24 MONTH STEM OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING EXTENSION
APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Before applying, please read the STEM Extension Overview and student resources on the STEM OPT Hub.

Eligibility and Filing Period

To be eligible for STEM OPT, students must meet the following requirements:

- Have earned a degree in an eligible STEM field as determined by the DHS-approved STEM CIP code
- Have not already utilized two STEM extensions and have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment during Post Completion OPT
- Currently are on an approved period of Post Completion OPT
- Intend to work a minimum of 20 hours/week in a paid position directly related to their field while on STEM OPT
- Pursue their STEM OPT extension through an employer that is enrolled in USCIS's E-Verify program, as well as other additional STEM OPT Employer Requirements
- Students and their employer(s) must complete and adhere to Form I-983

Filing period:

- Earliest date: Up to 90 days before the OPT EAD expiration date.
- Latest date: Recommended a minimum of 2 weeks before the OPT EAD expires. After ISSS processing, students must submit their application to USCIS within 60 days of I-20 issuance or before their Post Completion OPT expiration date, whichever is sooner. ISSS cannot process extensions after the EAD expires and USCIS will deny applications received after the OPT card end date.
- USCIS Processing Times: USCIS average processing time is approximately 2-3 months

Continued Employment Allowed while STEM Applications are Pending: Unlike Post Completion OPT, students filing for a STEM extension are allowed to continue working up to 180 days after the Post Completion OPT EAD card's expiration date while the application is being processed by USCIS. The student's employment authorization is automatically extended as long as the application was timely filed with USCIS before the OPT EAD expires. All work during the period of extended employment must adhere to STEM employment restrictions (i.e. E-Verify employers, positions directly related to the student's STEM field etc.).

Filing Method

Students may either apply online through USCIS at https://www.uscis.gov/i-765 or via mail. However, do not apply via both methods. Your employer (or their law firm) may offer assistance to file your STEM OPT on your behalf. If this is the case, please inform your ISSS advisor.

STEM OPT Application Process Overview

1. Read through this application document
2. Online applicants only: Start the online process but DO NOT submit. Follow instructions here: https://www.csus.edu/international-programs-global-engagement/international-student-scholar-services/_internal/_documents/stem-opt-online-filing-instructions-5.20.22.pdf
3. Send application documents (PDF format) to your ISSS Advisor
4. Your ISSS advisor will schedule an appointment with you to review then send you a STEM OPT I-20 via email
5. Submit supporting documents and STEM OPT I-20 to USCIS either online or via mail
6. Wait for USCIS to adjudicate
7. During STEM OPT, report updates to ISSS according to the 24 Month STEM OPT Responsibilities and Reporting Requirements Form

OPT Application Materials

Submit Items B - G to your ISSS Advisor via email as PDF Attachments

A. **24 month Planning Tool (optional):** This tool will help you gather the required information and determine your application timeline and reporting deadlines: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis-help-hub/student-records/fm-student-employment/planning-tool-for-24-month-extension-of-stem

B. **Signed 24 Month STEM OPT Responsibilities and Reporting Requirements Form:** https://www.csus.edu/international-programs-global-engagement/international-student-scholar-services/employment.html

C. **Signed and complete I-983 Training Plan:** https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/additional-resources/form-i-983-overview. Students and their employers will need to work together to complete and sign the I983 form. Follow the instructions closely: https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983Instructions.pdf

D. **U.S. Passport Sized Photos:**
   1. I-765 instructions state photos must have been taken within 30 days of filing the form.
   2. If filing by mail, 2 photos are required. Write your name lightly on the back.
   3. If submitting online, 1 photo is required. It is recommended to get an electronically issued passport photo, if possible.
   4. Follow measurements exactly:
      - Make sure the photo presents the full head from the top of the hair to the bottom of the chin
      - Center the head with the frame
      - The person in the photo should have a neutral expression and be facing the camera
      - Photo must be 2 inches by 2 inches
      - The height of the head (top of hair to bottom of chin) should measure 1 inch to 1 3/8 inches (25 mm - 35 mm)
      - Make sure the eye height is between 1 1/8 inches to 1 3/8 inches (28 mm – 35 mm) from the bottom of the photo
      - Eye glasses are not allowed

Paper Photo Head Size Template
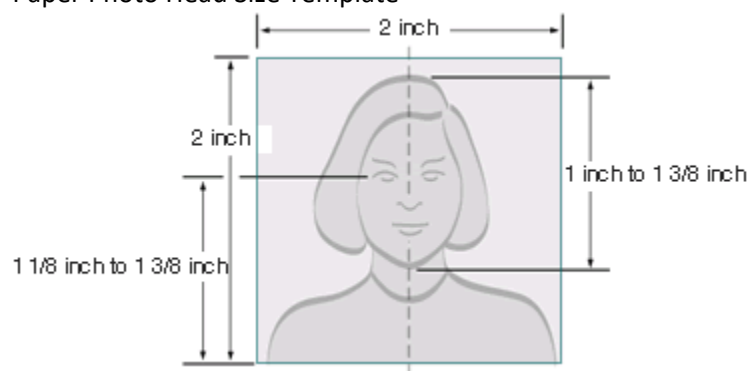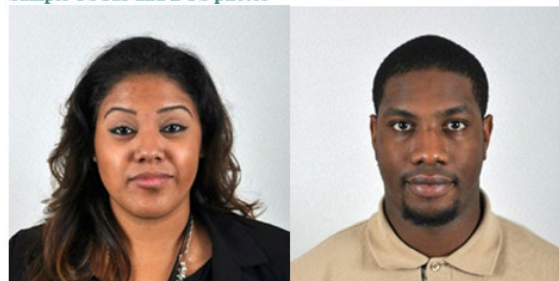
E. **Copies of Immigration Documents:**
   - All previous I-20s. Be sure to sign in ink (no E-signatures)
   - Bio page of your passport
   - Visa that you used for your most recent entry
   - I-94: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94
   - Previous EAD(s)

F.   Verification of Degree Completion: Prepare a copy of your diploma and transcript (official or unofficial) for your qualifying STEM degree.

If applying by mail, complete the I-765 Form using the instructions in item G below. If filing online, do not complete item G and skip to page 5.

G.   Complete the USCIS Form I-765 online and print: http://www.uscis.gov/i-765. Ensure you are using the form that expires 5/31/2020 (seen on upper right and lower left)

PART 1:
- #1c: Mark "Renewal of my permission to accept employment."

PART 2:
- #1a -1c: Type your name as shown on your I-20.
- #2a-4c: Type previous names you have used. (i.e. name change on your passport, name change due to marriage, etc.)
- #5a: Enter the mailing address where you would like your OPT card mailed. Use "In Care Of Name" if being sent to an individual other than yourself.
- #6: Yes or No. If No, provide physical address in 7a-7d
- #8: You will have an A-Number as a result of being on Post Completion OPT. Check your Post Completion OPT EAD card. The number is in the format XXX-XXX-XXX
- #9: You may have a USCIS Online Account Number if you have previously filed an application or petition using the USCIS online filing system.
- #10: Check One
- #11: Check One
- #12: Check One
- #13a: Yes or No. If "No", skip 13b and complete 14-17b. USCIS will provide your information to the Social Security Administration and apply for a Social Security number on your behalf. If "Yes", complete 13b and mark "No" on 14.
- #18a-18b: Include all countries of citizenship
- #19a-20: Provide birth information
- #21a: I-94 Arrival-Departure Record Number
- #21b: Current passport number
- #21c: Travel document Number (if any). Most students will not have this.
- #21d: Country that issued your passport
- #21e: Expiration date of passport
- #22: Use the date on your I-94
- #23: Refer to your I-94 Port of Entry. This is the city where you entered the US and went through passport control.
- #24: "F-1 Student"
- #25: "F-1 Student"
- #26: Your SEVIS Number is found on the top of your current I-20
- #27: Use code **(c) (3) (C)** for STEM OPT.
- #28a: Input in the following format: Degree (B.S. or M.S.), Field (i.e. Computer Science), CIP code on I-20 (i.e. 11.0701). An example would be, "M.S. Computer Science 11.0701"
- #28b: You may need to contact your employer's HR department to determine the exact name as listed in E-

