



International Student
and Scholar Services Office

Division of Student Affairs

How to Apply For:

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

24-Month

STEM EXTENSION (OPT-X)

Updated July 22nd, 2025

Student Center North, Rm N203, Houston, TX 77204-3024

🌐 Phone: (713) 743-5065 🌐 <http://uh.edu/oiss> 🌐 Email: isssohlp@central.uh.edu

Update your Current Employment

Before you submit your OPTX (STEM) application to ISSSO be sure to log into the SEVP portal and verify/check your employment information. Be sure that all employment is listed and accurate and make any changes through TerraDotta.

DO NOT delete any previous employment history, only add to the information that is already there.

DO NOT lie or falsify job information.

For information on how to update your SEVP Portal account click here or use this link <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevp-portal-help/maintain-information/update-employer-information>



Eligibility for STEM Extension

- ◇ Be a recipient of a U.S. Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degree in a Science Technology Engineering or Math (STEM) designated degree program.
- ◇ Is currently on an approved Post-Completion OPT and have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment.
- ◇ Be employed or have a job offer (directly related to your major field of study) for a minimum of 20 hours per week from an employer who is registered and maintains participation in the USCIS E-Verify Program.
- ◇ Employment must be paid.
- ◇ Employer completes and signs Form I-983 and abides by the requirements therein.
- ◇ Properly file within the required timeline.
- ◇ You are allowed 2 OPT STEM Extensions in your lifetime, but these cannot be used together and have to immediately follow the initial 12-month Post-Completion OPT period.



ELIGIBILITY

Review the following categories to determine which applies to you, then follow the guidelines*:

Category I (A)—New 24-Month STEM OPT Request

Category I (B)—Second STEM OPT Extension

Category II—Currently on Post-Completion OPT, Non-STEM Major



Eligibility for STEM-Extension

Category I (A): New 24-Month STEM OPT Request

Must be in a period of Active Post-Completion OPT.

The primary/secondary major is in a field listed on the DHS STEM Designated STEM Degree Program List. *[Your 6-digit CIP code is listed on pg. 1 of current Form I-20 next to your primary major].*

You will be or are currently working for an employer enrolled in the USCIS E-Verify system and meet all previously mentioned eligibility requirements.

Category I (B): Second STEM OPT Extension

Currently on an approved Active Post-Completion OPT.

You will be applying for a 2nd STEM Extension at a higher level than the one used for your 1st STEM Extension. The 2nd STEM OPT cannot be a continuation of the 1st STEM OPT.

2nd STEM degree meets all the same requirements as with the 1st STEM Extension



Eligibility for STEM Extension

Category II: OPT STEM Extension based on a previously obtained STEM degree from a U.S. based, SEVP-certified institution. This is based on the following guidelines:

- Currently on Post-Completion OPT in a non-STEM degree from UH.
- Earned the previous STEM degree within the past 10 years of the date the DSO recommends the STEM OPT extension.
- Received the current and prior degree from a US-accredited, SEVP-approved university, but did NOT apply for a STEM OPT Extension based on the prior STEM degree.
- A new job offer relating to the prior STEM degree from an employer enrolled in the USCIS E-Verify system. The job on STEM OPT cannot be based on the Non-STEM Post-Completion OPT major field of study.



Application Timeline

- The application window for OPT STEM Extension is 90 days prior to the Post Completion OPT EAD card end date at the earliest, up until the EAD card end date at the latest, received and properly filed with USCIS. Applications outside this timeframe are NOT accepted by USCIS.
- The OPT-X application must be properly filed with USCIS within 60 days from the OPT-X recommendation date on the I-20 or by the last day of the Post-Completion OPT, whichever comes first.
- *If the application is properly filed, a student can work up to 180 days past their period of Post-Completion OPT while pending a decision from USCIS.*
- Most employers may ask for the receipt notice from your case filing for you to keep working.
- NOTE: USCIS uses the UTC time when it comes to filing applications online. Depending on where you live in the U.S. when filing your application, you must take this additional time in consideration. For example: Filing at 11pm CST would be either 5 or 6 am UTC the following day.



