

## 24-Month STEM OPT Extension

The STEM OPT extension allows some students with designated science, technology, engineering, or math degrees to apply to extend their post-completion OPT authorization. Students with STEM degrees and currently in their 12-month OPT period should review the eligibility requirements, application timeline, and instructions below.

### Eligibility for the 24-month STEM OPT Extension:

- Applicant must be an F-1 student who is currently engaged in post-completion OPT with a job or job offer from a participating [E-Verify employer](#) in a position directly related to their major field of study.
- Applicant must have completed a degree in a designated [STEM field](#) from a U.S. accredited institution with SEVP certification within the last 10 years and may not have already utilized this degree to apply for a STEM OPT extension,
- Or applicant is in a period of post-completion OPT, is currently engaged in a designated STEM Master's or PhD program, has completed all degree-required coursework and lacks only the thesis or dissertation to complete the degree.
- Applicant must be in an active period of post-completion OPT at the time of requesting the STEM OPT extension.
- Applicant must submit a completed [I-983](#) with all attestations and supporting documentation to IPO to request the 24-month STEM extension.
- Applicant files the [I-765](#), with all required documentation and filing fee, to USCIS to request the STEM OPT extension.
- Applicant must be working in a full-time (20+ hours per week) paid position for a participating [E-Verified](#) employer; **cannot be self-employed**.
- Applicant must have his/her application received by USCIS within **90 days** of the end of their post-completion OPT period, within **60 days** of the STEM OPT recommendation in SEVIS and **before the end of their post-completion OPT period**, or the application will be **denied**.

### Conditions and Limitations:

1. The STEM OPT start date will begin the day after the initial OPT ends. You do not choose the dates.
2. TWO STEM OPT extensions are allowed per lifetime.
3. A STEM OPT Extension can only be applied for while the applicant is in a valid period of post-completion OPT
4. If the application has been timely filed, you can continue to work while the application is being processed for 180 days, even if you do not receive your new EAD before the end of your initial post-completion OPT period.
5. You must pay close attention to and comply with reporting requirements and deadlines. Failure to comply with reporting requirements will result in the loss of your immigration status and employment authorization.
6. Individuals engaged in a period of 24-month STEM OPT extension cannot be unemployed for an aggregate of more than 150 days (dating back to the start of your post-completion OPT period).
7. Students may not be their own (sole) employer or provide the employer attestations on their own behalf. Additionally, there must be an employer/employee relationship with the employer providing training on site, which means that people will typically need to be employed directly by the company, not employed by a third party or temp. employment agency. The government guidance is that the "employer that signs the Training Plan must be the same entity that employs the student and provides the practical training experience."
8. To qualify for the STEM OPT extension, the position must be full time (20+ hours per week). Employment with multiple employers is only possible if both positions will be more than 20 hours per week and if both employers comply with all of the STEM OPT regulations, including completing and signing the I-983 Training Plan.

## Application Process:

You must submit a timely application to USCIS in order to continue working and obtain the STEM OPT extension. Follow these steps:

**STEP 1: Be Informed:** Read this handout thoroughly and carefully. For more detailed information, consult the “STEM HUB” at <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub>

### **STEP 2: Obtain the OPT Recommendation and New I-20**

To request the STEM OPT I-20 you **MUST** submit all of the following to IPO by emailing [ipo@ysu.edu](mailto:ipo@ysu.edu).

1. The STEM OPT Extension Request Form
2. The STEM Attestation
3. Photocopy/scan of your EAD card(s)
4. Completed, signed [Form I-983](#)

Upon receiving your complete request, your STEM I-20 will be issued within 3 business days. When your I-20 is ready, you will receive an email with the next steps to collect your document.

### **STEP 3: Complete the USCIS Application Materials**

Gather the following application materials and submit them to USCIS to apply for the STEM OPT extension.

