box 21281
- Phoenix, AZ 85036

For Express mail and courier deliveries (UPS, Fed Ex, DHL):
- USCIS
- Attn: AOS
- 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
- Suite 100
- Phoenix, AZ 85034

**If you live in:**

**Mail your application to:** USCIS Dallas Lockbox

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries, including USPS express:
- USCIS
- PO Box 660867
- Dallas, TX 75266

For Express mail and courier deliveries (UPS, Fed Ex, DHL):
- USCIS
- Attn: AOS
- 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business
- Suite 400
- Lewisville, TX 75067
Step 3—While the application is pending with USCIS:

1. You will receive a notice (Form I-797) from USCIS. Keep this for your records. You should receive this receipt notice within 2-3 weeks of when your package arrives to USCIS. If you do not receive a receipt notice, contact USCIS Customer Service at 1-800-375-5283.

2. Track the status of your application and current processing times through USCIS using the case number on your receipt notice: [https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp](https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp)

3. Authorization is granted by the EAD card (Employment Authorization Document):
   i. The EAD will be mailed only to the address listed on Form I-765. Government mail cannot be forwarded, so you must notify USCIS immediately if your residential address changes.
   ii. **You may continue working up to 180 days after your 12-month OPT expires** while the STEM Extension is pending, as long as you are in compliance with all STEM OPT regulations during what would be the STEM OPT period of authorization. Provide a copy of your Receipt Notice to your employer.
Check that the date of the form has not expired.

Form I-94 number is the I-94 Admission Number OR Alien Registration Number is the 9 digit USCIS number on your EAD

“Which USCIS Office?” is the service center. Check your receipt notice. The most common are: YSC=Potomac Service Center EAC=Vermont Service Center

“Dates” is the approval date(s) on the EAD(s) Must write that is was “Granted” (i.e. approved)

(c) (3) (C) - OPT STEM Extension

Your EAD card will be mailed to this address. This address must be clearly identifiable to be delivered. In your mailbox, please make sure your name is written inside. You may put the ISSS office address if you are unsure where you will be living.

ISSS address: First Line—1400 Washington Ave, ISSS, SL-G40 Second Line—Albany, NY 12222

For example use only

Check — “Renewal” since you are renewing and extending your OPT authorization

Sample STEM I-765 Page-
Page 1 of 2

(c) (3) (C) - OPT STEM Extension
“Degree” include level and CIP code (6 digits next to major on your I-20). Consult your employer’s HR for the name as listed in e-Verify and e-Verify number.

Make sure you sign and date the form. While all other sections of the form can be typed, your signature must be an original signature in blue or black ink. Include your phone number and date.

Certification
I certify, under penalty of perjury, that the foregoing is true and correct. Furthermore, I authorize the release of any information that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services needs to determine eligibility for the benefit I am seeking. I have read the “Who May File Form I-765?” section of the instructions and have identified the appropriate eligibility category in Question 16.

Applicant’s Signature
Don’t forget to sign!

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy) 09/15/2015

Telephone Number
518555555

Signature of Person Preparing Form, If Other Than Applicant
I declare that this document was prepared by me at the request of the applicant and is based on all information of which I have any knowledge.

Preparer’s Signature

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy)

Printed Name

Address:
OPT STEM Extension Request Form

Eligibility for the 24-month OPT Extension:
• Students who are currently engaged in post-completion OPT; and
• Who have earned a bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral degree in a STEM CIP that is approved by DHS; and
• Who has a job or job offer from an E-Verify employer

Student Information

Family (Last) Name______________________Given (First) Name_______________________

UAlbany ID#_________________________SEVIS#_______________________________

Phone:_________________________E-mail: ________________________________

Current EAD Card approval dates: ________________________________

From__To

Employer Information

Employer’s name & address EXACTLY as registered with E-Verify:

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

Student’s work location if different than employer’s E-verify address:

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

Student’s Supervisor: Name & Title: ________________________

Supervisor’s Phone: ________________ Supervisor’s email: ________________________

Shipping Information

Please indicate how you would like to receive your I-20:

_____ I will come to the ISSS office to get my I-20

_____ Please send my I-20 via regular US Mail (not trackable) to the following address:

__________________________________________


_____ I would like to pay to have my I-20 sent express mail. I have ordered mailing through eShip Global’s University Express Mail Service at www.eshipglobal.com.

Student Attestation: By signing below, I take full responsibility for reading/understanding the information presented in this STEM packet. I attest that all the information including with this request I strue and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Student’s Signature ___________________________ Date __________________

Last Updated: 03/17/2017