

## **STEM OPT GUIDE**

### **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT F-1 STEM OPT EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION**

#### **WHAT IS IT?**

F-1 students who are currently authorized for Post-completion OPT employment based on completion of a Bachelor's or Master's from Brooklyn College in a Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) field, as defined by DHS, may be eligible for a 24-month extension of OPT. ISS does not have the authority to change the CIP code of your program and cannot recommend a STEM extension unless your CIP code as defined by the college qualifies you for the extension request.

#### **WHAT MAJORS QUALIFY FOR THE STEM EXTENSION?**

Actuarial Mathematics- BS  
Biology- BA, BS, MA  
Chemistry- BA, BS, MA, MS  
Computer Science- BS, MA

Computational Mathematics- BS  
Earth and Environmental Science- BA, BS, MA, MS  
Environmental Studies- BA  
Experimental Psychology- MA

Financial Mathematics- BS  
Health Informatics- MS  
Information Systems- BS, MS  
Mathematics- BA, BS, MA

Multimedia Computing- BS  
Physics- BA, BS, MA  
Urban Sustainability- BA

If your major is not on this list, you do not qualify for the 24 STEM Extension. Please do not complete this form without first verifying that your major qualifies. We cannot add any majors to this list.

#### **HOW CAN IT BE USED?**

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ The degree program on which the STEM OPT application is based must have a qualifying CIP code to be eligible for the extension on the I-20.

#### **HOW CAN YOU QUALIFY FOR IT?**

- ❶ Applicant is in an "Active" period of post-completion OPT at the time of requesting the OPT extension for STEM recommendation on the I-20 and offered employment by an employer participating in E-Verify.
- ❷ Applicant has completed a degree in a STEM eligible field from a U.S. accredited institution with SEVP certification within the last 10 years and has not already utilized this degree to apply for an OPT STEM extension
- ❸ Applicant is currently engaged in a STEM eligible Master's program, has completed all degree-required coursework and lacks only the thesis to complete the degree

### **HOW DO YOU APPLY?**

Make an appointment with a DSO in ISS. After discussing your options, submit the required documents. If everything is in order, we will issue a new Form I-20 recommending your STEM OPT extension and provide you with guidance on completing the package.

### **WHEN SHOULD YOU APPLY?**

The I-765 and supporting documents must be sent to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regional office having jurisdiction over your address of residence. Please contact a DSO while you are in your 8<sup>th</sup> month of OPT to discuss the STEM Extension. The earliest USCIS may receive the application is **90 days before the end date** of your initial period of OPT and the latest is the date your EAD expires.

### **HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?**

USCIS have up to 90 days to process your I-765 application. They will mail your receipt notice within 3-5 weeks to the address you specified on your I-765 form. You may check your application status <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>. Students who timely file an application for the 24-Month OPT extension will be able to continue employment while the extension application is pending, until a final decision on the I-765 or for 180 days, whichever comes first.

### **WHAT IF YOU WANT TO TRAVEL WHILE YOUR STEM APPLICATION IS PENDING?**

Although you may continue to work while the OPT extension application is pending, you will not be able to return to the US after a trip abroad after the first EAD has expired and before you receive the EAD for the 24-Month extension. As always, you will need to have a valid passport valid for 6 months into the future and a valid F-1 visa in your passport to return from a trip abroad in F-1 status.

### **STUDY AND STEM OPT**

DHS regulations state that, "Authorization to engage in optional practical training employment is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level." Therefore, you should not continue your U.S. studies until after your STEM OPT has ended.

**APPLYING FOR DSO  
RECOMMENDATION FOR STEM OPT  
EXTENSION**

**→ COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING FORMS:**

- I. After meeting with a DSO to complete the **Training Plan I-983** form, please have it signed by you and your employer. <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/i983.pdf> (Keep a copy of this as you will have to submit one for each employer again on your one-year reporting date.)
- II. Complete the **STEM OPT Student Responsibilities Contract**
- III. **Form I-765: APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION.** Go to [uscis.gov](http://uscis.gov), complete items 1-16, print out and sign it in blue ink **DO NOT SUBMIT ELECTRONICALLY.** **See Appendix 1 for instructions on completing this form.**
- IV. **Form G-1145 E-NOTIFICATION OF APPLICATION/PETITION ACCEPTANCE.** Complete, print out and sign (in blue ink) the MOST RECENT Form G-1145 available  
<https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/g-1145.pdf>

## HOW TO FILE YOUR STEM OPT APPLICATION

### I. Acknowledgment of Understanding

I understand that I am completely responsible for properly filing my STEM OPT application with the USCIS, as explained below, and tracking its processing through the USCIS Case Status Online System at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).

