How to Apply For:

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

24-Month

STEM EXTENSION (OPT-X)

*Updated September 2020*
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 an 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 2nd STEM degree at a higher level than the one used for the first STEM OPT extension. The 2nd STEM OPT cannot be a continuation of the 1st STEM OPT.

- 2nd STEM degree meets all of the same requirements as with the 1st 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.
Documents Required by ISSS for OPT-X Recommendation I-20

EMAIL THE FOLLOWING TO ISSSOHLP@CENTRAL.UH.EDU

✓ Student Reporting Obligation Form
✓ I-765
✓ Form I-983 Training plan
✓ G-1145
✓ 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

✓ 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.)
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.
Form I-765

Complete a NEW I-765

This form must be completed in black in or typed.

Download for at [https://www.uscis.gov/i-765](https://www.uscis.gov/i-765)

Part 1. Reason for Applying
Select 1c.
Form I-765

1. Name
   - Use the name as it is written on your passport.
   - If your Given name and middle name are on the same line on your passport write both names on the Given Name (First Name) line
   - If you do not have a middle name SKIP this line. It is okay to write N/A
   - If you have a middle name write on 1c
   - Write your family (last) name first in all capital (uppercase) letters.
   - Write your first name with only the first letter capitalized.

2-4. Other Names Used
   - Write other names that you have had
   - If you do not have any other names SKIP and go to page 2
5. Your U.S Mailing Address

- If you live at the address you are using in #5b, leave the space #5a blank.
- If you do not live at the address you are using in #5b, in space #5a write the abbreviation “C/O” and then the name of the person who lives there. C/O is an abbreviation for “Care Of,” meaning this person will be responsible for getting your mail to you.
- It is okay to use a family member or friends address, just be sure to put their name in #5a.

**Remember:**

- This address determines the Lockbox to which you send the I-765 application.
- This address must be valid from the time you send the I-765 until the time you receive the EAD.
- Mail from USCIS cannot be forwarded.

6. Current mailing address

- Check YES or NO
- If you select YES move to #8 under Other Information
- IF you select NO complete #7a-#7d be sure to update your PeopleSoft with this address
Form I-765

8. Alien Registration Number
   • This is the USCIS# on the front of your EAD card

9. USCIS Online Account Number
   • Leave blank unless you have created an Online Account

10. Gender
    • Select the appropriate response (on your passport)

11. Marital Status
    • Select the appropriate response

12. Have you previously filed Form I-765
    • This should be Yes as you have applied for OPT.

13. Has the SSA ever officially issued a Social Security Card to you?
    • Select YES as you should have an SSN at this point.
    • #13b if you have a SSN number you will put here. **Leave this space black until after you documents are returned to you.** UH can not keep your SSN on file. SKIP 13b until after you receive your documents back from ISSSO.
    • Move forward to item #18
18. **Country of Citizenship/Nationality**
   - Write your country of citizenship in 18a.
   - If you are a dual citizen, you will use 18a and 18b to write both countries.

19. **Place of Birth**
   - Write the information in the relevant spaces.

20. **Date of Birth**
   - Use the U.S. style – month/day/year.
21. Information about your last arrival in the United States
   • 21a. I-94 Number
     o You can find this number on your I-94 print out or card
     o It will read Admission(I-94) Record Number
   • 21b Write the passport number of the most recently issued passport
     o If you have more than one passport write the number of the current/most recent
   • 21c Travel Document
     o If you have complete If you do not have skip and move to 21d
   • 21d Write the country that issued your most recent passport
   • 21e Write the expiration date of your most recent passport
     o If you have more than one passport use the most recent
     o Your passport must be 6 months into the future
     o If you have applied for a new passport and are currently waiting for the new passport to arrive then you will have to wait to complete this part and submit your application and supporting material at a later date.

22. Date of last arrival in to US
   • You can find this date on your I-94 under your admission number by most recent date of entry

23. Place of last arrival in the US
   • Select the airline in the US on the last time you traveled
   • You can find this in your visa where your visa was last stamped
   • You can find this on the I-94 website under travel history
   • If your I-94 record was updated the last time you entered the U.S., write the city where the border officer inspected your immigration documents and gave you the new card.

24. Immigration Status at your last arrival
   • You can write F1 or F1 student either is fine

25. Your current immigration status
   • You can write F1 or F1 student either is fine

26. SEVIS Number
   • You can find this number on your I-20 top left
27. Eligibility Category
   - WRITE (c)(3)(C)

28a. Degree and CIP Code
   - Write Degree level and the STEM eligible 6 digit CIP Code

28b. Write Employers name as listed in E-verify
   - You can get this information from your employers Human Resources Department

28c. Write Employers E-verify number
   - You can get this information from your employers Human Resources Department. This is not public information. Be sure to verify with you employer. This number should not be longer than 7 digits.

