

## **24 MONTH OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) EXTENSION FOR F-1 STUDENTS WITH A STEM DEGREE**

### **What is a STEM degree?**

This is a Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral degree in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM). A list of STEM degrees can be found on the web page

<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf>

### **Who is eligible for the OPT extension?**

- Student completed all degree requirements (or for thesis/dissertation students, completed all coursework) and currently is engaged in a valid period of post-completion OPT.
- Student has a Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral degree in a STEM program.
- Student must have a job or a job offer from an E-Verify employer. This means that the employer is currently registered and is in good standing with the USCIS E-Verify program. The employer must also have an IRS Employer Identification Number (EIN). The employer must guarantee that you will work at least 20 hours per week and provide you with formal training and learning objectives.

### **When to apply for the OPT extension?**

The student may file for the extension **90 days before** the expiration date of the current OPT. All documents for the extension must reach USCIS before the OPT ending date and within 60 days of issuing the I-20 for the STEM OPT Extension.

### **When does the period of extension start?**

The student's period of STEM extension starts right after the ending date of the current OPT. If the student has a timely filed OPT extension application that is pending with USCIS, the student's work authorization is automatically extended for up to 180 days.

### **Can the student change employers while the STEM extension is pending?**

The student may start working for a new employer if the new employer is registered with E-Verify and has an EIN number. The student must submit a new I-983 and STEM OPT Reporting Form to the International Center. Obtain an updated I-20 from our office. We will email a copy of your new I-20 and EIN number to the Potomac Service Center so that your record can be updated.

### **Can the student travel while the STEM extension application is pending?**

Yes, with a valid F-1 visa and STEM OPT I-20 endorsed for reentry within the last six months. Also carry your EAD card and proof of employment. If you need to renew your F-1 visa while abroad, be prepared to also provide the consular official with proof that your STEM extension application was timely filed.

### **What types of employment are allowed?**

Students authorized for the STEM extension must work at least 20 hours per week for an E-Verify employer, in a paid position directly related to the student's STEM degree. Students may have multiple jobs, but all employers must be enrolled in E-Verify.

### **What do I need to report if I change employers while on the STEM extension?**

Submit to the International Center:

- 1) STEM OPT reporting form
- 2) New I-983 completed with the new employer
- 3) Final evaluation (see page 5 of the I-983) completed with previous employer
- 4) Ask previous employer to send an email to [immigration@uakron.edu](mailto:immigration@uakron.edu) regarding the termination of employment
- 5) Obtain an updated I-20 from our office

**What are the limits of the unemployment period?**

Students who receive a STEM extension may have up to 150 days of unemployment counting from the starting date indicated on the EAD for initial OPT. Each day during the period of OPT when the student does not have qualified employment counts as a day of unemployment.

**What if the period of unemployment exceeds the limit?**

A student who exceeds the unemployment period has violated the visa status unless he/she has taken one of the following steps (while the student is still in valid status):

- Applied to continue education by changing the level or transferring to another school.
- Departed the United States.
- Took action to otherwise maintain legal status.

**What does the student have to report to the International Center during the OPT period?**

**Within 10 days:** a student must report the following:

- Employment information: the date of starting or changing employment, employer's name and address, and loss of employment
- Change in any of the following: the student's legal name, the student's residential or mailing address, the student's e-mail address or phone number

**Six month report.** Every six months starting from the start date of STEM OPT. Use our STEM OPT reporting form. Must be submitted within 10 days before or after the due date. Include:

- The student's full legal name
- Current mailing and residential address
- Name and address of the current employer
- Employment start date for the current employer

**'Evaluation on Student Progress'** due after the first year of the Extension (see page 5 of the I-983)

**'Final Evaluation on Student Progress'** due after the second year of the OPT extension (see page 5 of the I-983)

*Reporting can be done by completing our STEM OPT Reporting Form (and the Evaluation Form, page 5 of the I-983, when required) and scanning/emailing it to us.*

**Material Changes or Modifications to I-983.** If a material change to or deviation from the training plan described in the I-983 occurs, the student and employer must sign a modified I-983 and submit it to the International Center at the earliest available opportunity. Examples of such changes are a change in Employer Identification Number, reduction in compensation not tied to a reduction in hours worked, any significant decrease in hours per week the student is working, any decrease in hours below 20 hours per week, or any deviation that renders the information on the I-983 inaccurate.

