OPT STEM EXTENSION INFO PACKET

Updated Summer 2022
International Student & Scholar Services
5209 University of Oregon, Eugene OR 97403-5209
TEL: (541) 346-3206 | EMAIL: intl@ uoregon.edu

What is STEM OPT Extension?

◦ STEM OPT Extension is an additional 24-month work authorization benefit for employed F-1 students on post-completion OPT, who obtained a DHS-approved science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) Bachelor's, Master's, or doctoral degree in the U.S.

◦ The student must meet certain eligibility requirements in order to request a STEM OPT Extension I-20 from ISSS and apply for a renewal of their EAD with USCIS.

◦ If approved, USCIS will issue the student a STEM OPT Extension EAD and the student must fulfill specific employment and reporting requirements over the 24-month period to maintain F-1 status.

◦ STEM OPT Extension is a benefit of F-1 status, not a separate visa status. Therefore, ISSS continues to sponsor your F-1 visa status.

◦ For more detailed information, students and their employers should refer to the STEM OPT Extension resources on the STEM OPT Hub | Study in the States (dhs.gov).
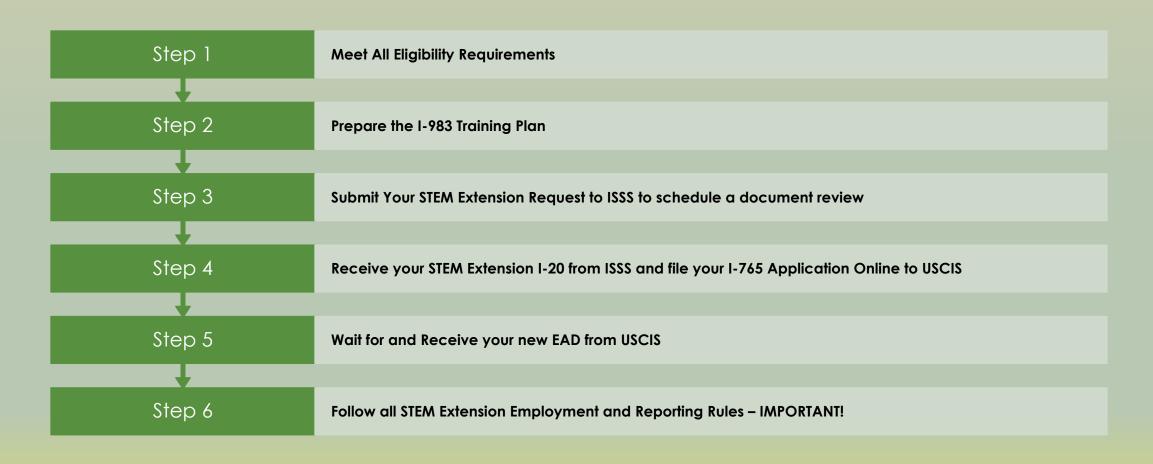
Application Timeline

❑ USCIS accepts completed STEM OPT Extension applications as early as **90 days prior to the post-completion OPT end date** and **no later than the post-completion OPT end date**.

◦ The **post-completion OPT end date is printed on your EAD card.**

❑ After receiving the STEM OPT Extension I-20 from ISSS, the student must submit their STEM OPT Extension application to USCIS for adjudication. USCIS must receive the application:

◦ Prior to student's post-completion OPT end date

   -AND-

◦ No more than 60 days after Date Issued on Page 1 of the STEM OPT Extension I-20

Plan Ahead…

◦ Since it takes approximately 2-3 months for USCIS to process your application.

◦ Students who file a timely application with USCIS may continue working after their post-completion OPT EAD is expired -until they receive the final decision from USCIS on the application (i.e., approved or denied) or for 180 days, whichever comes first.

6 Steps and what to expect

Step 1	**Meet All Eligibility Requirements**
Step 2	**Prepare the I-983 Training Plan**
Step 3	**Submit Your STEM Extension Request to ISSS to schedule a document review**
Step 4	**Receive your STEM Extension I-20 from ISSS and file your I-765 Application Online to USCIS**
Step 5	**Wait for and Receive your new EAD from USCIS**
Step 6	**Follow all STEM Extension Employment and Reporting Rules – IMPORTANT!**

Step 1: Eligibility Requirements

A. F-1 status eligibility

B. STEM degree eligibility

C. Job offer and employer eligibility

A. F-1 status eligibility requirements

You must currently be in valid F-1 student status

You must currently be authorized for and engaged in post-completion OPT – you cannot apply for the STEM extension once your post-completion OPT expires

You have not exceeded the 90 days of unemployment allowed during your post-completion OPT period

B. STEM degree eligibility

1: You must have completed a degree in a STEM field :

   *This STEM field must have been your major field of study (minors and concentrations are not eligible)
   *Your I-20 major code (printed next to your major) must be included on this list:
      STEM Majors | International Student and Scholar Services (uoregon.edu)

2: Your STEM degree can be your most recent UO degree, a previous UO degree, or a degree granted within the past 10 years by another US university or college currently approved by SEVP to sponsor F-1 international students.

