24 Month STEM OPT Extension Guide

Who can apply for 24 month STEM OPT extension?

An F-1 student who has completed a Bachelor’s, Master’s or doctoral degree in a STEM field and who has been granted authorization to work on Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (Post-Completion OPT) may apply for the 24-month OPT extension as long as they have a job or job offer that is related to a degree in a STEM designated field and has an employer that is registered with E-Verify.

To find out if you are STEM eligible please see the list of STEM eligible CIP codes at this link: ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf.

Your CIP code is listed on the first page of your I-20.

When can I apply for the STEM OPT extension?

STEP 1 – Prepare Form I-983 – Training Plan.

- In Section 1 of the Training Plan:
  - SEVIS School Code can be found in the school information section on P. 1 of your I-20, under school code and approval date.
  - CIP Code is in the Program of Study section on P. 1 of your I-20, under MAJOR 1.
  - For DSO Name and Contact Information, please use the following:
    Elena Gruzdeva
    405 Ell Hall, 360 Huntington Ave
    Boston, MA 02115
    e.gruzdeva@northeastern.edu
    617.373.2310
  - Employment Authorization Number: USCIS# on your EAD card.
  - Evaluation of Student Progress sections do not need to be completed for the initial STEM OPT I-20 request. Evaluations are required at the 12-month and 24-month points of the student’s STEM OPT.
  - The Training Plan does not need to cover your regular 12-month OPT period, only the STEM OPT period.
  - It is best to type up the information on Form I-983, if possible. If not possible, you may handwrite it, but make sure that it is easy to read.

Please note: if you are employed through a staffing or temporary agency, the agency cannot complete and sign Form I-983. Only the E-verified employer that provides the actual training is authorized to sign and complete Form I-983.


STEP 2 - Request STEM OPT I-20 from the Office of Global Services (OGS):

- Submit STEM Extension I-20 Request (Please note: The OGS processing time for STEM OPT I-20 is 10 business days.)
STEP 3 – Apply for STEM OPT extension with USCIS:

1. Complete an original Form G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance (optional) which can be found at: uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf

2. Complete original Form I-765, which can be downloaded from: uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf

The Form I-765 should be completed in its entirety and signed in blue ink.

- **Item Number 1:** Type your family name in **capital** letters, followed by a space, and then followed by your first name. If you have any middle name(s) enter it after your first name. Be sure to type your name as it appears on your passport.

- **Item Number 2:** Box 2 - Other Names. Complete this section only if you use other names on official documents, or if you have a maiden name (name used prior to marriage, usually applies to women who have married and changed their family name). If this does not apply to you, then leave Box 2 blank.

- **Item Number 3:** Box 3 – U.S. Mailing Address. **The U.S. address you enter here should be the address to which correspondence can be sent for the next 3-4 months during the STEM OPT application period.** If you are using someone else’s address (e.g., a friend’s), put “c/o … (person’s name)”. For example: “c/o John Smith” – “care of John Smith”. The post office will not deliver government mail if the name of the person on the mail is not on the post box as well.

- **Item Number 4:** Country of Citizenship/Nationality. Enter the nation of your current passport. If you have multiple passports, then enter the passport nation under which you have received your F-1 visa

- **Item Number 5:** Place of Birth - Enter first the town or city in which you were born, followed by the province or state name (if any), and then the country name of your birth.

- **Item Number 6:** Date of Birth. Enter the numerical date of birth as month, day, and year (4 digit) e.g., March 8, 1992 should be entered as 03/08/1992.

- **Item Number 7:** Gender. Select your gender, as it appears on your passport.

- **Item Number 8:** Marital Status. Select your current marital status. If you will be getting married in the future, you should still enter what your Marital Status is on the date you submit the I-765, and not what your future plans are.

- **Item Number 9:** Social Security Number. Enter your 9 digit Social Security Number, if you have one. If you do not currently have one, then leave this item blank.

- **Item Number 10:** Alien Registration Number (A-Number) or I-94 Number (if any). If you already have an EAD Card (Employment Authorization Card), then the Alien Number will be printed on the bottom middle of your card. It will begin with an A. If you do not have such a number, then list your I-94 number. If you last entered the U.S. before July 2013, then you will have an I-94 Card stapled in your passport. It will have an 11 digit number on it, which is your I-94 number. If you last entered the U.S. after July 2013, then you will not have a physical I-94 card, but you will have been given an electronic number that you will need to retrieve though the I-94 retrieval website.
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- **Item Number 11:** Have you ever before applied for employment authorization from USCIS? Check “Yes” and answer the questions as follows. “Which USCIS Office” – Check your EAD for the number and note the three letter prefix.
  - EAC – Vermont Service Center
  - WAC – California Service Center
  - LIN – Nebraska Service Center
  - SRC – Texas Service Center
  For “Dates,” enter the dates of employment listed on your EAD card. Under “Results” enter “Granted” and attach a copy of your EAD.
- **Item Number 12:** Date of Last Entry into the U.S., on or about. Enter the date of last entry listed on your I-94 card in your passport even if you have received more recent entry stamps from visits outside the U.S. lasting less than 30 days. Enter the date in mm/dd/year format: For example, if you last entered the U.S. on August 10, 2015, you will enter 08/10/2015.
- **Item Number 13:** Place of Last Entry into the U.S. This information is on the stamp in your passport and also on your electronic I-94 record (or paper I-94 card if you have one).
- **Item Number 14:** Status at Last Entry. Enter the visa status you entered the U.S. under the last time you came into the country. Unless you had a Change of Status while in the U.S., then this will likely be F-1 Student.
- **Item Number 15:** Current Immigration Status. This should be entered as Student.
- **Item Number 16:** As a former student applying for STEM Extension, please enter (c) (3) (c).
- **For Item 17:**
  - Enter your degree as it appears on your transcript or diploma. Write out the degree and do not abbreviate.
  - Enter the name of the E-Verify employer, and the employer’s E-Verify number.
- Certification: Please make sure you sign your name by hand (it cannot be typed), enter your telephone number, and enter the date on which you have signed the form. You’re done!

