

**How to Apply For:**

**OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING**

**24-Month**

**STEM EXTENSION (OPT-X)**

*Updated November 2021*

# COVID-19 Updates

- ◇ USCIS is currently open and accepting OPT/STEM I-765 application processing. USCIS has NOT changed application timelines and deadlines due to COVID-19.
- ◇ Your OPT STEM application must be received and receipted by the last day of your Pos-Completion OPT.
- ◇ Currently there is no delay in I-765 processing time due to COVID-19. You can check the processing times <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>
- ◇ For current USCIS COVID-19 information see:  
<https://www.uscis.gov/aboutus/uscis-response-covid-19>
- ◇ OPT/STEM I-765 applications MUST be submitted inside the U.S. That means that you must be physically present in the U.S. when your application is received by USCIS. USCIS has NOT made an exception to this due to COVID-19.
- ◇ USCIS still requires a handwritten signature for the I-765. NO DIGITAL or ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES.

# Update your SEVP portal

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 available and accurate.

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

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

# What is the STEM OPT Extension?

Extension of Post-Completion Optional Practical Training for students who have completed a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (STEM) fields.

Valid for and additional 24 months immediately following the initial 12 months of Post-Completion OPT.



# Eligibility for STEM Extension

- ◆ Be a recipient of a U.S. Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degree in a Science Technology Engineering or Math (STEM) designated degree program
- ◆ Currently on approved Post Completion OPT and have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment.
- ◆ Be employed or have a job offer (directly related to your field of study) for a minimum of 20 hours from an employer who is registered and maintains participation in the USCIS E-Verify Program.
- ◆ Employer completes and signs Form I-983 (employer must participate in E-Verify employer and have a valid EIN number).
- ◆ File within the required timeline.

# Qualifying STEM Employer

- Employment on STEM OPT must be directly related to the STEM major
- Employer must be enrolled and maintain participation in E-verify
- Employment must be a full-time paid position
- Employee and employer must complete the form I-983 Training Plan and agree to make any modifications as necessary





# 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

Have to be in a period of Active Post-Completion OPT.

The primary/secondary major is in a field listed on the DHS STEM Designated 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 for a minimum of 20 hours per week.

## Category I (B) Second STEM OPT Extension

Currently on approved Active Post-Completion OPT.

Work for U.S. employer in a paid position at least 20 hours per week.

You will be applying for the 2<sup>nd</sup> STEM degree at a higher level than the one used for the first STEM OPT extension. The 2<sup>nd</sup> STEM OPT cannot be a continuation of the 1<sup>st</sup> STEM OPT.

2<sup>nd</sup> STEM degree meets all of the same requirements as with the 1<sup>st</sup> STEM OPT



# 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 based on a non-STEM degree from UH.
- Earned the STEM degree within the previous 10 years of the date the DSO recommends the STEM OPT extension.
- Received current and prior degree from a US-accredited, SEVP-approved university, but did NOT benefit from a STEM OPT Extension with the prior 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 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 earlier than or later than this time window are not accepted by USCIS.
- The OPT-X application has to 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 filing in order for you to keep working.

**DEADLINE**



# Documents Required by ISSS for OPT-X Recommendation I-20

**EMAIL THE FOLLOWING TO [ISSSOHLP@CENTRAL.UH.EDU](mailto:ISSSOHLP@CENTRAL.UH.EDU)**

- ✓ Student Reporting Obligation Form
- ✓ Form I-983 Training plan
- ✓ Copy of latest I-20, and previous I-20 if the application is based on a previous STEM degree.
- ✓ Copy of passport(s) 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(s) (proof of STEM degree)

**MAIL THE FOLLOWING TO ISSSO**

- ✓ 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.)



# Mailing your Payment to ISSSO

Complete the Payment  
Coupon

Prepare a personal check  
OR money order made  
payable to University of  
Houston for \$200—Include  
your UHID in the memo  
line

Mail the Payment Coupon  
AND the \$200 check or  
money order together  
(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.)

## UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

### INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR SERVICES OFFICE

Student Center North, Room N203, Houston, TX 77204-3024 ☎ Phone: (713) 743-5065 📠 Fax: (713) 743-5079 🌐 [www.uh.edu/oisss](http://www.uh.edu/oisss)

#### Payment Coupon

**Instructions:** Please fill out and print this payment coupon. Mail it together with your payment (checks only) to our office. All payments for ISSSO fees must be payable to “UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON”. Only a personal check or a money order (certified check) is accepted; Do NOT send cash. Our office does not accept credit card payments. Note that our office fees are not related to any USCIS application fees, for example OPT application fee, which is payable to USCIS. Only mention a specific advisor in our office for Post Completion OPT. This will be the advisor for your OPT group session. Thank you.

Student ID number (Peoplesoft number; 7 digits) \_\_\_\_\_

Surname (Last Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Given name (First name) \_\_\_\_\_

Payment Reason – Please check only one box:

Alumni Fee for Post Completion OPT: **\$100** / Name of OPT Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Alumni Fee for STEM OPT Extension: **\$200**

File Search/ Photocopy (for PR's & Alumni), also Letters and Alumni issuance of I-20: **\$10**

J-1 Student on Academic Training (AT) Fee: **\$100** (for 1<sup>st</sup> 18 months)

J-1 Student on Academic Training: **\$200** (for additional AT beyond 18 months)

**Please mail** your completed payment coupon and a check or money order payable to “University of Houston” to our office:

#### University of Houston

International Student and Scholar Services  
c/o Juanette Davis  
4465 University Drive, Suite N203  
Houston, TX 77204 – 3024

# 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" to the DSO

EVERY SIX MONTHS

starting from the date the 24-month extension begins. Update the Self-Report on ISSS's website and every time your personal or employment information changes.

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON  
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST  
International Student and Scholar Services  
Student Center North, N203, Houston, TX 77204-3024 Phone: (713) 743-5065 Fax: (713) 743-5079 [www.uh.edu/oisss](http://www.uh.edu/oisss)

**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**):

- o Reporting Date #1: \_\_\_\_\_ (This is the first day after your Post-OPT expires)
- o Reporting Date #2: \_\_\_\_\_ (6 months after date #1)
- o Reporting Date #3: \_\_\_\_\_ (6 months after date #2)
- o Reporting Date #4: \_\_\_\_\_ (6 months after date #3)
- o 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:

- o Any time there is a "material change" in the terms and conditions of the original I-983
- o Termination of practical training experience
- o 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.
- o Employer noncompliance

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

- o After 12 months of the STEM OPT start or from the start date of working for a company, whichever comes later, and;
- o 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](#).

**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 H1-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 ISSS at the time of application for any STEM OPT Extension. Form I-983 will be kept on record by ISSS for minimum 3 years and will not be mailed to USCIS..

Training plan can be found here:

<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/i983.pdf>

- ◆ Pages 1 – 4 must be completed, all areas filled out and have original signatures.
- ◆ 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 OPTX and/or the end of your employment.



# 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.
- ◆ 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
- 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

## Based on Prior Degree?

- Check “Yes” if your STEM OPT is based on a previously-obtained U.S. STEM degree, and is not the same degree upon which your current 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, and that is the degree upon which your current OPT is based.

### 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: <b>University of Houston</b>	Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned:	SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT (including 3-digit suffix): <b>HOU214F00110000</b>	
Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information: <b>Find on your I-20</b>		Student SEVIS ID No.:	STEM OPT Requested Period (mm-dd-yyyy): From: <b>Day after EAD card ends</b> To: <b>Stem OPT End date</b>
Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: <b>6 digit code on page 1 of I-20</b>			
Level/Type of Qualifying Degree: <b>Enter Bachelors Masters, Ph.D.</b>			
Date Awarded (mm-dd-yyyy): <b>Enter date degree was awarded. Prior degree must be within 10 years.</b>			
Based on Prior Degree? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Employment Authorization Number: <b>9 digit number on EAD card</b>			
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):			<b>Must be original not electronic!</b>
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.
- ❑ The Signature of Employer Official with Signatory Authority **MUST BE** original. **CANNOT** be electronic.
  - ❑ ISSS 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:	Suite:
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:		
<b>9-digit number</b>	A. Salary Amount and Frequency: _____		
Start Date of Employment (mm-dd-yyyy):	B. Other Compensation (Type and Estimated Amount or Value):		
<b>OPT Stem Start Date</b>	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.			
<b>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.</b>			
Signature of Employer Official with Signatory Authority (Sign in ink):			<b>Must be original not electronic!</b>
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 has to 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
- ◇ **Name of official**—This person will be recorded as the students 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>	
<b>Student Role:</b> 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.	
<b>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 students official job title.</b>	
<b>Goals and Objectives:</b> 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.	
<b>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.</b>	
<b>Employer Oversight:</b> 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.	
<b>Explain in detail how the employer will oversee and supervise the student.</b>	
<b>Measures and Assessments:</b> 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.	
<b>Explain in detail how the employer will evaluate the student. Also indicate if the student gaining new knowledge and skills.</b>	

# 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 original signature.

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

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

Use this space if needed for additional remarks.

