24-Month STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) Extension
Agenda

- 24-Month STEM OPT Extension information
- Eligibility requirements
- Application process
- Application materials
- Sending STEM OPT application to USCIS
- Reporting Requirements during STEM OPT
- Travel
24-Month STEM OPT Extension Information
What is the STEM OPT Extension?

- Extension of Optional Practical Training for students who have completed a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (STEM) fields

- Allows students to continue engaging in practical experience that is directly related to their major after they complete their degree requirements

- Valid for 24 months (after initial 12 months of OPT)

- Benefit of F-1 status immediately following a period of post-completion OPT
STEM Extension Overview

- 24 month extension
- Two extensions in lifetime
  - The second extension must be at a higher level than the first
- Extension can be based on previous STEM degree
  - Must follow period of post-completion OPT
- Student and employer must complete Form I-983 Training Plan
- Application can reach USCIS:
  - No earlier than 90 days before OPT EAD end date
Resources
STEM OPT Eligibility
Mandatory Degree Requirements

- The degree that is the basis for the 24-month STEM OPT Extension must be:
  - Listed on the STEM Designated Degree Program List
  - Based on the degree’s CIP code
  - At the Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Doctoral level

- Student is eligible immediately following post-completion OPT and after completing all course requirements
  - Excluding creative component/thesis/dissertation
Previous Degree Requirements

- The STEM OPT may be based on a previously obtained STEM degree that was:
  - Conferred within the past 10 years
  - From a U.S. educational institution that is SEVP-certified
  - Included on the current STEM Designated Degree Program List

- Each degree may only be used once as the basis of a 24-Month STEM OPT extension

- Must be in a period of post-completion OPT when applying

- All requirements must be met at the time of the Designated School Official’s (DSO) STEM OPT recommendation
Employment Requirements

- Employment on STEM OPT must be directly related to the STEM major
- Employer must be enrolled in E-Verify
- **Must be paid** employment for a minimum of 20 hours per week per employer
- Employee and employer must complete the Form I-983 Training Plan
  - Bona fide employer, employee relationship must exist
  - Employer agrees to report the termination or departure of a STEM OPT student to the DSO within 5 days of the termination or departure
Compensation and Time Requirements

- Pay must be commensurate with terms and conditions applicable to the employer’s similarly situated U.S. workers in the area of employment.

- Required to work at least 20 hours per week for each employer.
  - Excluding time off taken consistent with leave-related policies.

- Not allowed to volunteer while on STEM OPT.

- Must disclose any adjustments on an updated Form I-983.
Form I-983, Training Plan

- Form I-983 is used to:
  - Identify goals for the STEM opportunity and specific knowledge, skills, and techniques that will be gained
  - Explain how goals will be achieved
  - Obtain a performance evaluation
  - Describe methods of oversight and supervision
  - Explain how the training is directly related to the student’s qualifying STEM degree

- Completed Form I-983 must be submitted before the DSO may recommend an OPT Extension
  - ICE and/or USCIS may request a copy. Must be kept updated.

- New Form I-983 required when starting with a new employer or when changes are made
  - Student must submit a new Form I-983 within 10 days of change
Application Process
To be eligible for STEM OPT, the application:

- **Must be received by USCIS no earlier than 90 days** before the end date of the post-completion OPT EAD
- **Must be received and receipted by USCIS on or before the end date** of the post-completion OPT EAD

- USCIS may take over 90 days to process the application

- If application is timely and properly filed, student may continue work for up to 180 days beyond the post-completion OPT end date while the application is pending
  - USCIS will issue a Receipt Notice which you may use to complete Form I-9 with your employer to authorize this 180 day period of employment

- Work performed after post-completion OPT EAD end date must be directly related to STEM degree used as the basis for the 24-month STEM OPT extension
To apply for STEM OPT, first request new I-20 by logging into CyStart through the ISSO website.
Submitting STEM OPT Request to ISSO Through CyStart
You will receive an email when your STEM OPT recommendation I-20 is ready to be collected from ISSO. The email will include information on:

- Document collection or document mailing
- Application timeline guidelines
- Review options and times
- Form I-765 feedback
- A list of required STEM OPT application materials
- Mailing your application to USCIS
Required 24-Month STEM OPT Application Documents
Required Application Materials

