

F-1 students in lawful status who are currently engaged in post-completion OPT who qualifies as STEM eligible may apply to the Department of Homeland Security for an additional 24 months of OPT.

### **Basic steps of a STEM OPT Extension Application:**

- Prepare the **STEM OPT materials with the employer (more information below)**
- Send STEM OPT materials to **International Office (obtain new I-20 recommending STEM OPT)**
- Mail **STEM OPT application to USCIS**
- USCIS receives application

### **NOTE:**

The application must be submitted to the International office no later than one month prior to the end of your current Post-Completion OPT. The STEM OPT application must be received by USCIS before the expiration of the current OPT period. However, you can submit an application to USCIS as early as 90 days prior to the end of the current OPT period.

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 extension applications.

### **The F-1 student must:**

- Be on a period of **standard Post-Completion OPT**
- Hold a degree in a field of study (indicated on the I-20) which qualifies as STEM eligible according to the official STEM Designated Degree Program List [[PDF](#)]
- Have a job offer from an employer enrolled in E-Verify (**Letter should include your title, name of supervisor, email and tel # of the supervisor, complete address of the employer**)
- **Demonstrate the job is directly related to a STEM field**
- **Prepare and sign** the Training Plan with your employer ([Form I-983](#))
- Apply before your current Post-Completion period of OPT expires.

### **The employer must:**

- Be enrolled in E-Verify
- Have a Federal Employer Identification Number

- Agree to a the terms of STEM OPT by completing their sections of the Training Plan (Form I-983)

## **Below is a list of the documents you will need for your STEM OPT application to USCIS:**

Once you receive your **new STEM OPT I-20**, you will include a copy of this new I-20 with the rest of your OPT application that you submit it to USCIS. You are now ready to mail your application to USCIS with a **cover letter listing all the items enclosed.**

### **The package mailed to USCIS will include:**

- **Cover letter**
- **Form I-765**
- **Form I-983 Training Plan** (completed and signed by you and your employer) and including a brief explanation of the relevance of your work to your degree/coursework.
- **Employment verification letter** – letter should explain your **duties, pay, location** of the company and whether your **employment is part-time or full-time**. Letter should have **employer’s name as listed in E-verify** and **E-verify identification number**
- **Form G-1145**
- **Photographs**
- **Check or Money Order** made to USCIS or Department of Homeland Security
- **Copies of** – copy of new I-20 (with STEM request), **previous I-20s**, **current I-94** (Printed online I-94 record) **visa page, passport, EAD card.**
- **Proof of STEM Degree completion** – copy of **awarded degree** and **official transcript**

### **NOTE:**

\* Make a copy of all application materials for your records and attach them using a paper clip.

\* Make sure to send your application **via certified mail with a return receipt or tracking number.**

Your OPT application must be **received by USCIS within 60 days of the issuance of your new STEM OPT I-20.**

### **Tips for completing the I-983, I-765 and other documents:**

#### **Form I-983**

The **purpose of the Form I-983**, a new requirement for 24-month extension, 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: **1.** the role of the student in the work place **2.** the goals and objectives of the proposed training **3.** how the employer will provide oversight of the plan, and **4.** what set of measures and assessments will be used. Both student and supervisor must sign this form.

Students **with a pending 17-month STEM extension filed before May 10, 2016** can expect to receive a request from USCIS which will require this form before their STEM OPT application will be approved. You will also be asked for a new I-20 signed by your International Office.

- Start with the SEVP instructions for students and employers to complete the I-983 as a helpful guide as you complete the form.
- Use the **name and contact information of your UCH designated school official** as your **Designated School Official (DSO)**.
- **UCH SEVIS School Code** is found on Page 1 of your I-20 under School Information, and begins with the letters **BOS214F\_\_\_\_\_**
- **Your CIP code** is assigned to your major and can be found on your I-20 or on a degree verification. The number format will be **00.0000 (26.0102 - Biomedical science)**
- Contact your employer to obtain the **company's EIN (tax ID number)**, NAISC code, and **E-Verify information**.

