

24-month STEM Extension of Optional Practical Training

Summary: The 12-month limit on OPT can be extended by 24 months, for certain STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) degree holders ONLY. Visit <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm> to determine if your field and CIP Code are included in the list.

Eligibility Requirements for F-1 Students:

- x Be on a period of standard Post-Completion OPT
- x Hold a degree in a field of study (indicated on the list) which qualifies as STEM eligible according to the official STEM Designated Degree Program List [
- x Have a PAID job from an employer enrolled in E-Verify
- x Demonstrate the job is directly related to a STEM field
- x Prepare and sign the Training Plan (Form I-983)
- x Apply at least 30 DAYS before your current Post-Completion period of OPT expires. YOU CANNOT APPLY ONCE YOUR 12 MONTH OPT EXPIRES.

Requirements for F-1 Student Employers:

- x Be enrolled in E-Verify
- x Have a Federal Employer Identification Number
- x Agree to a terms of STEM OPT by completing their sections of the Training Plan (Form I-983), assisting with the annual evaluation, and reporting to ISSS your employment termination within 5 days.

When to Apply:

Apply up to 90 days before your current EAD expires and NO LATER than 30 days prior to the end of your current Post-Completion OPT. You must submit your new STEM OPT-20 to USCIS within 60 days of creation by ISSS.

If you timely file your STEM OPT extension application, you will be able to continue employment while your application is pending, until a final decision is made by USCIS or for 180 days beyond the expiration of your Post-Completion OPT, whichever comes first. It normally takes up to 90 days for USCIS to process STEM OPT extensions.

Travel during a PENDING STEM OPT application

It is possible to travel during a Pending STEM OPT application, however it could be risky as it is up to the discretion of the border officer to permit your reentry. If you applied for STEM OPT in a timely manner, your 12-month OPT EAD card is automatically extended. If you need to travel while STEM OPT is pending, consult with ISSS first.

Gather the following items for your application:

To ISSS:

___ Completed and signed STEM OPT Request Form at end of packet (do NOT mail this to USCIS)

___ Completed Training Plan-983 form (do NOT mail this to USCIS)

(For "Hints for Completing your I-983," see below).

The purpose of the Form I-983 is to ensure that students continue a rigorous training program that builds on the skills obtained as a full time student. The student and their supervisor must agree on the components of the plan as follows: the role of the student in the work place, the goals and objectives of the proposed training, how the employer will provide oversight of the plan, and what set of measures and assessments will be used. Both student and supervisor must sign this form and send it to ISSS for review.

Note: Section 2 of the I-983 asks for your start date of employment. Put the STEM OPT start date

Name of School Recommending STEM OPT: Western New England University
 SEVIS School Code: BOS214F00461001 (Students at the New England Center for Children location in Southborough should put BOS214F00461001 for your school code)
 Designated School Official and Contact Info: Katie Ahlman, 413.796.2389 | kiss@wne.edu
 1215 Wilbraham Rd, Springfield, MA 01119
 Student SEVIS ID: See your I-20. The ID starts "N00xxxxxx" and is in the upper left corner.
 Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: Enter your STEM major that qualifies you for the STEM OPT extension, as well as the degree's (CIP) code. You may find this on your I-20 or here:
<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/default.aspx?y=55> at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis>
 Level/Type of Qualifying Degree: Enter the academic level upon which you are basing STEM OPT (For example, enter Bachelor's, Master's, or Ph.D.)
 Date Awarded: Enter the date when the degree, upon which STEM OPT will be based, awarded.
 Based on Prior Degree? Check "No" if your STEM OPT participation is based on your most recently obtained degree, and that is the degree upon which your current post-completion OPT is based. Check "Yes" if your STEM OPT participation is based on a previously obtained STEM degree, and is not the same degree upon which your current post-completion OPT was granted.
 Employment Authorization Number: Enter your "A" number, (which may be found on the Employment Authorization Document).

Section 3:

Employer ID Number (EIN): Enter the Employer Identification Number (EIN)
 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Code: Enter your employer or NAICS codes are accessible at <https://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/>
 Start Date: This is the start date of your STEM OPT when you started at your employer.