## 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): \_\_\_\_\_

**Must be original not electronic!**

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-sorms>).

**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 ISSS.

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 ISSS.

Once the evaluation is complete both the student and employer must sign.

## 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 to ISSS by email to [isssohlp@central.uh.edu](mailto:isssohlp@central.uh.edu) Include your PSID

- ✓ Student Reporting Obligation Form
- ✓ Form I-983 Training plan
- ✓ Copy of latest I-20, and previous I-20 if the application is based on a previous STEM degree.
- ✓ Copy of passport(s) 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(s) (proof of STEM degree)

Mail the following to our office. The address is below:

**ISSSO**  
**University of Houston**  
**4465 University Drive, N203**  
**Houston, TX 77204 – 3024**

- ✓ A personal check or money order made payable to University of Houston for \$200 with the [Payment Coupon](#) (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.)

# OPT-X Application Timeline

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

If a 24-month 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, sign and date it, and include it with your OPTX application. Send a copy to ISSS to be placed in your file. **The original I-20 is for your use and records.**

Mail the completed application to the USCIS address provided by the Counselor, within 60 days of the issue date of the new I-20 **AND** before your current OPT expires. The 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.



# You can now file you OPTX application Online with USCIS

- ◆ Create an account with USCIS. See video below or click the link to [see their tutorial](#) for support.



# After you create your account...

- ◇ After you review the [USCIS.gov “How to Create a USCIS Online Account” webpage](#)
- ◇ Click on the box to file a form online.
  - ◇ Select “Application for Employment Authorization”
  - ◇ Review the Form Overview Page. This is important information about your request to the U.S. Government.
  - ◇ Continue with each step of the application

# You will be required to upload the following...

- ◆ DO NOT SUBMIT UNTIL you have uploaded all required documentation
  - ◆ I-94 record
  - ◆ Visa
  - ◆ Passport
  - ◆ Photos
  - ◆ OPT endorsed I-20
  - ◆ Previous CPT or OPT I-20s
  - ◆ Previous EAD cards
- ◆ PLEASE NOTE: If you submit your application and pay the fee to USCIS WITHOUT having proper information in the application, USCIS will deny your OPT application AND keep your fee.



# Tips for Filing the Online Application

- ◆ Complete the form in its entirety as best as you can. You can skip the questions that you are not required to answer.
- ◆ Your form will save in draft status for 30 days. If you start the application and realize you messed up your OPT dates or need to get new photos taken, you can take a break and complete the form later.
- ◆ If you're inactive for 15 minutes, you will be automatically logged out.
- ◆ Make sure you pick the correct eligibility category for your form! stem extension = (c)(3)(C)
- ◆ Make sure your files uploaded properly. Documents and photos can only be up to 6 MB and they only accept certain file types. If you are getting an error, check the error message and do what you need to do to correct it.
- ◆ REVIEW! Always review your application before you pay the fee. If you pay the fee and submit, you cannot make corrections.

# Benefits of Filing Online

- ◇ You will receive a receipt notice immediately
- ◇ All notices are posted to your account
- ◇ You have more control of the application
- ◇ Note: Students who file a paper application can also create a USCIS account. You can link your paper application and receipt notice to the online account!
  - ◇ ISSSO recommends that you file your OPTX application online, however you may still mail your application if you choose. Please see the next slide on what application materials to mail to USCIS.



