

24-MONTH OPT EXTENSION FOR F-1 STEM STUDENTS

In March 2016, The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) amended F-1 nonimmigrant student regulations on OPT for certain students with STEM degrees. The new regulation, which provides for a 24-month extension of the OPT period for certain STEM majors, went into effect on May 10, 2016. A student may participate twice in the STEM OPT Extension over the course of their degrees. They are eligible if they have:

- ✓ Maintained valid F-1 status and completed a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree in a *designated* Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) field;
- ✓ Applied for and are currently engaged in post-completion OPT;
- ✓ Received a job offer from an employer who is currently enrolled in the federal government's E-Verify system; and
- ✓ Received a job offer which is directly related to their field of study.

Eligible Fields of Study

To qualify for the STEM OPT extension, an F-1 student must currently be working in a period of post-completion OPT and must hold a bachelor's degree or higher in an [eligible STEM field](#) from an SEVP-certified school that is accredited at the time the student submits their STEM OPT extension application to USCIS. Under certain circumstances, an F-1 student may now use a prior STEM degree from a currently accredited SEVP-certified school to fulfill this OPT STEM Extension eligibility requirement. If this is your situation, make an appointment with an International Student Advisor.

E-Verify

You may only apply for a STEM extension if you are currently employed by or if you receive a job offer from an employer that is currently enrolled in E-Verify. To determine if your employer is registered for E-Verify, contact your employer's Human Resources department. For more information about E-Verify, please refer to <http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify>.

When to Apply

If you meet the above requirements for the STEM extension, please make an appointment with an International Student Advisor to discuss the application process. **You may file an OPT STEM extension application up to 90 days before the expiration of your current OPT authorization.** A USCIS Service Center must receive your complete extension application before your current OPT authorization expires.

If your application is filed in a timely manner, your employment authorization will be *automatically extended* for up to 180 days while your application is pending. If your application is approved, your extension period will begin the day after the expiration of your original OPT period. You should not travel outside the United States while your OPT extension request is pending, so make travel plans accordingly.

Employment Requirements

Students who are granted an OPT STEM extension **may not accrue an aggregate of more than 150 days of unemployment** during the total period of OPT, which includes the initial post-completion period and the subsequent 24-month extension period. While you are authorized for a STEM extension, **you must work at least 20 hours per week** in a position that receives compensation for an employer that is registered for E-Verify. Your employment must be directly related to your field of study. Your employer must complete a training plan for you as defined in the Form I-983 as outlined in <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub>.

Reporting Requirements

International Student Advisors at OSU are required to maintain your SEVIS record throughout your entire period of OPT, including the STEM OPT extension. You must continue to provide the Office of International Services information about changes to your residential address and your employment within 10 days of any change. You will also be required to submit an online Validation Report every six months regardless of any changes. In addition, Form I-983 must be updated if there is any material or substantial change with your employer and also when your Evaluation on Student Progress is due. Failure to report this information may constitute a violation of your status and lead to termination of your SEVIS record.

Information to Report

Below is the information you are required to report to our office as part of maintaining your F-1 immigration status. You may email (OIS.Student@oregonstate.edu), fax (541-737-6226), or mail the required information and documents to our office or use the appropriate online forms. More information can be found here: <http://international.oregonstate.edu/ois/opt-reporting>

Information to Report	Supporting Documents to Send	When to Report	How to Report
Receipt of Employment Authorization Document (EAD)	Copy of front and back of EAD	Upon receipt of EAD	Email, fax, or mail
Change of address, email address, or phone number	None	Within 10 days of change	https://ipconnect.oregonstate.edu
Employment Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start & end date of employment Change of employment Loss of employment 	None	Within 10 days of change	http://international.oregonstate.edu/webform/international-student-advising-and-services/employment-update AND email, fax, or mail new Form I-983 if required
Change of legal name, as indicated on passport	Copy of passport showing change	Within 10 days of change	Email, fax, or mail
Intention to change visa/immigration status	Copy of I-797 Notice of Action Pending PR Form (if applicable)	Within 10 days of change	Email, fax, or mail
Approved change of visa/immigration status	Copy of I-797 Notice of Approval	Within 10 days of change	Email, fax, or mail
Permanent departure from U.S.	Departure Form (http://international.oregonstate.edu/ois/forms-and-documents)	Within 10 days of departure	Email, fax, or mail
Form I-983	Sections 1-6	At the time of OPT STEM application and if there is any material or substantial change with your employer	Email, fax, or mail
Form I-983	Evaluation on Student Progress	Within 12 months of the listed STEM OPT start date	Email, fax, or mail
Form I-983	Final Evaluation on Student Progress	By STEM OPT end date	Email, fax, or mail
Validation Report	None	Every 6 months	http://international.oregonstate.edu/webform/office-international-services/24-month-opt-stem-extension-validation-report

APPLICATION PROCEDURES FOR OPT STEM EXTENSION

Step 1: If you have questions about the OPT STEM Extension, schedule an appointment with an International Student Advisor.

If you live outside the Corvallis area, you may schedule a telephone appointment by contacting 541-737-6310.