#### **SEND THE FOLLOWING ITEMS TO USCIS (in this order):**

- I-765 filing fee of \$410.
  - Check or money order made payable to “US Department of Homeland Security.”
  - Form G-1450 if paying by credit card: <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450>
- G-1145. Use this form if you wish to receive email or text confirmation of your receipt number from USCIS. Find the form at: [www.uscis.gov/g-1145](http://www.uscis.gov/g-1145).
- Original I-765 form completed by you with your original signature (in blue ink). Find the form at [www.uscis.gov/i-765](http://www.uscis.gov/i-765). Refer to the STEM power point for tips on completing the I-765.
- Photocopies of **ALL** previously issued and signed I-20 documents dating back to beginning of F-1 status. This includes a copy of your new STEM I-20!
- Proof of degree: [official transcript](#) is recommended. Alternatively, the applicant may choose to provide a copy of the diploma showing the level and program of study.
- I-94 record (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/>) OR front and back of paper record (if applicable).
- Photocopy of your valid passport ID page(s)
- Photocopy of the most recent F-1 visa stamp (even if it is expired!)
- Two “passport” photos. In pencil, print your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo. No eyeglasses can be worn in passport photos. Passport photos can be obtained at some US Post Offices, FedEx offices, and many retailers such as CVS. More details about can be found at: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/photos/photos.html>
- Copy of any previously-issued EAD card(s).

### **STEP 4: Mail the Application Materials to USCIS**

- When you have completed the entire application, make a complete set of photocopies for your files, and send the entire application to USCIS.
- Mail the application to one of two USCIS lockboxes below. You must mail the application to the USCIS office that has jurisdiction over the address you have used on #3 of the I-765 form. IPO recommends that you send the application via an express mail carrier so that you have a tracking number and signature noting proof of delivery.
- Mail the application so USCIS receives it within the application deadlines:
  - No more than 90 days before the end of your initial OPT period
  - Before the end of your initial 12-month OPT period
  - Within 60 days of your STEM recommendation/issue date

**If the address used on the I-765 is in:****Mail Your Application To:**

Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Guam, or the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.	<u><a href="#">USCIS Phoenix Lockbox</a></u> <b><u>For FedEx/UPS – Recommended!!:</u></b> <b><u>For USPS</u></b> USCIS      USCIS Attn: AOS      P.O. Box 21281 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S      Phoenix, AZ 85034 Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034
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	<u><a href="#">USCIS Dallas Lockbox</a></u> <b><u>For FedEx/UPS – Recommended!!:</u></b> <b><u>For USPS</u></b> USCIS      USCIS Attn: AOS      P.O. Box 660867 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business      Dallas, TX 75266 Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067

**STEP 5: Wait for the EAD**

Within one month of sending the application to the USCIS, you should get a standard receipt notice. If you do not get this notice within 6 weeks contact IPO for more information. The “Receipt Number” in the top left corner of this receipt notice can be used to check the status of your case on the USCIS website at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) or by calling the phone number indicated on the receipt. Keep in mind that this information is updated infrequently. As long as your STEM application is timely filed you may continue working for up to 180 days while waiting on your STEM EAD card.

**Other Important Information:****A. Reporting Requirements and Limitations on Unemployment**

- **F-1 regulations REQUIRE you to report any change of your name, your address, your employer’s name or your employer’s address, within 10 days.**
  - Report changes to IPO by emailing [ipo@ysu.edu](mailto:ipo@ysu.edu). Updates will be reported in SEVIS.
- **You must submit verification reports to IPO every 6 months, to confirm that the employer information you submitted with this request is still correct.** The first report is due 6-months after the end of your 12-month OPT period. After that, the report is due every 6 months until your STEM OPT ends, or you change status or depart the U.S. Send STEM reports to [ipo@ysu.edu](mailto:ipo@ysu.edu).
- **You must submit 2 self-evaluations.** One at the 12-month mark and a final evaluation, either at the 24-month mark or at the time you leave the company, whichever comes first. The evaluation can be found on [page 5 of the I-983 form](#).
- As regulations may change, **IPO must also have your current email address** in order to contact you quickly.
- **Periods of “unemployment” are limited to 150 days while on STEM OPT.** This dates back to the start of your initial post-completion OPT period.
- **You must report status changes to IPO while you are on OPT.** For instance, you must notify IPO if you:
  - Apply for and are granted a change of status from F-1 (OPT) to H-1B or any other status.
  - If you leave the U.S. and make a new entry in another status.
  - If you leave the U.S. permanently before the end date of your EAD card.
  - If you plan to return to YSU as a student or continue studies elsewhere after OPT.