Documents Required by ISSSO for OPT-X Recommendation I-20

Upload the Following to the TerraDotta Portal

- ✓ Student Reporting Obligation Form
- ✓ Form I-983 Training plan
- ✓ Copy of passport that is valid for six months into the future
- ✓ Copy of your most recent visa page.
- ✓ Copy of most recent I-94.
- ✓ Job offer letter from the employer indicating the job title & job description on company letterhead.
- ✓ Copy of front AND back of your current EAD Card.
- ✓ Copy of diploma(s) OR official transcript
- ✓ Copy previous I-20 if the application is based on a previous STEM degree (Category II)

ISSSO OPT-X Application Payment Details

- ✓ By Mail: Complete Payment Coupon and a personal check OR money order made payable to University of Houston for \$200— Include your UHID in the memo line (Please be sure that your name and address is printed on the top left corner of your check. Do not sign the back of the check.)
- ✓ In-Person: You may make the payment at our front desk or have a friend come in to do so on your behalf. Payments by check, cash, or credit card are accepted. The Payment Coupon is still required to complete.



Student Reporting Obligation Form

Complete the form based on the dates you will be required to report.

STEM OPT recipients must complete a "validation report" through TerraDotta **EVERY 6 MONTHS** starting from the date the 24-month extension begins.

Complete an employment update request on the TerraDotta Portal every time your employment information changes.

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & ACADEMIC SERVICES
Student Center North, #205, Houston, TX 77204-3024 • Phone: (713) 743-5065 • Fax: (713) 743-5875 • www.uh.edu/issas
STUDENT Reporting Obligations

Students applying for STEM OPT Extension must abide by the following Reporting Obligations:

Six-month Validity Reports: I must submit an OPT-Self Report on ISSS website on my scheduled validation reporting dates even I don't have any personal nor employment changes. (Please fill out prior to submission):

- ☐ Reporting Date #1: _____ (This is the first day after your Post-OPT expires)
- ☐ Reporting Date #2: _____ (6 months after date #1)
- ☐ Reporting Date #3: _____ (6 months after date #2)
- ☐ Reporting Date #4: _____ (6 months after date #3)
- ☐ Reporting Date #5: _____ (last day of OPT-Extension, 24months)

Immediately notify DSO (ISSS): I must submit an OPT-Self Report on ISSS website for any of the events:

- ☐ Any time there is a "material change" in the terms and conditions of the original I-983
- ☐ Termination of practical training experience
- ☐ Beginning a new practical training opportunity with a new employer, a new Form I-983 must be executed and submitted to ISSS within 5 business days of the new start date and a final evaluation I-983 from your prior company.
- ☐ Employer noncompliance

I-983 Evaluations: I must submit the I-983 yearly and final evaluations to ISSS:

- ☐ After 12 months of the STEM OPT start or from the start date of working for a company, whichever comes later, and;
- ☐ Final evaluation at the end of the OPT-X period or at the end of any employment within 5 business days.

Student is responsible for conducting self-evaluations and obtaining the necessary signatures on I-983 and submits the evaluations (I-983) to ISSS. For detailed information, please visit [STEM OPT Hub](http://STEMOPT.Hub).

Regarding work authorization:

- ☐ I will only work the dates listed on my EAD card* (exceptions may exist on a case-by-case basis. See ISSS for details and additional authorizations if on OPTX, see your immigration attorney if under H-1-B Cap-Gap).
- ☐ I will only accept employment directly related to my major area of study.

Regarding transitions:

- ☐ I will obtain a new I-20 for any new degree program and contact ISSS for assistance should I choose to pursue a new degree in the US.
- ☐ I will notify ISSS by completing the OPT Self-Report in the event I change my status or decide to permanently leave the country prior to the ending date of my OPTX.