   * The degree may be used to qualify for STEM extension as long as you have not already used it to obtain an earlier STEM extension
   * If your request is based on a degree from another US college or university, you must provide a copy of your most recent I-20 from that institution

3: You have not been granted 2 STEM extensions previously
   * You are limited to a maximum of 2 STEM extensions across your entire educational career

C. Job offer and employer eligibility

❏ You must have a full-time, paid job offer (20 hours per week or more) from a US employer with whom you have a bona fide "employer/employee" relationship

❏ Your employer must be enrolled in the Department of Homeland Security's E-Verify Program (see https://www.e-verify.gov/ for more information about the E-Verify Program)

Employers who do not have an active E-Verify number do not qualify for the STEM extension and cannot serve as an employer during the STEM extension period

❏ The job offer must provide you with on-the-job training in your STEM major
Volunteer positions and self-employment do not qualify for the STEM extension
Employment with a staffing agency qualifies ONLY if the staffing agency is the employer directly providing the training opportunity
Your employer must have adequate personnel and resources to provide you with the required training in your major field of study
Remote or long-distance employment (on-line employment) is permitted, but student must obtain written permission from their employer indicating they have the permission to work remotely. Student must continue to comply with all STEM OPT Reporting Requirements.

❏ Your employer must agree to help complete a Form I-983 Training Plan and comply with all F-1 STEM reporting requirements (see Step Two)

Step 2: Prepare the Form I-983 Training Plan

❑ Once you have a job offer in your STEM major from an E-Verify employer, you and your employer must complete a Form I-983 Training Plan. The I-983 Training Plan describes how your job will provide you with educational and learning experiences and training in your STEM field. Please note: ISSS cannot complete the I-983 Training Plan for you and your employer. However, refer to the tips / suggestions below.

Download Form I-983 and instructions from Form I-983 Overview | Study in the States (dhs.gov)

Prepare a separate Form I-983 for each E-verify employer (if you have more than one employer)

If you add or change employers, you must complete a new I-983 Training Plan before starting employment

When starting employment, you and your employer must complete sections 1 – 6 (pages 1 – 4) only

Tips for Completing Form I-983

Section 1 – Completed by Student	
• Name of School Recommending STEM OPT	University of Oregon
• Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned	University of Oregon (or other school if basing STEM request on previous degree from another school)
• SEVIS School Code	POO214F00001000
• Designated School Official Contact Information	Becky Megerssa, SEVIS Coordinator 5209 University of Oregon Eugene OR 97403-5209 Tel: 541-346-3206 / Email: sevis@uoregon.edu
• Student SEVIS ID Number	Indicate SEVIS ID number from your I-20 ("N00xxxxxxx")
• STEM Start and End Dates:	Start ("From") date will be the day after your post-completion OPT expires
• Employment Authorization Number	Indicate USCIS # from your current EAD card

Section 2 – Completed by Student

Sections 3 & 4 – Completed by Employer

Section 5 – Completed by Student and Employer

Section 6 – Completed by Employer

Evaluation / Final Evaluation on Student Progress (Page 5) – Do not complete for initial STEM application

Step 3: Submit Your STEM Extension Request to ISSS

❑ Submit the following documents to ISSS:

1. Completed and signed [STEM Extension Request Form](#)

2. Completed I-983 training plan

3. Draft of your I-765: Create an account and start for I-765 application on [Application for Employment Authorization | USCIS](#).
   DO NOT PAY AND SUBMIT YET!

4. Valid Passport (at least 6 months into the future)

5. Your official UO transcript (recommended) or diploma showing that you received a degree in a STEM major field.
   If your application is based on a previous degree from another college / university, attach a copy of your diploma, transcript, and I-20(s) from your previous school.

