

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR SERVICES

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Optional Practical Training Extension Guidelines: (24 Month STEM OPT Extension)

A 24-month STEM OPT extension after the initial 12-month OPT is available for students graduating with a degree in designated STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) who meet additional employment criteria laid out below. Students may apply for the STEM OPT extension two times per sequentially higher degree level, over the course of their studies in the U.S. Non-STEM graduates who completed a STEM degree from another U.S. accredited institution within the past ten years are eligible to apply for a STEM extension based on that previous degree, assuming they have not already done a STEM OPT extension for that degree.

STEM OPT EXTENSION ELIGIBILITY:

1. Students must **be actively participating in post-completion OPT** and submit their STEM application to USCIS BEFORE their OPT expires. USCIS must receive STEM OPT extension application no earlier than 90 days prior to OPT expiration date.
2. Students must have **earned a degree in a STEM field** from UConn or another U.S. accredited institution within the past 10 years. Degree must be completed at time of application. Non-STEM UConn grads participating in post-completion OPT with a previous STEM degree are eligible to apply, if they have not already applied for a STEM extension based on that degree. For a list of STEM eligible major fields visit: <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf>
3. Student must be employed by an employer participating in the **E-Verify program**. For more information on E-Verify visit: www.uscis.gov/e-verify
4. Student and Employer must fill out and submit **Form I-983 (Training Plan for STEM OPT Students)** detailing the relationship between the STEM OPT employment, the academic degree earned and the learning goals of the F-1 student. For more information visit: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/employers-and-the-form-i-983>.

STEM OPT EMPLOYMENT RULES:

1. Student must notify ISSS of any changes in name, address, employer information or employment status any time it changes. Go to www.iss.uconn.edu and scroll down to "Submit OPT Employment Information".
2. Student must submit 6-month validation reports to ISSS (4 times over course of STEM OPT) confirming name, address, employer information and employment status. Go to www.iss.uconn.edu and scroll down to "Submit OPT Employment Information".
3. Students are permitted only 60 days of unemployment during STEM OPT extension. (150 days total between OPT and STEM periods). The student's SEVIS record is subject to termination after 150 days of unemployment.
4. As a part of the **Form I-983 (Training Plan for STEM OPT Students)**, students must conduct a 12-month and a 24-month self-evaluation of the training program, reviewed and approved by employer attesting to its accuracy. Evaluations must be submitted to ISSS.
5. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is permitted to conduct employer site visits to confirm that I-983 goals are being met.
6. Employers must know that student's compensation must be commensurate to similarly situated U.S. workers.
7. Volunteer work and self-employment are not permitted. Some Temp agency and consulting work will not be permitted.

STEM OPT EXTENSION APPLICATION PROCEDURES:

Step 1 -Submit STEM OPT application to ISSS:

Submit the following documents to ISSS. A DSO/International Advisor at ISSS will review and process your STEM OPT request. After processing, you will receive a new I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation and employer information listed on page 2:

- a. Completed "STEM OPT Extension Application Form (ISSS 356)" (available online at www.iss.uconn.edu)
- b. Completed Form I-765 (available online at www.iss.uconn.edu; see below for I-765 information)

- c. Completed Form I-983 (Training Plan for STEM OPT Students)
- d. Copy of UConn diploma or official transcript (proof of degree completion)
- e. Copy of STEM diploma from accredited U.S. university (within 10 years; if UConn degree is not STEM-eligible)
- f. Copy of all previous Employment Authorization Documents (EAD)

Step 2 - File your OPT application with USCIS:

After reviewing the OPT Application, ISSS will issue the following documents to you:

- 1) Updated Form I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation and STEM employer information on page 2
- 2) Form I-765 with any suggested revisions
- 3) Instructions for filing STEM OPT with USCIS listing all application materials and USCIS mailing address

Documents to submit to USCIS

- 1. Form G-1145 for email/text message application status updates. Get this form online at <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>
- 2. Two color passport style photographs (put photos in envelope and print name, date of birth, SEVIS ID number (starting with N00xxxx, located in the upper right hand corner of your I-20) on the outside of Envelope with title "I-765 Application for Post-Completion OPT").
- 3. \$380.00 in the form of a personal check or money order made to **U.S. Department of Homeland Security** (a personal check is preferable)
- 4. Completed I-765, typed and printed and signed in blue ink. Download form at <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> or www.issu.uconn.edu.
- 5. Photocopy of the Form I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation on page 2. Make sure that you sign the bottom of your form before making a photocopy
- 6. Photocopy of all previous forms I-20 (including 12-month OPT I-20). Make sure that you signed all previous forms I-20.
- 7. Print out of I-94 admission record (from www.cbp.gov website) or photocopy of I-94 card (front and back) if you have a paper I-94 attached to your passport or attached to an I-797 approval notice (if you changed status to F-1 within the U.S.)
- 8. Photocopy of any previous Employment Authorization Documents (EAD), if applicable
- 9. Photocopy of your most recent visa stamp (the visa can be expired and/or of a different visa category other than F-1)
- 10. Photocopy of biographical page(s) of the passport, with expiration date – If your passport will expire within 6 months from the time of filing your OPT application with USCIS, you should renew it with your home country’s embassy or consulate before you submit your OPT application

Note: Please be sure to make a photocopy of all your paperwork for your records before mailing your application.

Mail all application materials to the appropriate USCIS Lockbox facility (based on the mailing address on your I-765):

USCIS Phoenix and Dallas Lockbox facilities

If you live 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.	<p><u>USCIS Phoenix Lockbox</u></p> <p>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries: USCIS PO Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036</p> <p>For Express mail and courier deliveries: USCIS Attn: AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034</p>
Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire,	<p><u>USCIS Dallas Lockbox</u></p> <p>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries: USCIS PO Box 660867</p>

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	Dallas, TX 75266 For Express mail and courier deliveries: USCIS Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067
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Step 3 – After Filing Application with USCIS

Receive I-797 (Receipt Notice): The USCIS Lockbox will forward your application to a USCIS Service Center for processing. One or two weeks after receiving your application, USCIS will send you a Receipt Notice (I-797). This will list the Service Center where your application is being processed, the date your application was officially received, and a case number in reference to your application. Carefully review the notice to make sure your name is spelled correctly on the I-797. If it is not, contact a DSO/International Advisor at ISSS immediately.

Receive I-797 (Approval Notice): After processing the STEM OPT application, USCIS will send you an approval notice (I-797). This is a notification on your application status, NOT your work authorization/permission. USCIS processing times for OPT are 60 to 90 days.

Receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD): You will receive an EAD separately in the mail from USCIS. This is your proof of employment authorization. EADs cannot be forwarded by the post office, so if you move or change your mailing address you MUST notify USCIS with the updated address to send your EAD.

Step 4 – Mandatory Reporting Requirements for STEM OPT

Submit Employment Information to ISSS online by filling out the “OPT Information Form”: Go to www.issu.uconn.edu and scroll down to “**Submit OPT Employment Information**”, to fill out the OPT Information Form. All students on OPT and STEM OPT Extension must report their current address of residence, employer’s name and address and employment status to ISSS as soon as you receive your EAD, so that a DSO/International Advisor can report the information in SEVIS.

Students MUST submit this form every time their address or employment information changes. This is a regulatory requirement and failure to comply is a violation of your F-1 status. Students must update ISSS to ensure that they do not accrue more than 150 days of unemployment. **Failure to update ISSS with your employment information will lead to termination of your SEVIS record.**

Submit Validation Reports to ISSS Every Six Months: Go to www.issu.uconn.edu and scroll down to “**Submit OPT Employment Information**”, to fill out the OPT Information Form. All students on STEM OPT Extension must report their current address of residence, employer’s name and address and employment status to ISSS every six months (4 times per STEM extension) even if there is no change in information.

Submit Form I-983 Self-Evaluation Reports to ISSS: Along with your 12-month and 24-month OPT Information Form updates, you must submit your I-983 Self-Evaluation Reports to ISSS. Go to www.issu.uconn.edu and scroll down to “**Submit OPT Employment Information**”, to fill out the OPT Information Form and upload a scanned copy of the I-983 12/24 month self-evaluation.