# USCIS Mailing Checklist

Here is the list of documents that will be mailed to the Service Center listed on [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov):



- ✓ Form G-1145
- ✓ Filing Fee of \$410--You can pay by:
  - ✓ A check or money order – made payable to the “US Department of Homeland Security.”
  - ✓ Form G-1450– to pay by credit card you must fill out Form G-1450 and attach it to your application.
  - ✓ DO NOT SEND CASH
- ✓ Form I-765 (all pages)
- ✓ Two “passport” photos. Print your name and write your admission number (I-94#) on the back of each photo.
- ✓ A copy (NOT original) of page 1 and 2 of the new STEM Extension I-20 from with recommendation for STEM OPT on page 2. Be sure you have signed the document. This I-20 cannot be more than 60 days old when it arrives at USCIS or OPT will be denied!
- ✓ A copy of your I-94 record
- ✓ A copy Passport
- ✓ A copy of the most recent F-1 visa page in your passport (even if expired).
- ✓ A copy of any previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card(s) FRONT and BACK
- ✓ Proof of degree completion: Official transcripts confirming your degree and/or a copy of your diploma

**GET A TRACKING NUMBER FOR YOUR PACKAGE**

*Keep a copy of all documents you send for your personal record.*

# What do I do If I get an RFE?



**URGENT**

1. **Provide** ISSS 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 mailing instructions on the RFE. 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. Complete the OPT Self report at <http://www.uh.edu/oisss/opt-details/>
2. Send a copy of the front and back of your EAD card to [SEVIS@central.uh.edu](mailto:SEVIS@central.uh.edu). Include your student ID in the email.



# Maintaining Status During STEM Extension

## Reporting Requirements – 6 months Reporting

Update the Self-Report on ISSS's website **every 6 months** and every time your personal or employment information changes. Go to <http://www.uh.edu/oiss/opt-details/>, then click on **OPT SELF REPORT** and UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION!

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

### 12 Month Requirement

First evaluation

Required after completion of 12 months of STEM OPT period

### 24 Month Requirement

Final evaluation

Due at conclusion of 24-month STEM OPT period





# Maintaining Status During STEM Extension Reporting Requirements

- ◆ Students on OPT have 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.
- ◆ On OPT-X you have 5 business days to report changes in employment, ending or starting a new job. This includes updated I-983's.
- ◆ On October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018, SEVP will begin counting days of unemployment for each student. Once the function is fully implemented, any students breaching the max days of unemployment will be auto-terminated.



## Maintaining Status During STEM Extension Reporting Requirements Change of employer

If you change employer while OPTX is pending or approved you must send the following to [SEVIS@central.uh.edu](mailto:SEVIS@central.uh.edu).

- ✓ Have current employer complete a Final Evaluation (page 5 of I-983)
- ✓ Have new employer to complete a new I-983 (pages 1-4)
- ✓ Complete OPT Self report





# Travel on OPT-X

## What You Should Know

UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON** | ISSS

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 (endorsed on the 2nd page that is no older than six months upon return to the U.S. This signature can be given by either coming to our office, sending it to us, or asking for a reprint, [sevis@central.uh.edu](mailto:sevis@central.uh.edu) ).
- ✓ 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 leaving the country and for what reason



# Final Points



- After you have mailed your application and received your I-797 receipt notice from USCIS you can check the status of your application at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) click “check case status” and enter the receipt number provided on your receipt notice.
- 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 to our office via email at [sevis@central.uh.edu](mailto:sevis@central.uh.edu)
- The travel endorsement is valid for 1 year while you are on OPT/OPTX. It is recommended to be within 6 months and have the employment information 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 on the UH ISSS website <http://www.uh.edu/oisss/> Click Optional Practical Training—Click OPT Self Report
- 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 to [sevis@central.uh.edu](mailto:sevis@central.uh.edu)
- 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. Submit to [sevis@central.uh.edu](mailto:sevis@central.uh.edu)
- If you change employers while your OPTX is pending you must do the following:
  - Submit a final evaluation from previous employer to our office via email at [sevis@central.uh.edu](mailto:sevis@central.uh.edu)
  - Submit a new I-983 from new employer to our office via email at [sevis@central.uh.edu](mailto:sevis@central.uh.edu)
  - **Include the new company E-verify name and number**
- If you receive a Request for Evidence (RFE) contact our office immediately

# RESOURCES

**I-765 Filing Fee** <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>

**I-765 Form** -- <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>

**I-983** -- <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983.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 90 days:
- <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>

## **AUTHORIZATION**

- The USCIS has the final authority to grant OPT.

## **SOURCES**

- [www.studyinthestates.dhs.gov](http://www.studyinthestates.dhs.gov); [www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/stem-opt](http://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>