International Student and Scholars Office (ISSO)
Email: ISS@qc.cuny.edu
Website: www.qc.cuny.edu

24-MONTH STEM OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING EXTENSION

DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF THE STEM OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING EXTENSION

F-1 status students on an initial 12-month period of post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT), who have graduated in certain fields of study, may be eligible to apply for an additional 24-month period of STEM OPT employment authorization.

To be eligible, you must have received your academic degree in a designated STEM field, from an accredited U.S. institution and have a current or prospective OPT employer who is registered in the U.S. federal government's E-Verify program.

We recommend you begin to review the application process and begin collecting the required documentation for the STEM OPT application about four months before your current period of OPT ends.

NOTES: You can apply for the STEM OPT extension up to 90 days before your current period of OPT expires.

You must apply for the STEM OPT extension before your initial period of OPT expires.

If your OPT STEM extension application has not been approved by the expiration date of your current period of OPT, you are legally allowed to continue working for up to 180 days past the expiration date of your EAD.

APPLICATION PROCESS FOR OPT STEM EXTENSION

Learn about the application process by reviewing this handout as well as the STEM OPT extension information at the Study in the States STEM OPT Hub: **Study in the States STEM OPT HUB.** The STEM OPT HUB has useful information for both F-1 status students and their employers.

STEP 1: Determine your eligibility for the STEM OPT extension.
In general, if you are on an initial 12-month period of post-completion Optional Practical Training, received a degree in the U.S. in a STEM field and are working for an E-Verify employer, you should be eligible for the STEM OPT extension. For more information on eligibility, please see the links below.

Instructions for F-1 status students to help determine STEM OPT extension eligibility.

DHS-Approved STEM Designated Degree Program List DHS Information on the E-Verify program

STEP 2: COMPLETE the I-983, TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS with your employer.

[Overview of the Form I-983](#)

[Overview of the Form I-983 for students Overview of the Form I-983 for employers Instructions for Completing the Form I-983](#)

You must submit the completed I-983 Training Plan to the Office of International Students before our office can recommend you for the STEM OPT extension. Our "SEVIS School Code" is NYC214F00812015.

The "Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code" can be found in the "**PROGRAM OF STUDY**" section of the Form I-20 under "**MAJOR 1**" or "**MAJOR 2**."

STEP 3: Complete the Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization.
The application is fundamentally the same as when you made your initial OPT application except the code is **(c)(3)(C)**

[Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#)

[Detailed instructions for completing the I-765](#) are also available through the USCIS website.

You may follow the **step by step instruction here**

Note: for STEM extension, select STEM OPT C (3)(C)

STEP 4: Obtain an Employment Verification Letter.

You will need to obtain an employment verification letter, written on the organization's letterhead which provides:

• Company's address and the site of your employment, if different from address

• Job description, salary, start date and hours per week

• Your employer's E-Verify name and number

• Supervisor's name, title, email address and phone number

STEP 5: Obtain the DSO's STEM OPT Extension Recommendation and an Updated Form I-20.

Our office's main role in the STEM OPT extension application process is to certify that the Form I-983 Training Plan is complete and signed, to make a recommendation for the STEM OPT extension in the SEVIS system and to issue an updated Form I-20 with the STEM OPT extension request.

Documents Required by the International Student Office (Emailed)

- Form I-983, Training Plan.
- Form I-765, Application for Employment.
- OPT disclaimer form
- Employment Verification Letter.
- Your Diploma.
- All previous Employment Authorization Cards (Form-766)

NOTES:

o **We will review all your application materials.**
o **QC ISSO will process a new I-20 with the OPT recommendation dates and will email a copy with an electronic signature so you can print it, sign and submit it with your I765 on-line application.**

STEP 6: Gather and scan the following information on your PC

o JPG, JPEG, or PNG of 2 inch by 2-inch passport style photo
o PDF of your most recent I-94
o PDF Your passport and visa.
o PDF copy of all previous EADs (I-766).
o PDFs of all previously CPT or OPT endorsed I-20s
o PDF of Post-OPT endorsed I-20- This is the new OPTSTEM -recommended I-20
o Your Graduate Center Diploma.
o Fee Payment

STEP 7: Organize and complete Your On- Line Application.

