

24 Month STEM OPT Checklist & Guide

To be eligible, your employer should be registered in the E-Verify employment verification system.

Materials required for the OPT STEM extension application

To International Student Advisor:

- An email with the following information:
 - Current Employer
 - Employer EIN (optional)
 - Job Title
 - Start date
 - Current Work Address
 - Work Supervisor's Name (optional)
 - Work Supervisor's Telephone and Email (optional)
 - Current Home Address
- A copy of the completed [Training Plan I-983 form](#) which you fill out with your employer

To USCIS, you will mail:

- Check or money order for \$380, payable to "Dept. of Homeland Security"
- 2 color, U.S. passport-style, photographs (see "Guidelines" below.) Write name on back with pencil or felt-tip pen.
- Completed and signed [Form I-765](#) (see "Hints" below.)
- Copy of new I-20 from HMC, with recommendation for 24-month OPT extension (please keep the original I-20)
- Copy of your current [I-94](#) printout
- Copy of your passport identity page (and any renewal pages)
- Copy of all previous I-20s
- Copy of the front and back of your current OPT card
- Evidence that your degree meets the STEM degree/major requirements. Only one of the following must be submitted with your application:
 - Transcript—Official or copy that shows your degree and program of study
 - Copy of the diploma that shows your degree level and program of study
- Completed [G-1145](#), E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance (optional)

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Hints for filling out Form I-765

- Item #3 If you may move to a new residence while this application is being processed, use a stable address that will be valid for 3 months. Mail from USCIS is not forwarded by the United States Postal Service.
- Item #9 Use your U.S. Social Security Number.
- Item #10 This question refers to the 11-digit number on your most recent I-94
- Item #11 The answer to this question is “yes.” Include information about your current OPT. (For most students, it’s “Granted, California Service Center.”)
- Item #14 USCIS wants to know what your status was the last time you entered the U.S. For most students applying for OPT, it is “F-1”.
- Item #15 This should be “Student.”
- Item #16 (C)(3)(C)
- Item #17 Degree = your degree level and major; Employer’s name as listed in E-Verify; Employer’s E-Verify Identification Number (E-Verify information can only be obtained from your employer)

Guidelines for the “Two Passport Style” photos

- Photos must measure 2 inches by 2 inches.
- Background should be plain white or off-white.
- Photos should be taken within the last 30 days prior to the extension application. Photos used for obtaining a non-U.S. passport or a U.S. visa stamp are generally not acceptable, as they are often not the correct size, and rarely taken within 30 days of the OPT application.

REMINDER: Reporting Requirements & Maintaining Legal Status during STEM OPT

- Please report to your international student adviser within 10 days of each occurrence:
 - any change in your home address each time that you move
 - any change in the name AND/OR the address of your employer by submission of a new [I-983 form](#)
 - the loss of your job at any time during your OPT authorization
- You and your employer agree to submit an [I-983 form](#) to update your employment information as soon as a material change occurs and within 10 days of each 12-month evaluation.
- You will “check in” with HMC via your international student adviser every 6 months with your current employer’s name.
- Your OPT will end if you accrue a total of 150 days of unemployment (counted from the start of your total OPT period) or if you transfer your SEVIS record to another school.
- As always, you need a valid passport and I-20 at all times to remain in the United States. If travelling, you will need an F-1 visa valid 6 months into the future.

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Submitting the Application

You will submit the application to the appropriate USCIS Service Center. (See addresses below.)

- Be sure to sign your STEM OPT I-20 form when you receive it from HMC under “Student Attestation.”
- Scan or copy the entire application for your own records before you submit it to the USCIS.
- Optional: You can scan the entire application and send it to your international student adviser for a DSO to check over. (Please allow 2-3 business days.)
- Submit the application to the USCIS Lockbox with jurisdiction over the address you list on the I-765 form. Filing jurisdiction information can be found at: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> As of April, 2016, here are the directions for where to send the I-765 for the STEM Extension:

If you live in:	Mail your application to:
<p>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 Northern Mariana Islands.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">USCIS Phoenix Lockbox</p> <p>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">USCIS PO Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036</p> <p>For Express mail and courier deliveries:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">USCIS Attn: AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034</p>
<p>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</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">USCIS Dallas Lockbox</p> <p>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">USCIS PO Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266</p> <p>For Express mail and courier deliveries:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">USCIS Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067</p>

24 Month STEM OPT FAQs

Who is eligible for the STEM extension?

In order to be eligible for this extension, students applying for this benefit must:

- Already be on valid OPT based on a STEM-eligible degree: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension>
- Have had fewer than 90 days of unemployment while on OPT
- Be employed by, or have a job offer from, an employer who is registered in the E-Verify employment verification system

What is E-Verify?

E-Verify is an internet-based system operated by USCIS in partnership with the Social Security Administration to help employers determine the employment eligibility of their employees. You can find more information about E-Verify here: <http://www.uscis.gov/everify>

What is the Form I-983? How do I complete it and who do I send it to?

This form should be completed by the employer and the F-1 student. It should be submitted to the student's DSO. The goal of the formal training plan is to articulate the student's learning objectives and affirm the employer's commitment to helping the student achieve those objectives.

If you change employers, you should submit a new I-983 to your DSO. If your employer has questions about the I-983, please direct them to this resource page: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/employers-and-the-form-i-983>

My OPT expires in summer, 2016, and I am worried I will not get my new EAD card before my current one expires.

The DHS website, Study in the States, says:

"... If a student's post-completion OPT expires while their STEM OPT application is pending, the student will receive an automatic extension of employment authorization of up to 180 days upon the expiration of the current employment authorization (as students have received under the 17-month extension)." (From <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students-with-17-month-stem-opt-applications-pending-on-may-10-2016>)

24 Month STEM OPT FAQs (Continued)

My employer is asking for a new EAD card with the 24 month time frame for the I-9, the document that verifies my eligibility for employment. What can I show them?

You can direct them to the M-274, the Employer Guide to the I-9:

“If the student’s Employment Authorization Document (Form I-766) expires while his or her STEM extension application is pending, he or she is authorized to work until USCIS makes a decision on his or her application, but not more than 180 days from the date the student’s initial OPT Employment Authorization Document (Form I-766) expires. The student’s expired Employment Authorization Document (Form I-766), together with his or her Form I-20 endorsed by the designated school official recommending the STEM extension are acceptable proof of identity and employment authorization for Form I-9 purposes. Enter these documents in Section 2 under List A of Form I-9 . You should reverify employment authorization no later than 180 days from the expiration date of the previous Employment Authorization Document (Form I-766) .

(From Page 25 of M-274, the Employer Guide to the I-9

<https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/m-274.pdf>)

Previously, an F-1 student could only apply for the STEM extension one time. I heard you can apply twice with the new federal ruling. Can you explain how this will work?

There is a lifetime limit of **two** periods of 24-month STEM OPT; each occurring after a higher degree level has been obtained. A STEM degree obtained at a U.S. university prior to your current degree may be the basis for a STEM extension under certain circumstances.

Where can I find more information?

You can find detailed information on the STEM Hub: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub>