



Optional Practical Training: STEM Extensions International Student and Scholar Services

300 College Park, Rike Center #204
Dayton, OH 45469-1701
Ph: (937) 229-2748

University of Dayton

The STEM OPT Extension is a 24-month extension of work authorization available to international students who are currently engaged in Optional Practical Training (OPT) and who have earned a qualifying degree in a science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) field. Students require a STEM OPT I-20 from ISSS as part of their application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

In this guide, you will find:

- [STEM OPT Eligibility & important notes](#)
- Application Process
 - [Timeline overview, and important dates](#)
 - [Steps to complete your application](#)
 - [Mailing your application to USCIS](#)
 - [Checklist of necessary documents](#)
 - [How to write a check](#)
- Requirements during STEM OPT
 - [Acceptable types of employment](#)
 - [Reporting requirements](#)
 - [About the SEVP Portal](#)
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ELIGIBILITY & IMPORTANT NOTES

All four of the following conditions must be met to be eligible for the 24-month OPT extension:

1. Students who have already been approved for 12 months of post-completion OPT; **and**
2. Who have earned a bachelor's or higher degree in a field included on the U.S. Government's list of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields within the last 10 years; **and**
3. Who are employed in a paid job directly related to his/her field of study; **and**
4. Who are working for an employer that is enrolled in the U.S. Government's E-Verify program.

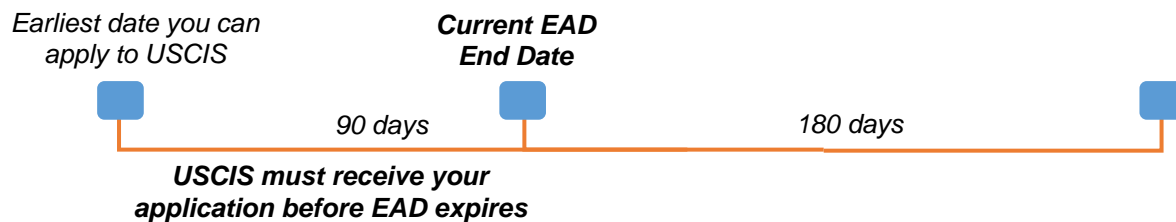
STEM eligible degree

See if your major is eligible. Look at the "Primary Major" on your I-20, then search for that code in the CIP code column of the [STEM Designated Degree Programs](#) list.

24-Month Extension Available Twice

After completing another qualifying degree at a higher degree level and completing another period of standard post-completion OPT based on that degree, a student would be eligible for one more 24-month STEM OPT extension. A student is limited to two STEM OPT extensions during his or her lifetime.

APPLICATION TIMELINE



- The earliest date to apply is 90 days before OPT end date (ISSS will not process your request before this date). USCIS will not accept applications filed earlier than this.
- USCIS must receive your application within 30 days after the STEM OPT I-20 is issued.
- USCIS must receive your application **before the expiration date of your Employment Authorization Document (EAD)**.

What if my STEM extension is still pending after my OPT end date?

If you have timely filed the application for the STEM extension, you may continue working while your STEM application is pending, even if your EAD card has expired, until your OPT extension is processed or until 180 days has passed, whichever is sooner.

How do I choose my start date? What should my end date be?

The start date of the 24-month OPT extension will automatically be the day after the end date on your OPT EAD card and the end date will be 24 months later. These dates are not flexible, and are independent of the actual date your application is adjudicated.

Note: STEM OPT extension will be granted in one EAD period and cannot be split into smaller periods.