Step 2: Request a recommendation for optional practical training from OIS.

Prepare the following documents and bring them to the OIS office or email scanned copies to OIS.Student@oregonstate.edu:

- Completed OPT STEM Extension request form (included on the last two pages of this packet)
- Form I-983 completed by you and your employer. The form and instructions are at <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview>

If you meet the eligibility requirements, OIS will recommend you for the OPT extension in the Student Exchange Visitor and Information System (SEVIS) and issue a new I-20. *OIS will only recommend you for the OPT extension. Actual approval must come from USCIS, which takes approximately 2-4 months.* If you would like OIS to mail your I-20 to you, request shipping by following the instructions at <http://international.oregonstate.edu/isas/current-students/visa-immigration-information/shipping-instructions>. Make sure to sign the I-20 when you receive it. Keep all your former I-20s for your records and the original I-20 containing the OPT extension endorsement for your use. **OIS recommends that you mail your application to USCIS within one week of receiving the OPT STEM Extension endorsement.**

Step 3: Prepare the following documents:

- Form G-1145:** <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145> Include this form to get a text or email when your application is received by USCIS. **Contact an International Student Advisor if you don't receive an electronic or paper receipt notice within a month.**
- Form I-765:** <http://www.uscis.gov/i-765> Type in your information instead of handwriting and then print the form. This helps with accuracy when the Lockbox scans your application. **Don't forget to sign the form!**
 - o For item #16, use the codes (c) (3) (C) for the 24-month extension for STEM students.
 - o For item #17, you will need to list the name of your degree as it is shown on your Form I-20, your employer's name as listed in E-Verify, and the E-Verify Company or Client ID Number.
 - o Enter "N/A" for any questions or fields that do not apply to you. Enter all dates in the format MM/DD/YYYY.
 - o **Use caution when filling out the address portion of this form.** The USCIS lockbox you will send your application to is determined by the state of the address you use in item #3. If you do not plan to remain at your current address for the next 3-4 months, list an alternative address. **The post office will not forward government documents.**
- Photocopy of your diploma or transcript.** The document must show the level and program of study to verify your STEM degree
- Two (2) color passport-style photos taken within the last 30 days.** Guidelines for photos are included in this packet. Put a piece of clear tape on the back of each photo and lightly print (in pencil) your full legal name and I-94 number.
- Check or money order.** Make it payable to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The current fee amount for the I-765 application can be found here: <https://www.uscis.gov/forms/our-fees>
- Photocopy of I-20 containing the STEM extension recommendation from OIS (all pages).** OIS will provide you with an original and a photocopy of your new I-20. Sign both. Send the photocopy with your OPT application to USCIS. Keep the original I-20.
- Photocopy of all previously issued I-20's (all pages).**
- Photocopy of I-94.** Find the electronic record here and print it: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94> If you last entered the U.S. when the paper I-94 cards were still in use, make a photocopy of both the front and back of the paper I-94 card.
- Photocopy of the F-1 visa page from your passport.** If the visa in your passport does not match the immigration status you currently hold, include a copy of the approval notice from your change of status petition.
- Photocopy of the identification page from your passport.** Include copies of your passport validity dates and any renewal or extension pages. You must have a valid, unexpired passport to be eligible for OPT.
- Photocopy of previously issued Employment Authorization Document(s).**

Step 4: Mail all of the necessary documents to the appropriate USCIS Lockbox.

Refer to the appropriate mailing address as listed here: <https://www.uscis.gov/forms/forms-information/uscis-phoenix-and-dallas-lockbox-facilities> The mailing address you use depends on the address you put in field #3 of the I-765 form and your mailing method. Keep copies of all documents sent. Make sure to use a mailing method that allows for tracking or return receipt. Allow 2-4 months processing time. To check the status of your application, visit: <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>

Step 5: Comply with all reporting requirements as listed in the "Reporting Requirements" section above.

PHOTOGRAPH SPECIFICATIONS

You are required to submit two passport-style photos to USCIS with your OPT application. Specifications for these photos are listed in the instructions for form I-765. Photos should be in color with a white background and taken no earlier than 30 days before the application is submitted to USCIS. Put a piece of clear tape on the back of each photo and lightly print (in pencil) your full legal name and I-94 number (which you can find here: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94>). The photos may be placed in an envelope or small, clear bag.

Photo Composition Instructions

(taken from <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/photos/photo-composition-template.html>)

- Frame subject with full face, front view, eyes open
- Make sure photo presents full head from top of hair to bottom of chin; height of head should measure 1 inch to 1-3/8 inches (25 mm to 35 mm)
- Center head within frame (see Figure 2 below)
- Make sure eye height is between 1-1/8 inches to 1-3/8 inches (28 mm and 35 mm) from bottom of photo
- Photograph subject against a plain white or off-white background
- Position subject and lighting so that there are no distracting shadows on the face or background
- Encourage subject to have a natural expression