Regarding other requirements:

- ☐ I will not attend school part-time or full-time in a degree seeking program while on OPTX.
- ☐ I understand I can only accumulate 150 days of unemployment the entire duration of my OPT and OPT STEM Extension (≤90 days for first 12 months of OPT; an additional 60 days for 24 month OPTX). Exceeding these amounts may result in a violation of my F-1 status.

I, (legibly print your name) _____, have read and understand my obligations as an F-1 student on optional practical training STEM extension (OPTX).

Signature: _____ PS ID #: _____ Date: _____

I-983 Training Plan

Form I-983 must be submitted to ISSSO at the time of application for any OPT STEM Extension. Form I-983 will be kept on record by ISSSO for minimum 3 years and will not be mailed to USCIS.

Training Plan can be found here: <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983.pdf>

- ◆ Pages 1 – 4 must be completed, all areas filled out. Electronic signatures are now accepted.
- ◆ Page 5 (Top part – Student Progress report) must be completed and submitted **after 1 year** from the start date of your STEM OPT.
- ◆ Page 5 (Bottom part – Final Evaluation) must be completed and submitted **at the end** of the OPT-X and/or the end of your employment for a company.



Form I-983 Training Plan

Complete the following on SECTION 1

- ◆ Student Name: As listed on passport
- ◆ Student Email Address: Current
- ◆ Name of School Recommending STEM OPT: Enter University of Houston
- ◆ Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned: Enter the name of the school where your STEM degree was awarded. This may or may not be the same school recommending the STEM OPT. Prior degree = Category II
- ◆ SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT
- ◆ DSO Name and Contact Information: Enter the name and contact information of DSO on your I-20. You may use the office email and phone number as contact information.
- Student SEVIS ID Number: Enter your SEVIS number on your UH I-20
- STEM OPT Requested Period: From should be the day **AFTER** your Post-completion OPT end and then the TO is 2 years after.

Based on Prior Degree?

- Check “Yes” if your STEM OPT is based on a previously-obtained U.S. STEM degree (Category II). This is not for the current degree for which your OPT was granted. The date awarded for prior degree must be within 10 years of the time/date that the OPT Stem is recommended.
- Check “No” if your STEM OPT is based on your most recently obtained degree. It is the degree upon which your current OPT is based.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

OMB APPROVAL NO. 1653-0054
EXPIRATION DATE: 7/31/2021

TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS

Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) Optional Practical Training (OPT)

SECTION 1: STUDENT INFORMATION (Completed by Student)			
Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):		Student Email Address:	
Name of School Recommending STEM OPT: University of Houston	Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned:	SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT (including 3-digit suffix): HOU214F00110000	
Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information: Find on your I-20		Student SEVIS ID No.:	STEM OPT Requested Period (mm-dd-yyyy): From: Day after EAD card ends To: Stem OPT End date
Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: 6 digit code on page 1 of I-20			
Level/Type of Qualifying Degree: Enter Bachelors Masters, Ph.D.			
Date Awarded (mm-dd-yyyy): Enter date degree was awarded. Prior degree must be within 10 years.			
Based on Prior Degree? ☐ Yes ☐ No			
Employment Authorization Number: 9 digit number on EAD card			
SECTION 2: STUDENT CERTIFICATION			
I declare and affirm under penalty of perjury that the statements and information made herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I understand that the law provides severe penalties for knowingly and willfully falsifying or concealing a material fact, or using any false document in the submission of this form.			
I certify that:			
1. I have reviewed, understand, and will adhere to this Training Plan for STEM OPT Students ("Plan");			
2. I will notify the DSO at the earliest available opportunity if I believe that my employer is not providing me with appropriate training as delineated on this Plan;			
3. I understand that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) may deny, revoke, or terminate the STEM OPT of students whom DHS determines are not engaging in OPT in compliance with the law, including the STEM OPT of students who are not, or whose employers are not, complying with this Plan;			
4. My practical training opportunity is directly related to the STEM degree that qualifies me for the STEM OPT extension; and			
5. I will notify the DSO at the earliest available opportunity regarding any material changes to or deviations from this Plan, including but not limited to, any change of Employer Identification Number resulting from a corporate restructuring, any nontrivial reduction in compensation from the amount previously submitted on the Plan that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked, any significant decrease in hours per week that I engage in a STEM training opportunity, and any decrease in hours below the 20-hours-per-week minimum required under this rule.			
Signature of Student (Sign in ink): _____			
Printed Name of Student: _____ Date (mm-dd-yyyy): _____			