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My Signature

My Name (please print)

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Date Signed

### II. Be sure that your application contains the following documents:

1. Form I-765 with the employer's name, as listed in E-Verify, and the employer's E-Verify client identification number (Properly completed and signed in blue ink)
2. Form G-1145 E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance
3. Fee: \$410 (check/MO) payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security
4. Copy of your new signed I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation issued by a DSO
5. Photocopies of all previous I-20's
6. Copy of the degree awarded to you in the qualifying academic STEM field or a copy of your unofficial transcript confirming your STEM academic field
7. Two passport format photos with your name and SEVIS ID# printed on the back in pen
8. Photocopies of all the following:
  - a. Previous EAD's
  - b. Passport Identification page
  - c. Visa
  - d. Form I-94 (both sides if you have a note card version)

### III. Make a photocopy of all the above documents for your records.

### IV. Make sure that the Form G-1145 E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance is paper-clipped (not stapled) to the top of your complete application.

### V. Your complete application (see II above) must be received at USCIS within the following deadlines:

1. Within 30 days of the DSO's STEM OPT Recommendation on your Form I-20, that is, signatures on pages 1 and 3.
2. It is strongly recommended that you send your application by some type of courier service that will provide you with proof of timely receipt.

**VI. File your complete application with delivery tracking to the lockbox.**

USCIS  
P.O. Box 660867  
Dallas, TX 75266

**VII. Send (email or fax) evidence of timely filing and acceptance of your application to our office and keep copies for yourself.**

1. Courier delivery receipt
2. G-1145 E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance

Please note: If your complete application is returned to you, for any reason, that means that it *has not been accepted*. Contact our office immediately for information about your options.

**VIII. Track the progress of your application through the USCIS Case Status Online System at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).**

**IX. Provide us with a photocopy of your EAD Card if it is being sent directly to you.**

**STEM OPT EXTENSION  
STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES CONTRACT**

International students are required to abide by US immigration laws and regulations throughout their stay in the US, including the time that they are on authorized in STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT). Current Department of Homeland Security regulations require F-1 students on STEM OPT to continue to report specific information to the DSO at the school who issued their I-20 immediately upon making a change in this information, even after they have completed studies at the school. The DSO is required by DHS regulations to input this information into the SEVIS. **THIS REQUIRED REPORTING MUST HAPPEN EVERY 6 MONTHS DURING YOUR STEM OPT AUTHORIZATION!!!** Students who fail to comply with these requirements will have the STEM OPT and F-1 status automatically terminated by DHS.

Because failure to comply with these requirements will mean loss of legal status in the US, it is essential that you understand these reporting responsibilities. This form lists the specific information you must report to a DSO while on STEM OPT in order to maintain legal student status.

It is YOUR responsibility to abide by all immigration rules for maintaining legal student status. ISS must report updates in your information to the federal government via the SEVIS within 21 days of making a change and at regular 6 month intervals during your STEM OPT.

**INFORMATION THAT ALL STUDENTS ON STEM OPT MUST REPORT EVERY 6 MONTHS TO ISS TO MAINTAIN LEGAL STATUS:**

You will “check in” with ISS every six months during the STEM OPT extension from the start date listed on your new STEM OPT card. You must report this information directly to [ShirmaC@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:ShirmaC@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

1. Scanned copy of your STEM OPT/EAD card.
2. Current, physical US address. This must be the place where you currently live and you must update ISS within 10 days of making any change. Make sure you provide us a current email and phone number.
3. Current, mailing US address. This must be the address you use to receive mail. All updated OPT I-20's will be mailed to this address if you do not indicate specific instructions on what to do with your updated I-20. If this address is the same as above, just state “Same as above”.
3. Any changes or interrupted employment such as “unemployment” (other than vacation while employed) or loss of your job during your STEM OPT authorization.
4. Your employer E-Verify Identification #. Your employer MUST also notify ISS within 5 days in the event of the termination of your employment or your departure from the job.
5. You and your employer 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. Student and employer must report changes in the training plan to the international advisor (including changes in EIN, hours, duties, pay, employer name/address OR any correction to the training plan) within 10 days.
6. PERIOD/S OF UNEMPLOYMENT Your STEM 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 to another school.
7. Any change of non-immigrant status or permanent departure from the US.
8. Verify your current local contact information, employer name and employer contact information every 6 months from date of extension

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE ON STEM OPT**

I have read and understand my F-1 student status responsibilities while I am on STEM-OPT.