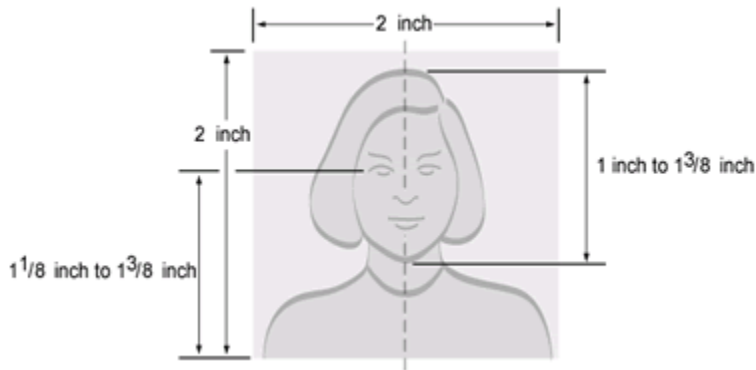


Figure 2. Head Position & Placement

Well-Composed Photos




OPT STEM EXTENSION REQUEST FORM

After you have spoken with an International Student Advisor to determine your eligibility for the OPT STEM extension, please complete the following information and submit this form to the Office of International Services.

PART I: Personal Information

Last name (family) _____ First name (given) _____

Student ID _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Current U.S. Address: Go to <https://ipconnect.oregonstate.edu> Click on  Select biographical information, then Local U.S. Address E-Form. * You are required to report your address to SEVIS to maintain your immigration status.

Future address (if known) _____
Street City State Zip Code

Effective date of future address (if applicable) ____ / ____ / ____ (month/day/year)

PART II: Degree Information

Please provide the following information for the degree on which your current OPT is based:

Degree level (circle) Bachelor's Master's PhD Major _____

Date of degree completion ____ / ____ (month/year) Final term of registration at OSU _____

If you worked on more than one degree at OSU, indicate level, major and completion date: _____

Under certain circumstances, an F-1 student may now use a prior STEM degree from a currently accredited SEVP-certified school to fulfill this OPT STEM Extension eligibility requirement. If this is your situation, make an appointment with an International Student Advisor.

PART III: Current Employment Information

Please provide the following information regarding your **current employment**:

Name of employer _____

Address of employer _____
Street City State Zip Code

Start date of employment ____ / ____ / ____ (month/day/year)

End date of employment (if applicable) __ / ____ / ____ (month/day/year)

Start date of current employment authorization document (EAD) ____ / ____ / ____ (month/day/year)

End date of current employment authorization document (EAD) ____ / ____ / ____ (month/day/year)

PART IV: STEM Employment Information

Please provide the following information regarding your **STEM employment**:

Name of employer _____

Address of employer _____
Street City State Zip Code

Start date of employment ____ / ____ / ____ (month/day/year) Employer ID Number (EIN): _____

Employer's E-Verify Company or Client ID Number _____

AFFIDAVIT OF UNDERSTANDING

The Office of International Services will not process incomplete applications. Students who have not completed a degree program in an approved STEM field, whose employer is not registered for E-Verify, and who have not submitted a completed Form I- 983 are not eligible for a STEM OPT extension recommendation.

To be completed by the student

I verify that I have read and understand the information contained in this STEM extension packet and I confirm each of the following (*check each item to indicate your understanding*):

- I have completed the degree listed on my current I-20 and have verified that my field of study is included in the list of STEM majors at <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf>
- My employer and I have completed the Form I-983 Training Plan (<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview>) and submitted it with this application.
- I am currently engaged in post-completion OPT, I am within 90 days of the expiration of my employment authorization document (EAD), and I have not been unemployed for more than 90 days during my OPT.
- I have a job offer for a position that receives compensation (at least 20 hours per week) from an employer who is currently enrolled in the E-Verify system.
- I have a job offer which is directly related to my field of study as listed on my current I-20 or a previous STEM degree, Bachelor's degree or higher, that I have received at a U.S. SEVP-Certified institution within the past 10 years.
- I understand that USCIS must receive my STEM OPT application within 60 days of the creation of my OPT STEM Extension endorsed I-20 and no later than the end date on my current EAD card.
- I understand the following reporting requirements for which I am responsible while I am on the OPT STEM extension:
 - I agree to submit a validation report as outlined in this STEM extension packet to OIS every six months, beginning from the start date of the STEM extension and ending when my F-1 status ends or the STEM extension ends, whichever is sooner.
 - Submit two annual self-evaluations using Form I-983, and signed by my employer, to my DSO regarding my training experience (one in first 12 months, and one at the end)
 - Report any material changes to the Form I-983 to my DSO (which includes changes in the employer's EIN, change in hours, compensation, or duties, change to learning objectives, etc.)
- I agree to report any change or loss of employment or permanent departure from the United States and any changes in my name, residential or mailing address, phone number, employer and employer's address, supervisor's name and contact information, and immigration status to OIS within 10 days of the change.
- I authorize OIS employees to report my private e-mail address, phone number, and job title; my supervisor's name, job title, telephone number and e-mail address; I-94 information, and how my employment related to my degree in SEVIS in order to issue a STEM extension I-20.

Student Printed Name _____

Student Signature _____

Date ____ / ____ / ____ (month/day/year)

Office of International Services use only

OPT Recommendation: Approved Denied OIS initials _____ Date entered into SEVIS _____