

# 24 Month STEM OPT Extension

## I-765 Application Instructions

Once International Services has received your request for a STEM extension, processed the request and issued an updated I-20 for this purpose, you should prepare your application with the required fee and documentation as follows:

- Form I-765 and form instructions can be downloaded at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) under forms.
- The application fee is \$410. Check <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> to be sure it hasn't changed. Check/money order should be made payable to US Department of Homeland Security. It's also possible to pay using the G-1450.
- I-765 must be filed and received **BEFORE** your current OPT employment authorization expires and **no later than 60 days** after the DSO's signature on your new I-20.
- If form I-765 is properly and timely filed, the student's employment authorization is considered automatically extended for up to 180 days while the EAD application is pending. ***To be considered timely filed, the I-765 petition must have been received by USCIS, not just a SEVIS request made and I-20 issued.***
- The I-765 should include the eligibility code of (c)(3)(C) in question #27.
- The I-765 should contain your degree and the employer's E-Verify Company or Client Identification Number at item 28. When asked to list the degree in item 28.a., enter exactly as shown on your I-20 with the CIP Code listed on page 1 of the I-20, under the heading "Major 1".

In addition to the application fee, the following documents should be submitted with the I-765:

- A scanned copy of a diploma or transcript which lists the degree **and** your major field of study. Unofficial transcripts or copies of diplomas will be acceptable.
- A scanned copy of an I-20 with STEM recommendation issued and signed by the DSO within 60 days of your filing the I-765. This form must also be signed by the student.
- Scanned copies of all I-20s issued to you by all schools you have attended (not just LSUHSC)
- A scanned copy of an offer letter from your employer
- A scanned copy of your current, unexpired passport
- A copy of your most recent I-94
- A scanned copy of your current EAD for post-completion OPT, and any other EADS that have been issued to you in the past
- A digital photo taken within the past 30 days

## Instructions for filing for STEM OPT online

Some important notes before you begin:

- You can file for STEM OPT by mail or online. Do **NOT** do both.
- You can only file the I-765 online from within the United States. Don't file for STEM OPT if you are outside the country.
- Online filing for STEM OPT speeds up the process only at the initial stages. It does not mean that your application will be processed faster than those submitted by mail.

- Once you've submitted the application, you cannot go back to make changes or additions. If you realize after hitting the submit button that you've made a mistake, contact International Services and we can discuss your options.

**Gather the materials you'll need.** These should be scans in pdf or some other digital format so you can upload them when you get to that part of the application process.

- **A new I-20** from International Services with your STEM OPT recommendation on page 2. This is very important – don't start until you have this in hand. You **cannot** use an old one.
- One digital passport style photo of yourself, taken within the past 30 days. Don't try to scan a paper copy – it's much easier to get the photo in digital format and upload it.
- Your most recent I-94
- Scan of your passport identification (photo) page
- Scan of your current EAD and any EAD you might have from previous OPT or other work authorization
- Scans of all I-20s you have including other schools you have attended (not just LSUHSC).
- A scanned copy of a diploma or transcript which lists the degree **and** your major field of study. Unofficial transcripts or copies of diplomas will be acceptable.
- A scanned copy of an offer letter from your employer

**NOTE:** you must submit a completed and signed Form I-983 to International Services as part of the application process, but this form is **not** uploaded into SEVIS when you apply. The original will be kept at International Services, and you should keep a copy.

**Arrange an appointment/consultation with International Services.** We will review your materials and answer any questions you have. If you'd like we can help with the online filing process.

**Create an account at USCIS -** [https://myaccount.uscis.gov/users/sign\\_up](https://myaccount.uscis.gov/users/sign_up)

Start with 'File a form online' under the section labeled 'Select what you want to do' or under the 'My Account' tab.

- Select 'I-765' and click 'Start Form'

We've provided the most common responses to the questions. Most of them should be straightforward, so some are not answered here. If you find that any fields are not applicable to you, leave them blank.

### **What is your eligibility category?**

The code for STEM extension is **(c)(3)(C)**.

### **Reason for applying**

Extension of previous employment

### **Have you previously filed I-765?**

This should be yes. Upload your current EAD when asked to do so.