**B. Authorization May Not be Rescinded.**

Once authorization to engage in OPT is granted by USCIS, it may not be rescinded or canceled. If you do not use the work authorization, it is forfeited.

**C. Change of Employer after OPT has been Authorized:** You must report any change of employer or employer address within 10 days. If you change your employer, you must submit a new (1) STEM OPT Extension Request Form, (2) copy of your STEM EAD (3) I-765, (4) I-983 and (5) final evaluation by emailing IPO.

**D. Social Security and Other Taxes**

In general, F-1 students who have been in the U.S. fewer than five tax years are “nonresidents for tax purposes” and are exempt from Social Security (FICA) and Medicare taxes (see Internal Revenue Service Publication 519, “US Tax Guide for Aliens”). However, your earnings are subject to applicable federal, state, and local taxes. Beginning in the sixth tax year, most students in F-1 status become “residents for tax purposes” and employers should withhold Social Security and Medicare taxes. Tax returns must be filed on or before April 15 each year for the previous calendar year, for both “nonresidents” and “residents.”

**E. Traveling Outside of the U.S. While on STEM OPT**

To re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status during the STEM OPT period, you must present the following documents at the U.S. port of entry:

- STEM OPT I-20 with a valid travel signature. Should you require an updated travel signature and are no longer in Youngstown, email IPO for next steps.
- Valid EAD card.
- Valid passport.
- Valid F-1 visa stamp (e.g. unless traveling to contiguous territory for less than 30 days).
- A job offer letter/proof of employment.

**Dependent Travel:** Since dependents do not receive an EAD, an F-2 dependent must carry copies of the F-1 I-20 with OPT recommendation, EAD card and job offer letter, in addition to the F-2 I-20.

**\*\*Travel at any time while in F-1 status carries some risk. This risk increases for individuals on OPT if the F-1 visa has expired and a new visa is required in order to re-enter the U.S. or if the F-1 student has been unemployed for more than 150 days. Be sure to consult with IPO with any travel questions or concerns.\*\***

**F. Employment Authorization with a Pending H-1B Petition (“Cap Gap” Employment Authorization)**

- All students on OPT who have a pending or approved H-1B petition will have their F-1 status and OPT authorization *automatically* extended if the employer has filed a timely H-1B petition for a change of status.
- Should your employer require a new “Cap Gap I-20”, contact IPO.
- The OPT employment authorization automatically ends if the H-1B petition is denied, rejected or withdrawn (although the student can continue working until the end date indicated on the OPT EAD). The F-1 would have a 60-day grace period with no work authorization after the end of OPT.

**24-Month STEM OPT Extension Request Form**

To request the STEM OPT I-20 you **MUST** submit all of the following to IPO by emailing [ipo@ysu.edu](mailto:ipo@ysu.edu).

1. This STEM OPT Extension Request Form
2. The STEM Attestation
3. Photocopy/scan of your EAD card(s)
4. Completed, signed [Form I-983](#)

**Personal Information**

Family Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

U.S. Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Current EAD Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

YSU Degree/Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Residential Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of STEM Extension**

**What Type of I-20 are you Requesting? Check ONE Box Below:**

**Initial** 24-Month STEM OPT Extension

**Change** in STEM OPT Employer

Submit the "Final Evaluation" (page 5) of the [I-983](#) from your Previous Employer.