- Payment of $410
  - Check or money order made payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security, or
  - Form G-1450 authorizing credit card payment
- Two U.S. passport photos taken within last 30 days (gently write SEVIS # on back)
- Form I-765, typed and signed in black ink
- Form G-1145, typed
- Most recent I-94 (Locate at cbp.gov/i94)
- Copy of passport identity page (and page with expiration date, if different)
- Copy of passport page with most recent F-1 visa
- Copy of previous OPT recommendation I-20s
- Copy of previous EADs (front and back) from USCIS
- Copy of official ISU transcript, which lists major and degree earned
- Copy of diploma (optional)
- Letter from employer verifying current employment and duties related to major & degree earned
Payment

- Payment of $410
  - Check or money order made payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security, or
    - Write I-765 and your SEVIS number in the Memo section
    - If the address on your check is not current, cross off and write in correct address
  - Form G-1450 authorizing credit card payment
Photos

- 2 color photos
  - Write SEVIS number lightly in black pen on the back of both pictures
- Taken within past 30 days
- White or off-white background with no shadows
- U.S. quality passport photos

Well Composed Photo Composition Examples
Form I-765: Sample and Template
Form G-1145

e-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance
Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

What is the Purpose of This Form?

This form is used by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to notify you that your application has been accepted.

General Information

Complete the information below and click the button to the right to begin the process of acceptance.

USCIS will send you an e-Notification to the e-mail address listed above. If you do not receive an e-Notification, you may check the status of your application on the USCIS website.

Electronic e-Notifications cannot be changed after they are sent.

USCIS will also send you a receipt notice (I-797, C), which will be sent to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Office of Policy and Strategy, 23 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20529-2145. If you have any questions, please call 1-800-375-5264.
New I-20 with STEM OPT Recommendation

- Recommendation indicated on page 2 of new I-20
  - Requested begin and end date

![Employment Authorizations Table]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authorization Type</th>
<th>Full/Part-Time</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POST-COMPLETION OPT</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>APPROVED</td>
<td>11 JUNE 2015</td>
<td>10 JUNE 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM OPT</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>PENDING</td>
<td>11 JUNE 2016</td>
<td>11 JUNE 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer Information</th>
<th>Authorization Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TYPE</td>
<td>POST-COMPLETION OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Name</td>
<td>SEVP Applied Labs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Date</td>
<td>01 JULY 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End Date</td>
<td>10 JUNE 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City &amp; State</td>
<td>ARLINGTON, VA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>Authorization Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STEM OPT</td>
<td>11 JUNE 2016 - 11 JUNE 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Name</td>
<td>SEVP Applied Labs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Date</td>
<td>11 JUNE 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End Date</td>
<td>11 JUNE 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City &amp; State</td>
<td>ARLINGTON, VA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Degree and Employment Information

- Copy of official transcript

- Copy of diploma (optional)
  - Indicating education level and field of study

- Letter of employment
  - Offer letter (if starting in the future) or letter confirming your employment with the company (if currently employed)
  - On company letterhead

- Copy of all previous EADs
  - Front and back
I-94 Record

- Paper or Electronic copy
- Retrieve from https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home
Passport and Visa Copies

- Biographic information
  - Photo, date of birth, country of birth

- Passport expiration date
  - Sometimes on a different page

- Most recent Visa page
Sending STEM OPT Application to USCIS
Mailing Final Application

• If mailing the application to USCIS yourself:
  Scan application, submit scanned copy to ISSO, and keep copy for yourself. This is important in case USCIS requests additional information or makes a mistake on your application. Submit the scanned copy of your final application in 1 PDF file here:
  • Cystart > F-1 Student Services > Immigration Document Upload

• If you want ISSO to mail the application to USCIS:
  Drop off/mail application to ISSO in 3241 Memorial Union, then complete the Document Mailing and Collection e-form here:
  • Cystart > F-1 Student Services > Document Mailing and Collection > Document Mailing
You will receive an electronic receipt notice from USCIS by email and text if you complete the G-1145 form.

- This commonly takes to 2-3 weeks
- You can check the status of your case with information in the e-mail
- Sample e-mail message:

  Your case has been accepted and routed to the USCIS Potomac Service Center for processing. Within 7-10 days by standard mail you will receive your official Receipt Notice (Form I-797) with your Receipt Number YSCxxxxxxxxxx. With the official Receipt Notice (Form I-797) you may visit www.uscis.gov where you can check the status of your case using My Case Status. We suggest you wait until you have received your Form I-797 before checking My Case Status.

  This confirmation provides notification of the date USCIS received your case. This notice does NOT grant any immigration status or benefit. You MAY NOT present this notice as evidence that you have been granted any immigration status or benefit. Further, this notice does NOT constitute evidence that your case remains pending with USCIS. The current status of your case must be verified with USCIS.