6. Your current EAD card and all previous EAD cards, such as for previous OPT or economic hardship employment authorizations

7. Digital passport-sized photo(not more than 30 days old): [U.S. Department of State Photo Requirements (state.gov)](#)

8. Most recent electronic I-94 form: [I94 -Official Website (dhs.gov)](#)

9. Copy of your previously-issued UO OPT I-20

ISSS will schedule a document review (in person or virtual) with you after receiving your documents. Then ISSS will process a STEM extension I-20 for you. **You will need to print, sign and upload the STEM extension I-20 to the online I-765 application.**

NOTE: ISSS requires at least 5 business days to process your request, and USCIS must receive your application no later than the last day of your post-completion OPT.

Step 4: Receive your STEM Extension I-20 from ISSS & File I-765 Online

◦ Student will receive the STEM Extension OPT I-20 after the document review.

◦ Student must print out this I-20 and sign the **Student Attestation** section in ink.

◦ Verify the following information under **Employment Authorizations** section: stem opt, full-time, requested, start date, end date. Example:

EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATIONS				
TYPE	**FULL/PART-TIME**	**STATUS**	**START DATE**	**END DATE**
POST-COMPLETION OPT	FULL TIME	APPROVED	07 OCTOBER 2017	06 OCTOBER 2018
STEM OPT	FULL TIME	REQUESTED	07 OCTOBER 2018	06 OCTOBER 2020

◦ Upload the signed STEM Extension I-20 to your online I-765 application.

◦ Pay and submit your online I-765 application.

◦ Wait to receive an email from USCIS with the receipt number.

Step 5: Wait for EAD Card

◦ Once your I-765 application is received by USCIS, you will receive by mail an I-797 Receipt Notice confirming that your application is in process.

➢ Keep the receipt as it contains important information

➢ Show the receipt to your STEM employer – the receipt notice allows you to work for your STEM employer for up to 180 days past the expiration of your post-completion OPT while your STEM application is being processed

◦ Log back into myUSCIS account from time to time to check your case status.

◦ If you receive any mail or communication from USCIS about your application, contact ISSS before responding.

◦ USCIS takes 60-90 days, on average, to process an I-765 application.

◦ Make any address updates or changes while your application is pending to both ISSS (send an email to intl@uoregon.edu with your name and UO ID number) and USCIS (http://www.uscis.gov)

◦ Once USCIS approves your application, you will receive a new Employment Authorization (EAD) card to show to your employer

➢ Keep all previously-issued EAD cards – do not throw them away

Step 6: Follow STEM Employment and Reporting Requirements

◦ During your STEM extension period, you must agree to follow certain rules and regulations.

It is essential that you follow and comply with all rules listed below. Failure to do so may lead to termination of your STEM extension benefit and loss of F-1 student status.

STEM Requirement #1: Unemployment Days

☐   During your STEM extension period, you are granted an additional 60 days of unemployment (i.e., days in which you have no STEM-related employment with an E-verify employer)

☐   You can combine these 60 days with any unused number of unemployment days from your post-completion OPT period, for a total of 150 days maximum

☐   It is up to you to monitor your unemployment time – if you exceed the total number of allowed unemployment, your STEM extension will be automatically terminated

STEM Requirement #2: Change of Address Notification Requirement

☐   You must notify ISSS within 10 days of any change to your US address.

➤   Submit a change of address update with instructions at http://isss.uoregon.edu/opt-update-form

STEM Requirement #3: Departure or Change of Job Notification Requirement

☐ If you leave your STEM job, you must notify ISSS within five days by sending an email to sevis@uoregon.edu

➢ Include your name, UO ID number, employer name, and the last day of employment

➢ Indicate if you plan to look for a new STEM employer or if you plan to discontinue your STEM employment and depart the United States

➢ You must also complete a final self-evaluation of your training experience (see Page 5 of your I-983 Training Plan)

➢ Send a copy of the final self-evaluation to sevis@uoregon.edu when it has been completed by you and signed by your employer

☐ If you plan to change or add a new STEM employer, you must complete the STEM OPT Employment Update Form and email to to sevis@uoregon.edu together with below documents:
   (1) a new Form I-983 Training Plan for each new employer, and
   (2) a final evaluation with signature from previous employer.

STEM Requirement #4: Six-month Verification Reporting Requirement

☐ You must submit a verification report every six months confirming your US address and employment information. Access the report form from STEM OPT UPDATE (smartsheet.com) and choose the right "Reason of Report" each time.