For more assistance, please go here:

<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/i983Instructions.pdf>

Hints for filling out Form I-765

COMPLETE THE FORM ONLINE AND THEN PRINT (do not hand write the form with pen; if your handwriting is unreadable, errors and delays will happen)

Click in the box: Permission to Renew Employment

Hints for filling out Form I-765

Complete the I-765 ON THE COMPUTER then print, sign, and Do NOT hand write the information below:

- from USCIS. This is proof that USCIS has received your application. Make sure to check the spelling of your name. If you notice an error, contact ISSS. The receipt will also have your case number printed on it, with which you can track the progress of your application on the [USCIS website](#).
- x It takes approximately three months for USCIS to process your request and mail your EAD card to the address on Form I-765.
 - x Request for Further Evidence Occasionally, a student will receive a Request for Further Evidence (RFE) from USCIS. These requests are typically because the application is missing a document or more photographs are required. If you receive such a request, tell ISSS IMMEDIATELY for help with your reply to USCIS and submitting the requested documents. Be sure to make copies of your RFE materials before you mail them, and send the reply by courier mail with tracking.
 - x EAD Delays Students should contact the USCIS Contact Center at 800-375-5283 if it has been more than 75 days since your application was received (the date listed on your I-797 receipt or date email received).
 - x If you have applied to USCIS for your 24-month STEM extension and you have not received your new EAD by the end of your Post-Completion OPT, you may continue to work for up to 180 days after the end of your Post-Completion OPT. You should receive your new EAD before you reach 180 days.
 - x Upon receipt of the EAD, scan and email issis@wne.edu

Requirements while on the STEM OPT Extension:

- x Employment must be paid.
- x Employment must be a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- x Employment must be directly related to your course of study.
- x Students are required to validate their employment every 6 months
- x Students are required to complete an ANNUAL review and FINAL review at the end of the STEM period
- x Students are required to complete a FINAL review and a new I-983 when they change employers
- x Unemployment Caution STEM OPT students get a total of 150 days of unemployment for THEIR ENTIRE 36 MONTHS ON OPT. I-983 is automatically terminated for students who have no employment reported for 150 days. Be sure that you have made alternate plans and communicated them to ISSS before your record is terminated

Reporting Requirements

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- x Notify ISSS if you decide to permanently depart the U.S. during your OPT.
- x Notify ISSS if you change your visa status during your OPT.

Students are required to report to ISSS every 6 months regardless if there is a change or not the following:

- x Legahame
- x Residentiaaddress
- x Employer name andaddress
- x Status of currentemployment

Failure to report the above changes may result in the termination of your status.

Keep Records of your Employment

Keep records of your employment history for your personal file, to present as evidence of maintaining lawful status should you apply for future immigration benefits.

Examples of records to keep:

- x offer letters
- x contracts
- x payroll stubs
- x letters describing volunteer activity and hours

Travel during APPROVED OPT

Under normal circumstances, a student who has both (1) an EAD for completion OPT or receipt notice [Form I-797] and (2) a job or job offer should not experience difficulty reentering the US. If either of these two conditions is missing, then the student is assuming risk.

Travel signatures on page 2 of the I-20 are only valid for 6 months from the date of the most recent signature. If your travel signature has expired, come to ISSS during to request a renewal.

Cap Gap Extension

The H1B "cap gap" occurs when an F student's status and OPT work authorization expires after April 1, and before the student can start approved H1B employment during the next fiscal year that begins on October 1. For example, a student currently on OPT on April 1 who files an H1B petition that requests an employment start date of October 1 of the following fiscal year will have their duration of status and OPT employment authorization extended to October 1. This is what is called the "cap gap".

However, if you need an I-20 for any other reason to prove you are in cap status, contact ISSS. You should send an e-mail to ISSS with end date on EAD card, current mailing address, current employer name and address including the start date of that employment, and employer name and address during Cap-

I agree to all of the following:

1. I understand the regulations regarding OPT and that I need to abide by all the regulations in order to maintain my status.
2. I understand it is my responsibility to report changes to any or all of the following information to the ISSS office, within 10 days of the change
 - a. Legal name changes
 - b. Change in residential mailing address
 - c. New employment or changes in employment
 - i. Provide: employer name, address, start date, EIN (recommended), a statement detailing how your employment relates to your degree and a new 983.
 - d. Changes in (1) 4-36-36 052 0786 910