Form I-983 Training Plan

- ❑ The Employer EIN is **NOT** the same as the E-verify number listed on the I-765. This number is usually 9 digits long.
- ❑ Start Date of Employment should be the day your Stem Extension will start. The first day after your post-completion OPT ends. This is the case no matter if your employment began before this date.
- ❑ The Signature of Employer Official with Signatory Authority **MUST BE** from someone working at your company.
 - ❑ ISSSO cannot determine the person responsible at your organization to complete and sign the form.
 - ❑ Keep in mind that your company will designate the person who is responsible for completing the training plan in your behalf,
 - ❑ You can check with your supervisor or human resources department if you are unsure

SECTION 3: EMPLOYER INFORMATION (Completed by Employer)			
Employer Name:		Street Address:	
Employer Website URL:		City:	State: ZIP Code:
Employer ID Number (EIN):	Number of Full-Time Employees in U.S.:	North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Code:	
OPT Hours Per Week (must be at least 20 hours/week):	Compensation:		
Start Date of Employment (mm-dd-yyyy):	A. Salary Amount and Frequency: _____		
	B. Other Compensation (Type and Estimated Amount or Value):		
	1. _____		
	2. _____		
	3. _____		
4. _____			
SECTION 4: EMPLOYER CERTIFICATION			
I declare and affirm under penalty of perjury that the statements and information made herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I understand that the law provides severe penalties for knowingly and willfully falsifying or concealing a material fact, or using any false document in the submission of this form.			
I certify on behalf of the employer that this Training Plan for STEM OPT Students ("Plan") is approved and that:			
1. I have reviewed and understand this Plan, and I will ensure that the supervising Official follows this Plan;			
2. I will notify the DSO at the earliest available opportunity regarding any material changes to this Plan, including but not limited to, any change of Employer Identification Number resulting from a corporate restructuring, any reduction in compensation from the amount previously submitted on the Plan that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked, any significant decrease in hours per week that a student engages in a STEM training opportunity, and any decrease in hours below the 20-hours-per-week minimum required under this rule;			
3. Within five business days of the termination or departure of the student during the authorized period of OPT, I will report such termination or departure to the DSO (Note: business days do not include federal holidays or weekend days; and an employer shall consider a student to have departed when the employer knows the student has left the practical training opportunity, or when the student has not reported for practical training for a period of five consecutive business days without the consent of the employer); and			
4. I will adhere to all applicable regulatory provisions that govern this program (see 8 CFR Part 214), which include, but are not limited to, the following:			
a. The student's practical training opportunity is directly related to the STEM degree that qualifies the student for the STEM OPT extension, and the position offered to the student achieves the objectives of his or her participation in this training program;			
b. The student will receive on-site supervision and training, consistent with this Plan, by experienced and knowledgeable staff;			
c. The employer has sufficient resources and personnel to provide the specified training program set forth in this Plan, and the employer is prepared to implement that program, including at the location(s) identified in this Plan;			
d. The student on a STEM OPT extension will not replace a full- or part-time, temporary or permanent U.S. worker. The terms and conditions of the STEM practical training opportunity—including duties, hours, and compensation—are commensurate with the terms and conditions applicable to the employer's similarly situated U.S. workers or, if the employer does not employ and has not recently employed more than two similarly situated U.S. workers in the area of employment, the terms and conditions of other similarly situated U.S. workers in the area of employment; and			
e. The training conducted pursuant to this Plan complies with all applicable Federal and State requirements relating to employment.			
Note: DHS may, at its discretion, conduct a site visit of the employer to ensure that program requirements are being met, including that the employer possesses and maintains the ability and resources to provide structured and guided work-based learning experiences consistent with this Plan.			
Signature of Employer Official with Signatory Authority: _____			
Printed Name and Title of Employer Official with Signatory Authority: _____			
Date (mm-dd-yyyy): _____ Printed Name of Employing Organization: _____			