**The employer must report the following to the International Center:**

The employer must notify the school when the student's employment is terminated. The employer must send an email to the International Center ([immigration@uakron.edu](mailto:immigration@uakron.edu)). The email must include the student's name and the date of termination. The report must be sent within 5 business days upon termination.

***The student must inform the employer about this requirement.***

**Please see the following websites for more information:**

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub>

<https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/stem-opt>

## Process to Apply for STEM OPT Extension

**Obtain a STEM OPT I-20 from our office. In order for us to issue the “STEM OPT Extension” I-20, submit the following documents to the International Center (scan is acceptable):**

1. Application for STEM OPT extension (page 5 of this handout).
2. A copy of your Degree Certificate.
3. A copy of EAD issued for your current OPT (front and back).
4. Form I-983 – can be found here:  
<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/i983.pdf>

Upon receipt of the documents above, the “STEM OPT Extension” I-20 will be issued and sent to you. The I-983 is for our office only. **Do not send the I-983 to USCIS.**

### **List of documents that must be submitted to USCIS**

1. (Optional) Form G-1145 “E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance”. You may download this form from the USCIS website. Here is a link to the form [Form G-1145](#)
2. Form I-765. Here is a link to the form [Form I-765](#). Use the latest version (edition date 5/31/18). Answer to #12: mark ‘Yes’. Answer to #27: (c) (3) (C).
3. Filing Fee of \$410.00. Check or money order must be made payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Place this check/money order on the top of your packet. You now have the option to pay with a credit card. If you wish to pay by credit card, complete Form G-1450. Here is a link to the form, [Form G-1450](#) Authorization for Credit Card Transactions.
4. Copy of previously issued Employment Authorization Documents (EAD) – front and back.
5. A copy of your Degree Certificate.
6. 2 recent, passport-style photographs taken no earlier than 30 days before submission of the OPT application. *Lightly print your name, date of birth, and the I-94 Number on the back of each photo with a pencil or a pen. Follow the passport photo requirements on the U.S. Department of State website:*  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/requirements/photos.html>.
7. Copy **of the I-20 issued for STEM OPT extension**
8. Copies (excluding instructions page) of **all** your I-20s, since the arrival date to the USA as an F-1 student
9. A copy of your passport picture page.
10. A copy of the Form I-94 admission number/record. You may download the form from the website <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94>.
11. Copy of your F-1 visa
12. Letter from employer that includes job duties and specifies if you are a part-time or full-time employee.

The USCIS processing time is about three months, so be sure to give yourself enough time.

**You may continue working for up to 180 days beyond the end date of your current EAD provided that USCIS receives your documents**

- (1) before the expiration date of your current EAD, AND
- (2) within 60 days of the issue date of the “STEM OPT” I-20.

**Where to mail the STEM OPT packet**

**STEM OPT documents should be mailed to USCIS Phoenix or Dallas Lockbox facilities depending on the mailing address you indicated on the form I-765**

<b>If the mailing address on your form I-765:</b>	<b>Mail your application to:</b>
<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 Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.</p>	<p><b><u>USCIS Phoenix Lockbox</u></b></p> <p>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries (regular or certified mail):</p> <p>USCIS PO Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036</p> <p>For Express Mail:</p> <p>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><b><u>USCIS Dallas Lockbox</u></b></p> <p>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries (regular or certified mail):</p> <p>USCIS PO Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266</p> <p>For Express Mail:</p> <p>USCIS Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067</p>

The University of Akron  
International Center

APPLICATION FOR THE 24-MONTH STEM OPT EXTENSION

**Information about you:**

Your Name: Last \_\_\_\_\_ First \_\_\_\_\_

Your UA ID# \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Your Current Address \_\_\_\_\_

Your Major/Program \_\_\_\_\_ Level of Education (B.S., M.S, Ph.D.) \_\_\_\_\_

Program Completed? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ Degree Received? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Starting/Ending dates of the OPT as indicated on your EAD \_\_\_\_\_

**Information about your employment (you are employed or have a job offer):**

The Company's Name \_\_\_\_\_ E-Verify ID# \_\_\_\_\_ EIN Number \_\_\_\_\_

The Company's Address \_\_\_\_\_

Your Title/Position \_\_\_\_\_ Your Business E-mail Address/Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Has an H-1B petition been filed for you? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If Yes, what is the result? \_\_\_\_\_  
Pending/Approved/Denied/ Withdrawn

**Information about your supervisor:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title/Position \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a short statement about how your employment relates to your degree: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Student Certification: I have read and agree to comply with STEM OPT Extension rules and reporting requirements.**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_