A full overview of the new application requirements including instructions for your employer can be found on The Study in the States hub.

## **Form I-765**

The purpose of the Form I-765 is to request renewal of your permission to accept employment. **Do not apply for your STEM extension of OPT using the online USCIS process.** Here are some tips for completing the PDF form:

- Type this form, except for the signature box
- Check the second box: **Renewal of my permission to accept employment**
- **Question 3:** Make certain that the address you put in item #3 will be valid for the next 90 to 120 days as this is where your receipt and EAD will be sent. Mail from USCIS will **not** be forwarded by the U.S. Postal Service
- **Question 10:** Number from your online I-94 record
- **Question 16:** Eligibility code: **(c)(3)(c)**

- **Question 17: Degree awarded and field of study. Employers EIN or E-Verify number, as supplied by your employer**
- Signature: **Sign in blue ink and make sure your signature does not touch any text or lines**

## **Form G-1145**

The purpose of the Form G-1145 is to request an electronic notification when USCIS accepts your application. You will receive an email and text message when it arrives at USCIS.

### **Photographs:**

Two recent photographs on thin, glossy paper per instructions from USCIS. Write your name and **SEVIS number in pencil on the back of the photos**. Do not cut to size or staple.

### **Check or Money Order:**

**\$410 payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security.**

### **PROOF OF STEM DEGREE:**

Proof of your STEM degree can include a copy of your UCH diploma accompanied by official Transcript

### **Employment Limitations**

- **Employment must be paid.**
- **Employment must be a minimum of 20 hours per week.**
- **Employment must be directly related to your course of study.**
- **Limitation on Unemployment for the STEM OPT Extension.** Students approved for the 24-month STEM OPT extension may not accrue more than a total of 150 days of unemployment throughout their entire 36 months on OPT. Time spent outside the United States, if not employed by a U.S. employer, is counted towards the 150-day period of unemployment. To count as “employed” a student should be able to provide evidence, acquired from the student’s employer, to verify that he or she worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of reported employment.
- **Unemployment Caution (Warning) :** SEVIS records will **automatically terminate** for students who have no employment reported for 150 days. Be sure that you have made alternate plans and communicated them to International Office before your record is terminated. If you have any concerns, you can always contact International Office.

### **Reporting Requirements**

Students must submit to International Office via the I-983 during the first 12 months on the STEM OPT extension and at the completion 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.

Student **and employers** must report to the International Office a change in any of the following via the I-983:

- Employer name and address
- Decrease in student's compensation
- Reduction in hours worked to less than 20 hours a week
- Employer's EIN
- Termination of employment

Students are required to report to International Office **within 10 days**, any change in the following:

- Legal Name
- Residential address
- Employer name and address
- Change in status of current employment, including loss of employment, change of status to H-1B, transfer to another F-1 program, or change employers. If you change employers, you and your employer will need to complete a new I-983 and submit to the International Office.

Students are required to report to the International Office **every 6 months** - regardless if there is a change or not - the following:

- Legal name
- Residential address
- Employer name and address
- Status of current employment

Students on the **17 month OPT STEM extension** must still report to International Office within 10 days any change in legal name, residential address, employer name and address, or a change in status. Students must also continue to report to International Office every 6 months, regardless if there is a change or not, their legal name, residential address, employer name and address, and the status of their current employment.

### **Required documents to re-enter the U.S. while on STEM OPT Extension**

- **Valid I-20** - Page two should list your employer's information and be signed by an International Advisor within the last six months.

- **Valid F-1 Visa** - If your F-1 visa is expired, you must apply for a new one at a U.S. embassy or consulate prior to your return. (Note: Canadian citizens do not need a visa.)
- **Valid Passport** - The expiration date should be at least six months into the future at any given time.
- **Valid Employment Authorization Document (EAD)**
- **Evidence of a job offer** or resumption of employment. If you are returning to the U.S without evidence of a job offer, you may be questioned at the port of entry.