Form I-983 Training Plan

Section 5 of the form will be completed by the student and the employer. A different company employer cannot sign this part. It must be the same employer that signs on page 2.

Site name—Be sure to enter exactly where the physical location that the student works.

Site Address—Be sure to list the full address, including suite or building number is applicable. If you work remotely, please do not put in your physical address; still use your employer address location from where your supervisor works.

Name of official—This person will be recorded as the student's supervisor.

Official's phone number—be sure that the phone number is complete and accurate

Official's Email—be sure that the email address in complete and accurate

Please include the Student's Official Job Title

SECTION 5: TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS (Completed by Student and Employer)	
Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):	
Employer Name:	
EMPLOYER SITE INFORMATION	
Site Name:	Site Address (Street, City, State, ZIP):
Name of Official:	Official's Title:
Official's Email:	Official's Phone Number:
<i>Note: for the remaining fields in this section, employers who already have an internal/pre-existing training plan in place may fill in the details based on that plan.</i>	
Student Role: Describe the student's role with the employer and how that role is directly related to enhancing the student's knowledge obtained through his or her qualifying STEM degree.	
Describe in DETAIL what assignments and responsibilities the student will have and how the training is related to the STEM degree. It would be helpful to include the student's official job title.	
Goals and Objectives: Describe how the assignment(s) with the employer will help the student achieve his or her specific objectives for work-based learning related to his or her STEM degree. The description must both specify the student's goals regarding specific knowledge, skills, or techniques as well as the means by which they will be achieved.	
The goals listed here should be specific and measurable. The self-evaluations to be completed later should reflect and show how the goals listed here have been achieved.	
Employer Oversight: Explain how the employer provides oversight and supervision of individuals filling positions such as that being filled by the named F-1 student. If the employer has a training program or related policy in place that controls such oversight and supervision, please describe.	
Explain in detail how the employer will oversee and supervise the student.	
Measures and Assessments: Explain how the employer measures and confirms whether individuals filling positions such as that being filled by the named F-1 student are acquiring new knowledge and skills. If the employer has a training program or related policy in place that controls such measures and assessments, please describe.	
Explain in detail how the employer will evaluate the student. Also indicate if the student gaining new knowledge and skills.	

Form I-983 Training Plan

Be sure to read the following statements:

- ☐ Employer Official Certification
- ☐ Privacy Act Statement
- ☐ Paperwork Reduction Act
- ☐ Have employer sign with electronic or an original signature.

You will submit page 5 with your application. Leave page 5 blank.

*Further instructions to fill out the I-983 training plan is found here:
<https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983Instructions.pdf>*

Additional Remarks (optional): Provide additional information pertinent to the Plan.

SECTION 6: EMPLOYER OFFICIAL CERTIFICATION

I declare and affirm under penalty of perjury that the statements and information made herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I understand that the law provides severe penalties for knowingly and willfully falsifying or concealing a material fact, or using any false document in the submission of this form.