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APPLICATION PROCESS

1. **Complete the online form [STEM OPT Request & Reporting](#). Email a completed [I-983](#) to iss@udayton.edu.** For assistance in completing this form, please view our *Guide to Completing the I-983* (download from the ISSS website). Except for the I-983, ISSS does not accept or review other OPT-related documents. It is the student's responsibility to prepare, review, and send the final application packet to USCIS.
2. After reviewing your documents, **ISSS will prepare a new I-20** for you with the STEM OPT recommendation. In most cases your I-20 will be ready in 1 week. We will notify you via email when it is ready.
3. **Mail your application to USCIS.** After receiving your new I-20, you must prepare and mail your application packet to USCIS. **Gather the items on the Checklist (see next page).** Send your application on time! Refer to the "Application Timeline" section to ensure your application will arrive to USCIS within the correct window.
4. **Receive your receipt notice.** USCIS will send you an e-notification within 1-2 weeks from the date they receive your I-765. Also, approximately 2-3 weeks after USCIS receives your application, they will mail a receipt notice to the address listed on your I-765. The receipt notice includes a tracking number that can be used to track the progress of your OPT application online. To check the status of your case, visit: <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/>.
5. **Receive your EAD card.** Your card should arrive to the address listed on your I-765 approximately 3-4 months after USCIS receives your application. Send a photocopy of your new EAD to iss@udayton.edu.

MAILING YOUR APPLICATION

We recommend using a track-able mail service such as FedEx or United Parcel Service (UPS). Keep a copy of your whole application for your own records.

Mail your application to the correct USCIS lockbox. The mailing address that you provide in question 3 of your I-765 determines where you should send your application. Visit the USCIS website here to determine your correct mailing address:

<https://www.uscis.gov/forms/forms-information/uscis-phoenix-and-dallas-lockbox-facilities>



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CHECKLIST

	Fee for I-765	Refer to I-765 instructions at www.uscis.gov/i-765 for most recent fee amount. Personal check, cashier's check or money order is acceptable. See example of "How to Write a Check" below..
	Two 2x2 inch full-face passport-style photos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The photos must be identical and color with a plain background. o They must be no more than 30 days old when the I-765 is filed at USCIS. o Head should be positioned directly facing the camera. o Photo should capture from slightly above top of hair to middle of chest. o Eyeglasses should be worn if normally used by the subject. Include headpieces if worn daily for religious purposes; they should not obscure or cast shadows on the eyes or any other part of the face. o Put photos in an envelope. Attach the fee and the photo envelope on top of the entire application (on the upper left-hand corner). Write your name and DOB on back.
	Original USCIS Form G-1145	This is a form to request an electronic notification when USCIS accepts your application.
	Original USCIS Form I-765	Download from www.uscis.gov/i-765 . Download our Guide to Completing the I-765 to make sure you fill it out properly (find this on the ISSS website).
	Copy of STEM OPT I-20	ISSS will create this after you submit the Request for STEM OPT I-20 to our office. Remember to sign your new I-20!
	Copy of current EAD	Make a color photocopy of the front and back of your current EAD card.
	Copy of I-94	Go to https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov to print your I-94
	Copy of your passport pages showing biographical info and expiration date	If the photo in the passport is not clear or varies widely from your current appearance, we recommend you send a clear copy of another form of identification, such as a state-issued driver's license.
	Copy of proof of STEM degree	Copy of diploma that shows your degree level and program of study OR transcript (official or unofficial) showing degree conferral
	Copy of job offer letter	Letter from employer that includes job duties and specifies part-time or full-time employment

HOW TO WRITE A CHECK

The illustration below shows how to write the check for payment of the I-765 fee.

Fees are subject to change! See the I-765 instructions (www.uscis.gov/i-765) to verify the most recent fee.

The illustration shows a check with the following details:

- Your Name:** [Blank]
- Address:** [Blank]
- City, State, Zip:** [Blank]
- DATE:** mm/dd/yyyy
- PAY TO THE ORDER OF:** U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- Amount:** \$ 410
- Text:** Four hundred and ten
- FOR:** I-765
- Signature:** Your signature
- Bottom:** 22222222 000 111 555 1027



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ACCEPTABLE TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT

A student authorized for a 24-month extension must work at least 20 hours per week for an E-Verify employer in a paid position directly related to his or her major. STEM OPT employment may include any of the following:

- **Work for one or more employers.** Students may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to each individual student's degree program and all employers must be enrolled in EVerify.
- **Work for hire.** This is also commonly referred to as 1099 employment where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. The company for whom the student is providing services must be registered with E-Verify. If requested by DHS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.