  PLEASE DO NOT REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE
You will receive a paper receipt notice from USCIS

- USCIS sends a paper I-797 Receipt Notice to the mailing address listed on the I-765
  - May take 2 – 4 weeks
  - 90-120 day processing starts from I-797 received date
- ISSO will email you a copy when I-797 is received, if you list ISSO’s address on the I-765
Case Status

- Use [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) (click “Check Case Status”)
  - Might stay on “Case Was Received” for 2-4 months
Pending STEM OPT Application

- While your STEM OPT application is pending with USCIS:
  - You remain in legal, F-1 status
  - You may continue working for 180 days past end date on the Post-Completion OPT EAD card, as long as STEM OPT application was timely and properly filed
    - USCIS will issue a Receipt Notice which you may use to complete Form I-9 with your employer to authorize this 180 day period of employment
Application Process Overview

1. Verify that you are eligible for the STEM OPT Extension
2. Complete Form I-983 Training Plan with employer
3. Complete the STEM OPT Extension e-form in Cystart
4. Compile all required application materials
5. Collect STEM OPT recommendation I-20 from ISSO
6. Bring or send application materials to ISSO for review (optional)
7. Mail final application to USCIS
8. Receive a receipt notice within 2-3 weeks after submission from USCIS
9. If STEM OPT is approved, USCIS will mail your new EAD to the address listed on your Form I-765
   • If you listed ISSO on the Form I-765, ISSO will contact you regarding EAD collection
Reporting Requirements During STEM OPT
**Reporting Requirements**

- **Must update ISSO within Cystart or the SEVP Portal within 10 days** of a change to:
  - Living address
  - Employer
  - Employer address
  - Employer name
  - Loss of employment

- If you change employers, the new employer must be enrolled in E-Verify and you must submit the following to ISSO:
  - A new Form I-983 for your new employer within 10 days of starting
  - A final evaluation (page 5 of the Form I-983) of your experience with the previous employer

- Required to complete a **validation report for ISSO every 6 months** while on STEM OPT Extension
  - Due within 10 business days of each reporting date
  - Complete OPT Reporting Requirements e-form through CyStart
Changes to the Form I-983

- Student and employer are required to submit a modified Form I-983 to ISSO, if any changes are made

- Material changes and deviations include:
  - Any change of Employer Identification Number
  - Any reduction in compensation that is not tied to reduction in hours worked
  - Any significant decrease in hours worked per week
  - Any decrease in hours worked below the minimum 20 hour weekly requirement
  - Any change that makes the I-983 inaccurate

Department of Homeland Security may conduct a site visit to any employer.
Form I-983 - Evaluation Requirements

- Student must submit a self-evaluation of their progress toward the training goals outlined in Form I-983, signed by student and employer:
  
  - Require an initial evaluation within **12 months** and concluding evaluation by **24 months**
    - Due within 10 days following the conclusion of the reporting period

- Changes to the Form I-983, Training Plan must be reported to the ISSO
  - Student must submit a modified Form I-983 through CyStart via the “OPT Reporting Requirements” e-form
Periods of Unemployment

- Allowed up to 150 days of unemployment during post-completion OPT (90) and STEM OPT (60) combined
  - Count unemployment days between start date on post-completion OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and end date of STEM OPT
  - Count all days, including weekends and holidays, during unemployment
  - Count any week employed less than 20 hours as a week of unemployment
  - Count days outside the U.S., if unemployed

- Student does not receive additional 60 days of STEM OPT unemployment until STEM OPT application is approved

- Considered a violation of F-1 status to go over 150 days of unemployment
  - Student is required to keep track of unemployment periods

- Students and employers must report the end of employment to ISSO within 5 business days
Travel
Travel During STEM OPT Extension

- Students are able to travel while on an approved 24-month STEM OPT Extension

- Students with a pending 24-month STEM OPT Extension application and an expired post-completion OPT EAD are recommended to not travel

- Students are able to travel while on the 24-month STEM OPT Extension and should have the following documents when they re-enter the United States:
  - STEM OPT I-20 with a travel signature within 6 months of reentry
  - Passport with at least 6 months of validity
  - Valid F-1 visa
  - STEM OPT EAD card
  - Letter of employment
Questions?

Please email ISSO at isso@iastate.edu or make an appointment with an International Student Advisor.
Contact Information

International Students and Scholars Office
3241 Memorial Union
2229 Lincoln Way, Ames IA 50014
Phone: 515-294-1120
Fax: 515-294-8263
Email: isso@iastate.edu
Website: www.isso.iastate.edu