Move forward to page 4
Form I-765

PART 3—Page 4
- Select the appropriate box for applicant statement
- Complete numbers 3, 4, and 5

Read the Applicants Declaration and Certification
- Sign your name for 7a
- This must be an original signature, in blue or black ink.

Write the appropriate date
- In Month/Date/Year format the date of signature must be within 60 days of the day USCIS receives your application

NOTE: Read the Penalties section of the Form I-765 instructions before completing this section. You must file Form I-765 while in the United States.

Applicant’s Statement
NOTE: Select the box for either Item Number 1.a or 1.b. If applicable, select the box for Item Number 2.
1.a. [Checkbox] I can read and understand English, and I have read and understand every question and instruction on this application and my answer to every question.
1.b. [Checkbox] The interpreter named in Part 4, read to me every question and instruction on this application and my answer to every question in a language in which I am fluent, and I understood everything.

2. [Checkbox] At my request, the preparer named in Part 5 prepared this application for me based only upon information I provided or authorized.

Applicant’s Contact Information
3. Applicant’s Daytime Telephone Number
4. Applicant’s Mobile Telephone Number (if any)
5. Applicant’s Email Address (if any)
6. [Checkbox] Select this box if you are a Salvadoran or Guatemalan national eligible for benefits under the ABC settlement agreement.

Applicant’s Signature
7.a. Applicant’s Signature
7.b. Date of Signature (mm/dd/yyyy)

NOTE TO ALL APPLICANTS: If you do not completely fill out this application or fail to submit required documents listed in the Instructions, USCIS may deny your application.
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:

- 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.

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**6 digit code on page 1 of I-20**

**9 digit number on EAD card**

**Find on your I-20**

**Enter Bachelors Masters, Ph.D.**

**Enter date degree was awarded. Prior degree must be within 10 years.**

**Day after EAD card ends**

**Stem OPT End date**

**University of Houston**

**HOU214F00110000**

**Must be original not electronic!**
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.
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. 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.

Explain in detail how the employer will oversee and supervise the student.

Explain in detail how the employer will evaluate the student. Also indicate if the student gaining new knowledge and skills.
Form I-765  
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.*
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.

**LEAVE BLANK**

First evaluation--Required after completion of 12 months of STEM OPT period

**LEAVE BLANK**

Final evaluation--Due at conclusion of 24-month STEM OPT period
Use this form to request a text message and/or email when USCIS accepts your form.

Complete the bottom portion of the form.

You can find the form at https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/g-1145.pdf
Required Documents...

- Copy of Current unexpired passport and visa
- I-94 print out
- Job offer letter on company letterhead (include supervisor name, email and/or telephone number).
- A personal check payable to “University of Houston” for $200.* You must also prepare a check payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security for $550. DO NOT send this check to ISSS.
- A postage-paid label (for mailing package back to student, where student requests counselor to return package by mail).
How to Apply

Submit the following documents to ISSS by email to
isssohlp@central.uh.edu Include your PSID

- Student Reporting Obligation Form
- I-765
- Form I-983 Training plan
- G-1145
- 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)
- Self-stamped and addressed USPS mailing label (for ISSS to mail you back the I-20)

Mail the following to, the address to our office 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 (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, then make a copy 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.
Paying the Filing Fee

**Personal Check**

1. Write date month/year
3. Use numbers to show exact amount
4. Spell out dollar amount
5. In memo write “I-765 Filing Fee”
6. Sign the check
7. Do not write on the back
8. Make sure money is available

**G-1450 Form**

1. Type or Print in BLACK ink
2. Complete entire form. If you type the form Be sure to sign the in the designated space
3. Place form on the TOP of your application packet.

<<<Be sure to sign!!!
USCIS Filing Fee

- Currently USCIS Filing Fee is $410 until October 1, 2020. USCIS must receive your package on or before October 1, 2020 to pay the current filing fee.

- October 2, 2020, USCIS will increase the I-765 filing fee to $550. Any application filed on OR after October 2 will have to pay the new filing fee.

- To check the filing fee information visit [https://www.uscis.gov/i-765](https://www.uscis.gov/i-765)
Here is the list of documents that will be mailed to the Service Center listed on www.uscis.gov:

- Form G-1145
- Filing Fee of $410 (if filed by 10/01/2020) $550 (Effective 10/02/2020). 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?

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. 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/oisss/opt-details/](http://www.uh.edu/oisss/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.

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**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)*
- Reporting Date #3: **mm/dd/yyyy** ----> *(6 months after date #2)*
- Reporting Date #4: **mm/dd/yyyy** ----> *(6 months after date #3)*
- Reporting Date #5: **mm/dd/yyyy** ----> *(last day of OPT-Extension, 24months)*

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**UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON | ISSS**
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 26th, 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 your must send the following to 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

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 Gina McCready for a reprint, 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 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

- 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

- 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

- 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
  - Submit a new I-983 from new employer to our office via email at 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
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

- 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