However, **the two types of work below are NOT permitted** during STEM OPT:

- **Unpaid employment.** All STEM employment must be for an E-Verify employer in a paid position directly related to the major field of study.
- **Self-employed business owner.** Under the regulations, students may not fill out their own Form I-983, Sections 3 to 6, nor act as their own employer for the purposes of the form. *Therefore, self-employment is not acceptable for the purposes of STEM OPT employment.*



Unemployment Limit

During the STEM OPT period, students are allowed a maximum of **150** days of unemployment time, which includes any unemployment that was accrued during 12 month OPT.

MAINTAINING YOUR STATUS

Students approved for the extension have additional reporting requirements in order to maintain their status. Take special care to comply with these obligations, in order to maintain your F1 status. Failure to comply with this responsibility may result in difficulties when applying for any future immigration benefits, such as H-1B. Read below for specific instructions.

You are required to report any of the following through our [STEM OPT Request & Reporting](#) form within 10 days:

- Starting a new job (send an updated I-983 to iss@udayton.edu)
- 12-month or final evaluation reports (send an updated I-983 to iss@udayton.edu)
- 6-month validation reports

You are also required to report any of the following changes through the [SEVP Portal](#) within 10 days:

- Your legal name or contact information (phone number, mailing address)
- Your employment address/location
- Your supervisor's name and contact information.
- You have left a job (submit job end date in SEVP Portal and send an updated I-983 to iss@udayton.edu)

Finally, we recommend that students maintain evidence for each job: the position held, duration of that position, the job title, contact information for the student's supervisor or manager, and a description of the work.



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About the SEVP Portal: This website from the Department of Homeland Security is a tool that F-1 students can use to fulfill their OPT reporting requirements directly. You will be able to take responsibility for the accuracy of your employment records. You will also be able to view and make corrections to your employment history and contact information as stored in SEVIS.

Who can use the SEVP Portal?

- During the STEM OPT Extension, students can use the portal for some functions, but must still submit the I-983 to the ISSS office when leaving a job, starting a new job, or if there are any material changes to the employment.

How can you create your SEVP Portal account?

- After your OPT has been approved by USCIS, you will receive an email with instructions to create your SEVP Portal account.
- This email will come from do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov. If you do not see the email, check your spam or junk mail folder.
- This email will be sent **only** to the email address in your SEVIS record. If you need to change your email address, you must request this by emailing iss@udayton.edu.

To learn more about the SEVP Portal, visit the online [SEVP Portal Help Hub](#).

Note: the SEVP Portal does not currently include the option to reprint your I-20. After updating your employer information, please use the [Request to Replace I-20 form](#) to request an updated I-20 for your records.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long can I remain in the US after my STEM OPT expires?

You may only work until the expiration date on your EAD card but you may remain in the US for 60 days after your STEM OPT ends. This is known as a “grace period” and will permit you to prepare to depart the US, transfer to a new institution, start a new degree program, or to apply for a change of status.

If you decide to transfer or start a new degree program at the end of your STEM OPT, you must transfer within the 60 day grace period. You must also start your new degree program within the next 5 months or the next available start date, whichever is sooner.

Only in the case that your employer has filed a timely H-1B petition requesting an employment start date of October 1 will you be permitted to remain legally in the US and continue working. Your permission to continue working and remain legally in the US will automatically end upon the rejection, denial or revocation of the H-1B petition.

Do I have to pay taxes while working on OPT?

Yes. You must pay state *and* federal income taxes.

What if I change employers while my STEM extension is still pending?

You must complete a new I-983 with your new employer and submit it to our office. You must also report this change through our [STEM OPT Request & Reporting](#) form by selecting this option: My STEM extension is pending. I have changed employers and am providing updated employment details. Once you have completed this process, our office will report the change to the USCIS.