Review all of the information you have provided so far, and then click to submit your I-765 online application.
You may follow the **step by step instruction here**

Notes:

- Do not send the I-983, Training Plan to USCIS; we keep it in our office.
- Your application cannot be received by the USCIS more than 90 days prior to the expiration of your initial period Optional Practical Training.
- Your application must be received by the USCIS prior to the expiration of your current period of Optional Practical Training.
- Your application must be received by the USCIS within 30 days of the date that our office makes the STEM OPT extension recommendation and issues the updated Form I-20.
- If you move and change your address before receiving your STEM OPT approval, your EAD may not be delivered. Inform our office of your new address and we will update your SEVIS record.

- ❖ These directions are meant to help you in completing your application but should not be considered legal advice. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) ultimately provides the decision on your OPT application. It is your responsibility, as the OPT applicant, to ensure that your OPT application is accurate and complete before you submit it to the US government. Incomplete applications could result in a delay in processing time or denial. QC in no event shall be held liable for any delay, denial, or mistake on your OPT application.

AFTER SUBMITTING THE I-765 ON-LINE- WHILE THE OPT APPLICATION IS PENDING

- The student will receive a paper Receipt Notice within two weeks to one month of submitting the application. The Receipt Notice will give a case number and a Received Date for the application. Follow the instructions to check USCIS website using Receipt Number. check your case status with your receipt number at www.uscis.gov.
  - o Verify that your name and mailing address are correct on the receipt notice.
  - o When the status of your case shows online "Approved", wait for a few days to receive the EAD card
- USCIS processing time is between 60 and 120 days after the Received Date of the application. Often processing times reach or exceed 90 days, so we recommend applying as early as possible. Please visit the USCIS Processing Times website for the most up-to-date processing times for OPT/STEM applications.
- If you have an OPT/STEM application that has been pending for longer than the normal processing time, please contact ISSO and submit a case inquiry on the USCIS website.
- The ISSO does not recommend traveling between the completion date and the approval of the OPT STEM application.

WHEN YOU RECEIVE THE I-797 APPROVAL NOTICE AND THE EAD CARD

- Make a copy of the Approval Notice and EAD (front and back) for your records
- Make a copy of your EAD and write your CUNY ID # somewhere on the page. Scan and email to iss@qc.cuny.edu with a note indicating you applied for STEM OPT and have received your EAD. We will issue and email you a new I -20 stating "STEM OPT Approved."

Maintaining Your Status During Your STEM OPT- Reporting to USCIS

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) requires the Office of International Students to obtain and report information for F-1 Status Students who are participating in the 24-Month STEM OPT Extension.

Check often the STEM reporting requirements here:
[UNDERSTANDING STEM OPT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR F-1 STATUS STUDENTS](#)
[UNDERSTANDING](#) [STEM OPT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR EMPLOYERS](#)

SEVP Portal users will [receive a reminder](#) via email 30 days before any validation report is due. Please note that STEM OPT students must report a change in this information, including any loss of employment, within 10 days of the change.

SEVP Portal FAQs - STEM OPT

1. I am on the STEM extension and I cannot edit my employment in the SEVP Portal, how do I update my information?
While on the STEM extension, only the DSO can update your employment information and the DSO is required to review updates to your I-983 before making any changes. You must fill the [STEM OPT Reporting Form](#) to update your employment and email QC-ISSO the updated I-983 when necessary. You can still update your physical address in the SEVP Portal while on STEM OPT.

2. I received an email about the STEM validation reporting from the SEVP Portal and it says I need to contact my DSO. Can you help me complete my reporting?
While on the STEM extension, only the DSO can update your employment information and verify your validation reports. To complete a validation report and you have been approved by the USCIS for STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) you must do the following:

1. Submit us a copy of the OPT Employment Authorization Card (EAD).

2. Submit the [STEM OPT Reporting Form](#) to our Office.

3. Email us with your name and SEVIS # to request an updated copy of your I-20.- after you submit all of the above

4. Submit to our office your Annual Self Evaluation (on time (after 12 months and after 24 months -Read requirement in the above links)

5. IF you need to contact USCIS Center [check here](#)