Employer Official with Signatory Authority - I certify that:

1. I have reviewed, understand, and will follow this Training Plan for STEM OPT Students (Plan);
2. I will conduct the required periodic evaluations of the student;⁺
3. I will adhere to all applicable regulatory provisions that govern this program (see 8 CFR Part 214.2(f)(10)(ii)); and
4. I will notify the DSO regarding any material changes to or material deviations from this Plan at the earliest available opportunity, including if I believe the student is not receiving appropriate training as delineated in this Plan.

Signature of Employer Official with Signatory Authority (Sign in ink): _____

Printed Name and Title of Employer Official with Signatory Authority: _____

Date (mm-dd-yyyy): _____

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

AUTHORITIES: Section 101(a)(15)(F) of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, as amended (INA), 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(F), Section 641 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA), Pub. L. 104-208, Div. C, 110 Stat. 3009-546 (codified at 8 U.S.C. 1372), Section 502 of the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002, Pub. L. 107-173, 116 Stat. 543 (codified at 8 U.S.C. 1762) and Homeland Security Presidential Directive No. 2 (HSPD-2), authorize U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to collect the information requested in this form.

PURPOSE: The information collection on this form is used to assist in the administration of the STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) extension so that Designated School Officials (DSO) can properly recommend the Student for and review and help coordinate his or her STEM optional practical training opportunity.

ROUTINE USES: The information collected on this form may be shared with: the individuals who signed the Plan, relevant DSOs acting as liaisons with the DHS, Federal, State, local, or foreign government entities for law enforcement purposes, Members of Congress in response to requests on the Student's behalf, or as otherwise authorized pursuant to its published Privacy Act system of records notice - Privacy Act of 1974: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, DHS/ICE-001 Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) System of Records (<https://www.dhs.gov/system-records-notices-soms>).

DISCLOSURE: The information you provide is voluntary. However, failure to provide the information requested on this form may delay or prevent participation in a STEM OPT opportunity.

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT

The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 7.5 hours per response, including time required for searching existing data sources, gathering the necessary documentation, providing the information and/or documents required, and reviewing the final collection. You do not have to supply this information unless this collection displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. If you have comments on the accuracy of this burden estimate and/or recommendations for reducing it, send them to: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Office of Policy, 500 12th Street SW, Washington, D.C. 20536

⁺See evaluation forms that follow for student's first evaluation, to occur before the one year anniversary of the start date of the student's STEM OPT employment authorization, and final program evaluation.

Form I-765 Training Plan

During the STEM OPT employment period, the student will be required to submit self-reported evaluations on their performance to ISSSO.

The student evaluations will be completed by the student and reviewed by the supervisor. The evaluations are a shared responsibility of both the student and the employer. However, the student is responsible for submitting the evaluation in a timely manner to ISSSO.

Once the evaluation is complete both the student and employer must sign. Either an electronic or original signature is fine.

EVALUATION ON STUDENT PROGRESS	
Provide a self-evaluation of your performance, using the measures previously identified, in applying and acquiring new knowledge, skills, and competencies identified in the Training Plan for STEM OPT Students. Discuss accomplishments, successful projects, overall contributions, etc., during this review period. Address whether there are any modifications to the objectives and goals for projects, or new areas for skill and competency development.	
Range of Evaluation Dates: From (mm-dd-yyyy): _____	To (mm-dd-yyyy): _____
LEAVE BLANK First evaluation--Required after completion of 12 months of STEM OPT period	
Signature of Student (Sign in ink): _____	
Printed Name of Student: _____	Date (mm-dd-yyyy): _____
Signature of Employer Official with Signatory Authority (Sign in ink): _____	
Printed Name of Employer Official with Signatory Authority: _____	Date (mm-dd-yyyy): _____
FINAL EVALUATION ON STUDENT PROGRESS	
Provide a self-evaluation of your performance, using the measures previously identified, in applying and acquiring new knowledge, skills, and competencies identified in the Training Plan for STEM OPT Students. Discuss accomplishments, successful projects, overall contributions, etc., during this review period. Address whether there are any modifications to the objectives and goals for projects, or new areas for skill and competency development.	
Range of Evaluation Dates: From (mm-dd-yyyy): _____	To (mm-dd-yyyy): _____
LEAVE BLANK Final evaluation--Due at conclusion of 24-month STEM OPT period	
Signature of Student (Sign in ink): _____	
Printed Name of Student: _____	Date (mm-dd-yyyy): _____
Signature of Employer Official with Signatory Authority (Sign in ink): _____	