Verify
- #28c: You may need to contact your employer's HR to identify this number. Note, this number is *different* than an EIN.
- #29-31b: Leave blank

PART 3
- #1a: Check this box
- #1b-2: Leave blank
- #3-5: Complete your contact information
- #7a-b: SIGN AND DATE IN BLACK INK INSIDE OF THE BOX. DO NOT CROSS OVER THE BOX

PART 4-5: Leave blank

PART 6: Complete this section only if:
- You have been approved for OPT in the past (Required for STEM OPT extension applications)
- You have used a different SEVIS ID in F-1 status in the US (for example, you attended school for a while, left the US to take a break from school, and returned with a new I-20, you would have a SEVIS ID from your first period of attendance that is different than your current SEVIS ID). Your SEVIS ID is on the top right corner of your I-20, and starts with N00..
  If you need to complete this section because one or more of these apply to you, please complete item 1. For each of the items listed above, complete one box in Part 6. We suggest using the following to complete the Page number, Part Number, and Item number, as this information is required specific to Category (c)(3)(B) (per the I-765 instructions, page 4):

Page 3, Part 2, Item 27
- 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 PhD)
- Previous SEVIS ID's: Please list your other SEVIS ID's you have used in the past. We suggest this format: Previous SEVIS ID's (as a title to the section). SEVIS ID: N00…..; program start date – program end date; Degree level (Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD).

If applying online, please see detailed instructions here: https://www.csus.edu/international-programs-global-engagement/international-student-scholar-services/_internal/_documents/stem-opt-online-filing-instructions-5.20.22.pdf

Prepare but do not submit to ISSS:

$410 I-765 Application Fee
- If applying via mail, prepare a check or money order payable to "US Department of Homeland Security."
- If applying online, you must pay via credit card or ACH

Submit to ISSS for Review and Receive a STEM OPT I-20

After you submit items B - G, your ISSS Advisor will schedule an appointment with you to review. If complete, they will issue you a STEM OPT I-20 and final instructions to apply with USCIS. Scheduling an appointment and receiving a STEM OPT I-20 may take up to 7 business days, depending on availability.

USCIS must receive your application within 60 days of I-20 issuance, or the end of your Post Completion OPT, whichever is earlier.

After Submitting Your Application to USCIS

The USCIS Service Center will process your application payment and send a Receipt Notice (form I-797) to you within 3-4 weeks. The Receipt Notice confirms the date your application was received by USCIS and provides you a USCIS case number. Be sure to keep a copy of all USCIS correspondence for your records.

Applications for STEM OPT are usually processed within in about 90 days of receipt. This is an average processing time.

While waiting for the application to be approved, students must continue adhering to the Post Completion OPT reporting requirements.

As long as students have properly filed with USCIS, their work authorization is automatically extended for 180 days beyond the expiration of Post Completion OPT while USCIS adjudicates the STEM OPT application. This means once Post Completion OPT ends, students are responsible for adhering to all of the requirements associated with STEM OPT.

International Travel

While on Post Completion OPT, students must carry the following for re-entry to the United States:
- Valid Passport
- Valid Visa
- I-20 signed for travel on page 2. Travel signatures are valid for one year and multiple entries
- Post Completion OPT EAD
- Proof of employment

However, when on STEM OPT, students must carry their STEM OPT EAD instead of their Post Completion OPT EAD. **This means it is inadvisable to travel internationally if STEM OPT is still pending and you do not have your STEM OPT EAD, since you will not have your STEM OPT EAD for re-entry to the U.S.** If students are considering travel while STEM OPT is pending they are advised to discuss their plans with their ISSS advisor.