### **Is someone assisting you with completing this application?**

Most likely the answer will be 'no', unless you have an immigration lawyer helping you.

**What is your current legal name?**

Enter your name as it appears on your passport.

**Have you used any other names since birth?**

This refers to names that might be found on formal documents. Your maiden name, other naming formats, or aliases, but not what your sister called you when you were growing up.

**What is your current U.S. mailing address?**

This should be the address where you'd like your EAD and any other related mail to be sent. Remember that official mail from USCIS will NOT be forwarded, so if you are going to move within the next several months (like, six) and don't yet know your new address, you should either use a friend or family member in the U.S. or the International Services address. You can list either Remy Allen or John Lorch in the 'in care of' field. We'll notify you when anything arrives in the mail.

**Is your current mailing address the same as your physical address?**

These next several questions should be easy enough to answer. Let us know if there's anything you're not clear on. Remember to use the U.S. date format (MM/DD/YYYY)

**Place of arrival**

Choose a port of entry from the drop-down menu. This is asking where you went through immigration or 'preclearance', so it could be a place outside the U.S.

**Status at last arrival**

This will most likely be F-1, unless you entered in a different status and changed status within the U.S.

**What is the passport number of your most recently issued passport?**

If you have more than one passport, use the newest one, even if your visa is in an older one.

**What is your travel document number (if any)?**

If you have a passport, this will not apply to you.

**What is the expiration date of your passport or travel document?**

**What country issued your passport or travel document?**

**What is your current immigration status or category?**

This should be F-1 – Student, Academic or Language Program

**What is your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) number, if any?**

This is found on the top left corner of your I-20, starting with 'N00...'

**What is your A-Number?**

If you have a pending green card application, you will have an A number. Enter it here. Most students will check 'I do not have or know my A-Number'

**What is your USCIS Online Account Number?**

If you used this system before and were sent a receipt in the mail, you can find the number at the top of the notice. Most students, though, won't have one yet.

### **Has the Social Security Administration (SSA) ever officially issued a Social Security card to you?**

#### **Do you want the SSA to issue you a Social Security card?**

Check yes *only* if you don't already have a Social Security Number (SSN) and want one. Remember that an SSN is yours for life once it's been issued. You can't use this option to get a new copy of a card that you have lost. You can request a free replacement of your SS card through SSA if you have lost it.

### **Evidence**

This is the section where you upload documents that are asked for as part of the application. Here's what you'll need:

#### **STEM OPT I-20 - NEW**

This is where you'll upload the copy of your new I-20 with the recommendation for STEM OPT on page 2. **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT.** Make sure you sign and date it on page 1, and that all the information is correct. Be sure to submit this no more than 30 days after the I-20 is issued by International Services, *not* from when you pick it up. You do not need to have a travel signature on page 2 when you apply for STEM OPT.

#### **Passport-style photo (Digital)**

A digital version of a new passport style photo will be needed. It should be new, or at least not the same photo that you used for your passport or visa. It seems that you'll have fewer problems uploading a photo that is strictly digital as opposed to a paper photo that you scanned and then edited.

If you have problems, try using the Department of State's Photo Tool here:

<https://tsg.phototool.state.gov/photo>

#### **Passport photo page**

Include a copy of the photo and/or information page of your current, unexpired passport.

#### **I-94**

You'll need your most recent I-94 - <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home> . The travel history is not needed, although it won't hurt anything if you include that.

#### **Old EAD(s)**

Upload a copy of your current EAD and any others issued to you in the past.

#### **Old I-20s**

Upload all I-20s issued to you in the past, even if it was for an earlier degree at a different school.

### **Additional Information**

This section is where you can add any additional information that doesn't fit in the previous parts of the form. The most common use will be for those who have done CPT or OPT in the past to list the dates of their employment, or for previous SEVIS IDs if you have those.

Be sure to list the type of employment (CPT, OPT, economic hardship); part-time or full-time; the start date and end date; and the degree you were pursuing at that time.

