



OPT STEM Extension Application & Reporting Requirements

Requesting an I-20 Recommending a STEM Extension of OPT

In order to apply for a STEM extension of OPT, you **must** first receive the I-20 recommending the STEM OPT Extension from ISSS before submitting your application to USCIS. To receive your I-20 recommending STEM OPT, complete the [STEM OPT I-20 Request Form](#).

The following materials must be uploaded in the *STEM OPT I-20 Request Form*:

- Complete and signed [I-983 Training Plan for STEM OPT Students](#) that addresses all training program requirements;
- Most recent EAD card;
- Documentation of the completion of your STEM degree course work; and
- *If you have completed a qualifying STEM degree:*
 - A copy of your diploma and/or copy of your final transcript indicating the degree major.
- *If you have only completed the course work for the qualifying STEM degree:*
 - A signed letter on letterhead from your academic department indicating the degree major, when the course work was completed, and that the degree is still in progress.

Application Materials To Be Submitted to USCIS

You can submit your application materials to USCIS either by [electronically filing the Form I-765](#) with USCIS online or by mailing a complete application to USCIS.

The application materials that you will submit to USCIS depend on whether you are electronically filing the Form I-765 with USCIS online or mailing your completed application to USCIS.

- Be sure you submit a complete OPT STEM extension application to USCIS. Review the checklist below and [USCIS' Optional Checklist for I-765 \(c\)\(3\)\(C\) Filings](#). USCIS may still request additional documentation.

The following documents are required for the application to USCIS:

If mailing your application to USCIS, you will need to mail printed paper copies of these materials. If electronically filing the Form I-765 with USCIS online, you will need to upload the following materials to the online application system. Documents can be uploaded in the following formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, or TIFF. Photos can be uploaded as a JPG, JPEG, or PNG.

- [Form I-765](#): You should type your information into the form I-765, print, and sign in black ink.
- Application Fee: \$410
 - If mailing your complete application to USCIS, you can choose to pay with a money order, check, or credit card.
 - If you choose to pay with a Credit Card, you will fill out and include the [Form G-1450](#) with your materials. This form authorizes a credit card payment. USCIS accepts: Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover.
 - If you choose to pay with a Personal Check/Money Order Payment: Make it payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security." Do NOT abbreviate name to DHS or USDHS; Sign and date the check (month/day/year) on the front of the check (do not sign the back of the check); On the memo line, indicate—OPT and your I-94 number.
 - If you are electronically filing the Form I-765 with USCIS online, you will submit payment on a secure webpage. ISSS understands that once you submit payment, your whole application will be submitted

to USCIS. Please make sure that you are ready to submit your entire STEM OPT application (including the required STEM OPT recommendation I-20 from ISSS, passport photos, and any other supporting documents) when you get to the payment screen.

If you are submitting your application to USCIS by mail:

[Form G-1145](#)

- Place this form on the top of your application if you would like to receive an email/text message when USCIS accepts your application at the Lockbox.

Current I-94 Record

You will have one of the following:

- *Electronic I-94*: Majority of students will have an electronic I-94. Download a copy from the [Customs and Border Protection I-94 website](#)
- *Paper I-94 Card*: Most common with land crossings, given to student at Customs and Border Protection. Include photocopies of the front and back of your I-94 card.

Clear (color) copy of your valid passport ID page(s) and any renewal, extension, amendment, or correction pages

Clear (color) copy of most recent U.S. entry visa or change of status I-797 approval notice. Exception: Canadians do not need provide a visa copy

Clear copies of the front and back of any Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) issued previously by USCIS (Pre-completion OPT, Post-completion OPT, STEM OPT, or Severe Economic Hardship).

Copy of the I-20 that was issued by ISSS with the STEM OPT recommendation.

- Confirm that the STEM extension comment is in the “Remarks” section on page 1; you and ISSS signed the I-20 in the “Attestation” sections on page 1, and the STEM extension request and employer information is included on page 2.

Copy of your official diploma indicating the degree level and STEM field of study (if your diploma does not indicate this, also include your transcript);

Color U.S.-style passport photographs taken within the last 30 days.

- 2" x 2" on plain white or off-white background in accordance with [Department of State photo requirements](#). You cannot be wearing glasses, hats, or head coverings unless a personal or doctor's statement is submitted.
 - Do not cut, trim, or otherwise alter the photos.
 - Do not reuse old photos or photos used in passport/visa applications.
 - If USCIS requests new photos, it will delay STEM OPT application processing.
- *If you are submitting your application by mail:*
 - Two passport photos are required. Gently write your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo in case they are separated from the application.
- *If electronically filing the Form I-765 with USCIS online:*
 - You will only need to upload one passport photograph.

Submitting Your Complete Application to USCIS

Once you receive the I-20 from ISSS recommending STEM OPT, you will submit your materials to USCIS either by electronically filing the Form I-765 with USCIS online **or** by mailing your materials to USCIS. Instructions for each option are listed below.

- No matter how you file, USCIS must receive your STEM OPT application within 60 days of the date ISSS enters the recommendation for STEM OPT into your SEVIS record.