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NAME (Print)

SIGNATURE

DATE

# (Sample cover letter)

MM/DD/YYYY

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
P.O. Box 660867  
Dallas TX 75266

**RE: Application for STEM Employment Authorization Document (Form I-765)**

**Applicant Name: Last, First**

**SEVIS ID #: N00XXXXXXXX**

**I-94 Number: XXXXXXXXX**

Dear USCIS Officer:

I am applying for a 24 month STEM OPT extension beginning on MM/DD/YYYY and ending on MM/DD/YYYY. I am seeking your authorization to continue practical training related to my STEM degree and field of study.

**I've included the following documents in support of this application:**

- A \$410 check payable to "Department of Homeland Security"
- Two passport photos
- This cover letter
- An original G-1145 form
- An I-765 form
- Copy of first I-20 and copies of other I-20's with changes in program or authorized employment
- Copy of the new I-20 with 24 month STEM OPT recommendation
- Copy of the degree or transcripts awarded in STEM field
- Copy of I-94
- Copy of US visa stamp
- Copy of the most recent I.D. page(s) of passport
- Copies of both sides of previously issued EAD cards

If you have any questions or need any further documentation, please contact me. Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

First and last name  
Phone: XXXXXXXXX  
Email: XXXXXXXXX

**GUIDE TO APPLYING FOR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING**  
**STEM EXTENSION: APPENDIX 1**

Go to [uscis.gov](http://uscis.gov), complete items parts 1-3, print out and sign it in blue ink.

**DO NOT SUBMIT ELECTRONICALLY**

Start here: Begin your entries in Part 1. Leave the top portion blank as it is for USCIS use only.

**Part 1:** Select box 1c.

**Part 2:**

Items 1.a-4.c: Your full legal name should match the name on your passport.

Item 5.a: Your U.S. mailing address is where USCIS will mail your EAD card after your OPT is approved. If you will not receive mail at this address for at least 4 months, use another address. Item 5.a is an optional field. If you are using someone else's address, write their name in this field. Otherwise, leave it blank.

Item 6: If you answered 'yes' to this question, then skip items 7.a-7.d.

Item 7.a-7.d: Handwrite your current physical address at the time of application.

**LEAVE ITEMS 8 & 9 BLANK.**

Item 12: Select "yes", and provide copies of previous EAD's with your application, if available. If unavailable, you can explain in part 6.

Item 13.a: If you still have your SSN card, answer "yes", then complete items 13.b, answer "no" to item 14, and leave items 15-17 blank.

If you had an SSN card and would like a replacement card, answer "yes", then answer "yes" to items 14 and 15 and complete items 16-17.

Item 21: Type your 11-digit I-94 number from your most recent I-94. The I-94 can be found at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94>.

Item 21.c: If you have a travel document other than a passport, provide its number here.

Item 22: Indicate the last date you entered the U.S.



Item 23: This is where you last entered the U.S. and received your entry stamp from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). List the City and State. If there is more than one airport in that city, please specify which airport. (For example: JFK, New York, NY)

Item 26: Your SEVIS number is on the top left of your most recent I-20.

Item 27: Enter code (c)(3)(C).

Item 28.a: Enter your Degree level (Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate) followed by your major as listed on page 1 of your I-20.

Item 28.b: Enter the company's name as listed in E-Verify.

Item 28.c: The E-verify number is not the employer's EIN. The E-verify number is usually 4-7 digits.

**LEAVE ITEMS 29-31.b. BLANK.**

**Part 3:**

Item 1.a: Check this box

**LEAVE ITEM 1.b. BLANK.**

Item 2: If someone has helped you fill out the form, handwrite their name in this field.

Item 3: Provide a U.S. phone number. You may add a cell phone number to item 4, or type it here if it is your only U.S. phone number.

Item 5: Please use a current e-mail address.

**LEAVE ITEM 6 BLANK.**

Item 7.a-7.b: Sign in BLUE ink, and put the date.

**LEAVE PART 4 BLANK UNLESS SOMEONE HAS ASSISTED YOU WITH FILLING OUT THE FORM.**