3. There is a filing fee required by Form I-765. Write out a personal check or money order for the amount of $380, payable to the ‘U.S. Department of Homeland Security.’
4. Provide your official transcript to show your eligibility for STEM OPT extension.
5. Make photocopies of the documents indicated below:
  - Pages of all previous I-20s, including the last I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation.
    Your new 24-month STEM OPT extension I-20 which will be issued to you as part of this application process, will need your signature before you copy it and include it with other I-20s copied by you for this application.
  - Form I-94 (front and reverse sides if you have a paper form);
  - Previous Employment Authorization Card(s) (EAD) (front and reverse sides). You may have more than one EAD if you have been authorized Pre-completion OPT or have been authorized for OPT at another program level or at another university;
  - Copy the following pages from your passport(s):
• Biographical page;
• Page with expiration date and/or renewal dates (if different from the biographical page);
• Pages that include your F-1 visa(s)
  (If you had the first F-1 visa in an expired or older passport, you need to copy the biographical page, page with expiration date and/or renewal dates of that older passport, and previous F-1 visa(s) from the older passport, especially if you have not been home since your initial arrival to the U.S.)

If you entered the U.S. initially in a status other than F-1 and you changed your status in the U.S., you will need to include a copy of the Change of Status approval Form I-797 and the I-94 (front and reverse sides) attached at the bottom of that form.

6. Obtain (2) full-frontal passport style photos as required. Visit the following link for additional information on photo requirements: travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/photos/photos.html. The photos must be taken within the last 30 days.

IMPORTANT: All documents must be received by USCIS prior to the expiration date of the 12 month period of Post-Completion OPT.

Mailing your application for 24 month STEM OPT extension

Once you have your documents and I-20 for the 24-month extension, and you have copied all documentation and assembled the packet, you should send it to one of the following addresses depending on where you live (the address you put on Form I-765). It is recommended that you mail your OPT packet certified return receipt requested if using U.S. Postal Service.

If you live in: Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands or West Virginia

You will be sending your application to the USCIS Dallas Lockbox.

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:
USCIS
P.O. Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

For express mail and courier service deliveries:
USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121
Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067
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You will be sending your application to the USCIS Phoenix Lockbox.

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:
USCIS
P.O. Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For express mail and courier service deliveries:
USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034

What happens while the 24 month STEM OPT extension request is pending at USCIS?

The period of the 24-month STEM OPT extension starts the day after the expiration of your original period of approved Post-Completion OPT. While your 24-month OPT STEM extension application is pending, you may continue working for up to 180 days (6 months). The Code of Federal Regulations, 8CFR 214.2(f)(11)(i)(C) and 8CFR 247a.12(c)(6)(iv), automatically extend your work authorization while the application is pending. However, you must have already submitted all the appropriate documentation to USCIS and paid the filing fee prior to the expiration date of your Post-Completion OPT.

Processing period for the 24 month OPT extension & Receipt Notice (Form I-797)

After the documentation leaves the respective Lockbox, it is forwarded to the USCIS Service Center where it is adjudicated within a period of 90 days. In about fifteen days of USCIS’ receipt of your application for the 24-month OPT extension, you should be receiving a Form I-797 - a receipt notice from USCIS, confirming that they received your application, including the filing fee, with a case number. This will enable you to track your application on-line at the USCIS web site.

Reporting requirements for F-1 students on the 24 month STEM OPT extension

1. You and your employer(s) must report to the OGS a change in any of the following by submitting a new Form I-983:
   Material changes in the terms and conditions of the original I-983, such as
   - Any change in of Employer Identification Number
   - Any reduction in your compensation that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked
   - Any significant decrease in your work hours per week
   - Loss of employment (within 5 business days of termination of employment)

2. You must submit to the OGS two self-evaluations via Form I-983: one at the end of the first 12 months on the STEM OPT extension, the second at the end of the of the 24-month extension period (or at the conclusion of employment, whichever comes first). Evaluations should be submitted within 10 days of the required date.
3. You are required to report to the OGS within 10 days any changes in the following:
   - Legal name
   - Residential address
   - Employer name and address
   - Status of current employment, including loss of employment or change of employer. If you change employers, you and your new employer will need to complete a new I-983 and submit it to the OGS.

4. You are required to confirm to the OGS every 6 months the validity of the following information (regardless if there is a change or not):
   - Legal name
   - Residential address
   - Employer name and address
   - Status of current employment

Please use the 6 Month Validation Report Form on the OGS website to submit your report.