Option 1: Mail Your Complete STEM OPT Application Materials to USCIS

It is your responsibility to mail all the required STEM OPT application materials to the [USCIS Lockbox or Service Center](#) that processes applications for your eligibility category and place of residence. The STEM Extension OPT eligibility category is: (c)(3)(C).

- The mailing address depends on the mailing service you choose to use to mail the application.
 - ISSS recommends that you use a mailing service that provides detailed tracking information (FedEx, UPS, or DHL). You can also use the U.S. Postal Service.
- Make sure that you have signed your Form I-765 by hand with a black ink pen.
- Do not include any staples in your OPT documents/application. Use a paperclip or a binder clip to keep all your documents together.
- Print your documents single-sided. Having your documents double sided will not result in a denial of your application, but USCIS does prefer all documents to be single sided.

Option 2: Electronically File Your Complete STEM OPT Application Materials

To electronically file the Form I-765 with USCIS online, individuals must first create a USCIS online account at myaccount.uscis.gov.

Once you have created an account, you'll be able to complete the filing process. Within your USCIS account, you will be able to:

- Upload your documents
 - Documents can be uploaded in the following formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, or TIFF. Photos can be uploaded as a JPG, JPEG, or PNG.
 - File names must contain only English characters (e.g. ABC). Special characters (e.g. @, #, \$, &) are not allowed. You will receive an error message if the file format or file name do not meet the standards above.
- Pay the \$410 fee
 - Payment will be made on a secure website using a credit or debit card. This means that you'll be able to confirm receipt of payment at the time of application. ISSS understands that once you submit payment, your whole application will be submitted to USCIS. Please make sure that you are ready to submit your entire STEM OPT application (including the required STEM OPT recommendation I-20 from ISSS, passport photos, and any other supporting documents) when you get to the payment screen.

Once you submit your application through the online system, you should:

- Receive your receipt notice and receipt number immediately within your USCIS account;
 - Please note: filing online does not expedite the [USCIS processing times](#).
- Be able to track the status of your case;
- Communicate with USCIS through a secure inbox; and
- Respond to Requests for Evidence (RFE).

You may continue to work on your expired EAD for OPT along with your STEM Extension Receipt Notice up to 180 days while your 24-month extension petition is pending if you meet the following conditions:

- You are currently in a period of post-completion OPT.
- You properly and in a timely manner filed your application for the 24-month extension with USCIS.
*Receipt Notice must show a receipt date that is prior to your current OPT EAD end date

Your OPT STEM extension application must be received and *begin being processed* by USCIS:

- No earlier than 90 days prior to your current OPT EAD expiration date;
- No later than your current OPT EAD end date; and
- Within 60 days of the “School Attestation” signature date on page 1 of the OPT STEM extension I-20.

If your current OPT authorization has already expired, you cannot apply for the STEM OPT extension.

Updating Your EAD Delivery Address & USCIS Case Inquiries

If you move from the U.S. address you entered in item 3 of the I-765/ are no longer receiving mail there and have not yet obtained your Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card), you must update your address information in the [USCIS Online Change of Address System](#). For USCIS case inquiries and status requests, please use the [USCIS online tools](#) or call the National Customer Service Number (800-375-5283).

Reporting Requirements While Authorized for OPT

- Reporting Changes of Address and Telephone Information:
 - Access the SEVP Portal and update your information
 - Address Updates: If you have a pending USCIS application, you must also report your address change to USCIS within 10 days of the change using the [Online Change of Address System](#)
 - For alumni purposes, you can update your address in the [Buff Portal](#) and with the Alumni Association
- Reporting Changes of Employment Information, Name, Citizenship, and Email Address:
 - Employment, Name, and Citizenship Updates: Submit the [OPT Information Update Form](#) electronically to ISSS.
 - Employment Updates: You will be required to upload an [I-983 Training Plan](#)
 - Email Address Updates: Please email ISSS

Limits on Periods of Unemployment

8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(E) states—“During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment....Students granted a 24-month OPT extension under paragraph (f)(10)(ii)(C)(2) of this section may not accrue an aggregate of more than 150 days of unemployment during a total OPT period, including any post-completion OPT period.” This limit also applies to students with an automatic extension of an OPT authorization due to the cap gap provisions. SEVP’s OPT Policy Guidance [7.1.6] establishes “Each day (including weekends) during the period when OPT authorization begins and ends that the student does not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment.”

Travel with a Pending OPT Application

ISSS does not recommend traveling while the I-765 application is pending after your post-completion OPT EAD card end date if your OPT STEM Extension application has not been approved. For additional information about travel, review the [ICE Travel FAQ](#) and “Travel While Authorized for OPT” on p. 2 of the [ISSS OPT Reporting Requirements handout](#).

Beginning a New Degree Level and SEVIS Transfer

During post-completion OPT, employment in your major field of study is the basis for maintenance of F-1 status. Enrollment is not required and may impact your OPT work authorization. Consult ISSS if you are considering beginning a new course of study or will seek to transfer your SEVIS record to another institution.

- OPT work authorization is terminated when your SEVIS record is transferred to a new school and/or you begin a program of study at a new degree level.