How to Apply

Submit the following documents through the TerraDotta portal

- ✓ Student Reporting Obligation Form
- ✓ Form I-983 Training plan
- ✓ Copy of passport that is valid for six months into the future
- ✓ Copy of your most recent visa page.
- ✓ Copy of most recent I-94.
- ✓ Job offer letter from the employer indicating: job title & job description on company letterhead.
- ✓ Copy of front and back of your current EAD Card.
- ✓ Copy of diploma(s) or official transcript (proof of STEM degree)
- ✓ Copy previous I-20 if the application is based on a previous STEM degree.

Application payment submission to our office.

- ✓ By Mail: Complete [Payment Coupon](#) and a personal check **OR** money order made payable to University of Houston for \$200—Include your UHID in the memo line (Please be sure that your name and address is printed on the top left corner of your check. Do not sign the back of the check.)
- ✓ In-Person: You may make the payment at our front desk or have a friend come in to do so on your behalf. Payments by check, cash, or credit card are accepted. The Payment Coupon is still required to complete.

University of Houston
International Student and Scholar Services Office
4465 University Drive, Suite N203
Houston, TX 77204 – 3024



International Student
and Scholar Services Office
Division of Student Affairs

OPT-X

Application Timeline

The ISSSO Counselor will review your request and determine your eligibility.

If a 24-month STEM Extension is warranted, a recommendation for an OPT Extension will be processed in SEVIS which will generate a new I-20.

When you receive your new I-20, print a copy, sign and date it, then include it with your OPTX application submission online with USCIS.

File the application with USCIS within 60 days of the issue date of the new I-20 **AND** before your current OPT expires. The USCIS Service Center must receive and receipt the application, before the current OPT expires.

Once this is done, you can work up to 180 days past your OPT end-date as you are pending for adjudication from USCIS.

[Here's details on how to file your application with USCIS Online](#)



What do I do If I get an RFE?

1. **Provide** ISSSO DSO with a scanned copy of the Request for Evidence (RFE)
2. **A DSO will review** the RFE and assist you with compiling the requested information
3. **Respond** to USCIS by following instructions to submit online through the unsolicited evidence option. Remember this is your petition and your responsibility.



OPT STEM Extension USCIS Approval



Once you are approved by USCIS and have your EAD card, do the following:

1. Submit the EAD card, front and back, through the TerraDotta portal.



Maintaining Status During STEM Extension

Reporting Requirements – 6 months Reporting

Update ISSSO through TerraDotta portal **every 6 months** for the validation report and every time your personal or employment information changes.

The “Student Reporting Obligations” Form is a reminder of your reporting dates. Use it to mark your calendar ahead of time.

STUDENT Reporting Obligations

Students applying for STEM OPT Extension must abide by the following Reporting Obligations:

Six-month Validity Reports: *I must submit an OPT-Self Report on ISSS website on my scheduled validation reporting dates even I don't have any personal nor employment changes (Please fill out prior to submission):*

- Reporting Date #1: **Date after OPT ends** (This is the first day after your Post-OPT expires)
- Reporting Date #2: **mm/dd/yyyy ---->** (6 months after date #1) **Fill out all reporting dates**
- Reporting Date #3: _____ (6 months after date #2) **for ISSS and then keep it**
- Reporting Date #4: _____ (6 months after date #3) **as a reminder to report**
- Reporting Date #5: _____ (last day of OPT-Extension, 24months)

Maintaining Status During STEM Extension Reporting Requirements

Students on Post Completion OPT may not exceed 90 days of unemployment. You will receive an additional time of 60 days during the period of OPT-X.