☐ You will receive a reminder from ISSS when it is time to complete the online verification report, but it is your responsibility to keep track of your STEM OPT reporting timeline

☐ Keep an updated email address on file with ISSS so that we can send a timely reminder to you

STEM Requirement #5: Self-evaluation Reporting Requirement

☐ After the first year of your STEM employment you must submit Evaluation of Student Progress (top portion of Page 5 of your Form I-983 Training Plan) – you will write the evaluation and your employer must sign it. Upload it to your STEM OPT UPDATE (smartsheet.com)

☐ At the end of your STEM employment, or whenever you leave your STEM employer, submit the Final Self Evaluation (bottom portion of your Form I-983 Training Plan) while reporting through STEM OPT UPDATE (smartsheet.com)

STEM OPT Extension FAQs:
STEM start date and end date

STEM OPT EXTENSTION START DATE	STEM OPT EXTENSION END DATE
The STEM OPT Extension start date is always the day *after* the OPT EAD end date.	By default, the STEM OPT Extension expires 24 months from the STEM OPT Extension start date.

Example

OPT EAD ends Dec 16, 2020
STEM OPT Extension start date: Dec 17, 2020
STEM OPT Extension end date: Dec 16, 2022

STEM OPT Extension FAQs:
Can student file while outside of the U.S.?

◦ No. Students must be physically in the U.S. in order to apply for the STEM OPT Extension. If a student is outside the U.S. during OPT, they *must* re-enter the U.S. before their OPT EAD end date. Furthermore, USCIS must receive the student's STEM OPT Extension application prior to their OPT EAD end date.

STEM OPT Extension FAQs:
Travel

During your STEM extension, you may travel outside of and return to the US with the following documents:

☐ Unexpired passport valid at least six months into the future on the date of your return

☐ Valid, unexpired F-1 student visa

➢ Exception: Canadian citizens do not require visas in most situations

☐ STEM extension OPT I-20 with a travel signature no more than six months old on the date of your return

➢ If you need an updated travel signature, you will need to request an updated I-20 from ISSS

☐ Valid, unexpired EAD card issued for STEM extension Optional Practical Training

☐ STRONGLY RECOMMENDED: Proof of employment from your STEM employer (job offer letter, pay stubs, etc.)

➢ Proof of employment can include a brief letter from your employer confirming that you are working for them under your STEM OPT benefit

◦ ISSS does not recommend that you travel outside of the US if you are not employed by an E-verify employer as required under the STEM extension regulations.

STEM OPT Extension FAQs: Multiple Employers

◦ Student can work for multiple employers under STEM OPT.

◦ However, student must file a Form I-983 for each employer. In addition, each employer must meet **all** eligibility requirements, including working at least 20 hours per week.

STEM OPT Extension FAQs:
Remote Work

◦ Remote work is authorized, but student must obtain written confirmation from their employer indicating they have permission to work remotely. This document is for personal records only and does not need to be submitted to ISSS or USCIS .

◦ Student must continue to comply with all STEM OPT Reporting Requirements.

STEM OPT Extension FAQs:
Ending STEM

Your STEM extension period ends if any of the following applies to you:

☐   You choose to discontinue your STEM extension benefit and leave the US

☐   Your immigration status is changed from F-1 to another visa type, e.g., H-1B

☐   You exceed the 150 days of allowed unemployment

☐   You engage in unauthorized employer (e.g., employment with an employer that is not a valid participant in the E-Verify program)

☐   You reach the end of your STEM extension period as indicated by the expiration date of your EAD card

○ If any of the above changes apply to you, or if you have questions, contact ISSS at intl@uoregon.edu.

○ Remember that whenever you leave your employer or stop/end your STEM extension period, you must complete a final self-evaluation (bottom portion of your Form I-983 Training Plan) and submit the evaluation to ISSS.

STEM OPT Extension FAQs:
Options after STEM

◦ Students are allowed to remain in the U.S. for up to 60 days after the approved STEM OPT Extension end date printed on their EAD. This period of time is called a "grace period." During this time, students may not work and cannot leave and re-enter the U.S. as F-1 students. During their 60-day grace period, students can:

◦ **Begin a new degree program at UO**-Students must apply to the new program, be admitted, and be issued a new I-20

◦ **Transfer SEVIS record to another school** –Student must submit an I-20 Transfer Out Request Form from iconnect.uoregon.edu, under "F-1 Student Services"

◦ **Change visa status** -USCIS must receive and approve the application to change the immigration status before the end of the grace period

◦ **Depart the United States**

QUESTIONS?

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AND SCHOLAR SERVICES

3RD FLOOR OREGON HALL

EMAIL: INTL@UOREGON.EDU

TEL: (541) 346-3206

Please include your full name and UO ID number in any messages sent to ISSS.

Looking forward to hearing from you!