Submit a new and complete [I-983](#) (pages 1-4) from the New Employer.

**Indicate:**

Previous Employer/Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Date of Employment with Previous Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Start Date of Employment with New Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reissue** of STEM OPT I-20 (*not timely filed/I-20 over 60 days past issuance*)

## Employer Information

\* Be careful of spelling/capitalization/punctuation. Information will appear in SEVIS **EXACTLY** as you enter it below.

Employer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Verify Number (usually 4-6 digits): \_\_\_\_\_

Employer's EIN Number: \_\_\_\_\_

(NOTE: The Employer Identification Number (EIN) is not the same as the E-Verify number. Your Human Resources Department will be able to provide both the E-Verify Number and EIN to you!)

My employment must be:  **Full-time** (*defined by immigration as working more than 20 hours per week.*)

Actual Start Date with STEM Employer: (mm/dd/yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_

Employer Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Explain how the employment is related to your MAJOR field of study** (maximum 1000 characters).

(Note: This is a required field in SEVIS. Students who work in a position unrelated to their major field of study fail to comply with federal regulations. If the Department of Homeland Security identifies that your work is not directly related to your major field of study, your SEVIS record could be terminated for failing to maintain status. Make sure you are clear in how the job directly relates to your major field. It is also important that you keep good records of all employment during the OPT period – job offer letters, job description, pay stubs, etc. This way, should you ever be asked to show this information in the future, you will have it to refer back to.)

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## Receiving your STEM I-20

I will pick up the I-20 from IPO.

I designate \_\_\_\_\_ to pick up the I-20 for me at IPO.

I choose eShipGlobal for express mailing (FedEx/UPS) payable by my credit/debit card. IPO will email you with instructions if you choose this method.

## Certification

By checking this box, I certify all information is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge and I request that IPO issue a STEM OPT I-20. I also confirm that after receiving my STEM OPT I-20 from IPO, I will adhere to the guidelines in the Attestation and will then apply to USCIS for the STEM OPT Extension in a timely manner as I understand that USCIS has strict filing deadlines.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**STEM OPT Extension Attestation**

**Write your initials in each box to indicate that you have read and understood each item. KEEP a copy of this form** for your records and provide a copy to your employer so they are aware of all requirements during the STEM extension.

**I CERTIFY THAT:**

I have thoroughly read and understood the 24-month STEM OPT information provided.

My employment is directly related to the qualifying STEM degree and I understand that:

- I may NOT work in a volunteer/unpaid position;
- there must be an employer-employee relationship at the location of my employment; and
- self-employment is not supported on the 24-month STEM OPT Extension.

I must submit three validity reports to IPO which include my name and date of birth, my address, my employer's name and my employer's address. These validity reports will be due every six months beginning 6-months after the 24-month EAD start date (refer to the dates listed on the reporting tool). I understand that I have a 10-business day period to make this verification. Submit reports to [ipo@ysu.edu](mailto:ipo@ysu.edu).

I must submit two self-evaluations of my STEM training. This includes a 12-month mid-evaluation and a final evaluation, either at the 24-month mark or at the time I leave the company, whichever occurs first (refer to the dates listed on the reporting tool). This self-evaluation is found on page 5 of Form I-983.

I understand that failure to submit the validity and evaluation reports is considered a violation of status and will result in the termination of my SEVIS record and loss of my legal status in the U.S. and my employment authorization.

If my immigration status changes or if I depart the U.S. permanently, I will notify IPO by providing a copy of the approval notice and my I-94 showing my new status so that my F-1 SEVIS record can be properly updated.

I understand that accruing an aggregate of more than 150 days of unemployment during the total 36-month OPT period will result in a violation of the requirements to remain in valid F-1 status. I will notify IPO if I lose my job or if I am considering changing employers. I must notify IPO of any change of employer within 10 days and submit a STEM OPT request to obtain a new I-20.

I will read all IPO emails carefully to insure that I am aware of any changes pertaining to my immigration status.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)