The accumulative unemployment days cannot exceed 150 - Any unused portion of allowable unemployment from Post Completion OPT is carried over to OPT STEM Extension.

On OPT-X you have 10 days to report changes in employment such as ending or starting a new job. This includes providing an updated form I-983.

SEVP reserves the right to terminate students who violate the unemployment requirements while on OPT/-X.



Maintaining Status During STEM Extension Reporting Requirements Change of employer

If you change employer while OPT-X is pending or approved you must send the following through TerraDotta.

- ✓ Have current employer complete a Final Evaluation (page 5 of I-983) if your period of OPT-X has already begun.
- ✓ Have new employer to complete a new I-983 (pages 1-4)
- ✓ Request a new I-20.
- ✓ Submit the new I-20 and a signed/dated letter providing a reason for the change that includes the new company's E-verify name and number to the unsolicited evidence section of the application online with USCIS.



Travel on OPT-X

What You Should Know

In most cases, you should not travel outside of the U.S. if your EAD is expired and the 24-month extension request is pending. Wait until you receive the new EAD before traveling. You will be unable to apply for a new VISA until you are on an approved period of STEM-OPT.

In order to travel while on OPT, please see the required documents below:

- ✓ I-20 (a travel endorsement on the 2nd page that is no older than six months upon return to the U.S. This signature can be given by requesting a reprint through TerraDotta and pay the \$10 alumni fee payment. O if you have the original form I-20, it can be re-signed without any additional fee.
- ✓ Passport that is valid within six months or more
- ✓ Valid VISA
- ✓ STEM OPT EAD card
- ✓ Job offer letter and/or a letter from employer stating that they know you are travelling internationally and for what reason



Final Points

- After you have submitted your application online, you will receive your I-797 receipt notice from USCIS and can check the case status of your application at www.uscis.gov or logging into your account.
- You may continue to work up to 180 days while your OPT Stem Extension is pending
- Once approved for OPTX you are required to submit a scanned copy of the front and back of your new STEM EAD card through TerraDotta.
- The travel endorsement is valid for 6 months while you are on OPT/OPT-X. It is recommended to have the employment information printed on the I-20, but it's not required by law.
- You are required to submit a Six-Month Validity Report to confirm your information every six months through TerraDotta.
- I-983 Annual Evaluation must be submitted 12 months from the OPT start date or the start date from working for the company whichever comes later. 12-month Evaluation: Complete the top half of page 5 on the I-983. Submit through TerraDotta.
- I-983 Final Evaluation must be submitted at the end of the OPTX or at the end of employment within five business days. 24-month (Final Evaluation): Complete the bottom half of page 5 on the I-983 and submit through TerraDotta.
- If you change employers while your OPTX is pending you must submit the following through TerraDotta and following instructions in this Powerpoint presentation on what to submit to USCIS:
 - Submit a final evaluation from previous employer.
 - Submit a new I-983 from new employer
- If you receive a Request for Evidence (RFE) contact our office immediately



RESOURCES

I-983 -- <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983.pdf>

STEM List: <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/stemList2024.pdf>

ONLINE STATUS CHECK

- The status of your application can be checked online with your receipt number (*See I-797*):
<https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>

ONLINE REQUEST FOR UPDATE

- You can request an update if you haven't received your card after 120 days:
- <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>

AUTHORIZATION

- The USCIS has the final authority to grant OPT/-X employment authorization.

SOURCES

- www.studyinthestates.dhs.gov; www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/stem-opt;
- [8 CFR 214, 274a](#)
- **USPS Informed Delivery** – Use this to find out what is coming in your mail each day as it will help you see when your EAD card will arrive.
- <https://informeddelivery.usps.com/box/pages/intro/start.action>