Sample:

**CPT**

Part-time, 2/22/2021 – 4/15/2021, Master's

**OPT**

Post-completion OPT, 6/6/2018-6/5/2019, Bachelor's

**Previous SEVIS ID Numbers**

N0001234567, Bachelor's, F-1

N0098765432, J-1 Trainee

Carefully review your application before you submit it. Be sure that you've answered all the relevant questions, since it will allow you to submit even if some of the fields are blank.

- Check the 'Applicant's Statement'
- Check that you've read and agree to the 'Applicant's Statement'
- Provide your digital signature in the space provided.
- Pay and submit

You'll be taken to another window to complete your payment. You can either enter your credit card information or bank account data. USCIS will not process your application without payment.

**After submitting your application**

A receipt notice will be sent to the email address you give them. This will have information on how you can check the progress of your STEM OPT application online. You will also receive a paper receipt notice via regular mail at the address used on the I-765.

**Timely** filed STEM OPT applications (for which you have received a Receipt Notice) will provide a **180 day** grace period where you can continue training/employment while your STEM OPT case is pending if the new EAD is not received by the time your initial OPT period expires.

**Approval**

Once your application has been approved, you will be sent an Approval Notice and an EAD, or Employment Authorization Document. Check that carefully for any errors. If you find any, contact International Services **\*before\*** you contact USCIS.

Once you receive the new EAD, please provide a copy to International Services

**Remember to submit your "Student Validation Reports" to ISO every six months and the Evaluation of Student Progress (Form I-983, Pgs 6-7) annually, according to previous instructions.**

**Travel while your STEM OPT application is pending**

We recommend that you do not leave the U.S. until you have received your new EAD. If you do travel, try to return before the end of your initial EAD. Be sure to carry your most recent I-20 with a travel signature, and evidence of the job you will be returning to.

## **Reporting Requirements during the STEM OPT extension**

During STEM OPT, you are required to maintain updated information with International Services. You are required to report/provide:

- The required 6 month validation report, within 10 days of the due date
- Any changes to your legal name, mailing and physical address
- When you stop working for an employer
- When you start working for a new qualifying employer
- Required self-evaluations
- A modified I-983 if there has been a material change to the training plan that was originally filed with the International Services office

## **Unemployment limits**

While on STEM OPT, you are allowed to be unemployed for a total of 150 days. This includes the 90 days (and an additional 60) from your initial period of OPT – the clock does not reset with the STEM OPT extension.

For more information on STEM OPT extension, please refer to Study in the States at <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis-help-hub/student-records/fm-student-employment/f-1-stem-optional-practical-training-opt>

Practical training may not begin until the Employment Authorization Document has been received or before the start date noted on the EAD.

## **Appropriate Employment on Post Completion STEM OPT**

Work done for STEM OPT must be "directly related to the student's major area of study." Employment based on a STEM OPT EAD that is not directly related to the major area of study would be considered a status violation. The employment must also be commensurate with your educational level. While on STEM OPT, employment **must be paid**.

Documenting that your STEM OPT employment is appropriate is **your** responsibility, not that of International Services. We recommend that you maintain evidence for each job documenting the position held, proof of the duration of that position, the job title, contact information for your supervisor or manager, and a description of the work. If it is not clear from the job title that the work is related to your degree, we recommend that you get a signed letter from your hiring official, supervisor, or manager explaining how your degree is related to the work performed.

According to SEVP policy guidance, "a student must work at least 20 hours per week in a qualifying position to be considered employed. If a student has a variable schedule, within a month, it should average out to at least 20 hours per week".

If you cannot show that your employment was appropriate for Post Completion STEM OPT, as applied for, you may be considered to have violated your status, which may require that you leave the United States and/or make you ineligible for future immigration benefits.

### **Cap Gap Extensions**

(not applicable to LSUHSC-New Orleans employees)

If your STEM OPT period ends before October 1, and your employer is considered to be subject to the H1B cap, and that employer has filed a petition to change your status to H1B in a timely manner, your work authorization and your F-1 status will be automatically extended until a decision is made on your H1B petition. If it is approved, your authorization will continue until September 30. If the H1B petition is denied, revoked or withdrawn during the cap gap period, your STEM OPT will end on the day the petition was denied, revoked or withdrawn. At that point you will still have a 60 day grace period to leave the country, change status or begin a new academic program.