24-month Extension of OPT for UMN STEM Degrees

24-Month STEM OPT Workshop

- In this workshop you will:
  - Learn the rules and requirements of requesting 24-Month STEM OPT authorization documentation
  - Learn the process for submitting your application to USCIS
  - Learn helpful tips and see FAQs
  - Learn what you will be required to do once your 24-Month STEM OPT has been approved
Overview

- F-1 students who receive science, technology, engineering, and mathematics degrees.
- 1) Request a recommendation from ISSS, and
- 2) apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The process takes 3-4 months.
- Students may be eligible for up to two lifetime STEM OPT Extensions

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS
Eligibility Requirements

▪ Must currently be in a valid period of post-completion OPT
  ▪ Not eligible to apply after your 12-month post-completion OPT EAD expiration date
▪ Have not accumulated 90 days of unemployment
▪ Report your employment information in the SEVP Portal

Eligibility Requirements

▪ Must have obtained a bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral degree from an educational institution that is accredited at the time of the application

z.umn.edu/accreditationsearch
Eligibility Requirements

- Must have obtained a degree in a STEM field as defined by Department of Homeland Security
- The qualifying STEM degree needs to be on DHS's STEM Designated Degree Program List at the time you submit your STEM OPT application to USCIS, not at the time you received your degree.
  
  z.umn.edu/stemfields

Eligibility Requirements

- May apply based on a previously earned STEM degree within the past 10 years (bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral degree) from a currently accredited U.S. educational institution
Eligibility Requirements

▪ Must have a job or job offer that is directly related to the student’s STEM degree

Example:

▪ F-1 student has B.S. in Civil Engineering, and M.A. in Urban/Regional Planning.
▪ Student is currently on OPT for the M.A., and is in a job that relates to both the Civil Engineering and Urban/Regional Planning degrees.
▪ Student could apply for the STEM extension based on the STEM B.S. degree and continue to work at the same job.
Eligibility Requirements  
- Employment -

- Job must be paid
- Working hours must be a minimum of 20 hours per week
- If you have multiple employers, each job must be at least 20 hours per week.

Eligibility Requirements  
- Employment/Employer -

- Employer must sign the Form I-983
- The employer who signs the Form I-983 must be the same as the employer who pays you and provides the practical training experience
- You may work for a start-up company, however, you may not sign the Training Plan yourself.
Staffing Agencies: Caution

• USCIS states: *Staffing and temporary agencies and consulting firms may employ STEM OPT applicants only if:*
  • they will be the entity that provides the practical training experience to the student, and
  • they have and maintain a bona fide employer-employee relationship with the student.

• Details: [z.umn.edu/stemopt](http://z.umn.edu/stemopt)

Eligibility Requirements

- Employment/Employer -

• Your employer must attest that they have sufficient resources and personnel available to provide appropriate training for you.
• Your employer must also attest that they are not replacing a full-time or part-time, temporary or permanent U.S. worker and that this employment opportunity will help you in reaching your training goals.
Eligibility Requirements
- Employer -

- Employer is enrolled in E-Verify
- Employer must have an employer identification number (EIN)

Second STEM OPT

- Students may be eligible for up to two separate STEM OPT extensions over the course of their academic career upon completion of two qualifying STEM degrees at different educational levels
  - Only eligible to apply for STEM OPT during post-completion OPT
Examples of Second STEM OPT

Example #1:
Most recent degree: MBA (non-STEM)
Previous degree: BS in Computer Science (STEM)

Example #2:
Most recent degree: MS in Electrical Engineering (STEM)
Previous degree: BS in Electrical Engineering (STEM)

APPLICATION TIMELINE
STEM OPT Application Timeline

- Your application must be received by USCIS prior to the end of your post-completion OPT EAD expiration date. You may not apply for 24-month STEM OPT extension after your post-completion OPT expires.

ISSS Processing Time

- It takes 10 business days to receive a new I-20 from ISSS once your application is complete
- It may take additional time if your I-983 is incomplete or has errors
APPLICATION PROCEDURES

STEM Degree

▪ Most recent STEM degree? *This is the most common STEM application.*
▪ Previous STEM degree? *This is rare.*
▪ *Reminder:* eligible STEM degrees must have been earned at an accredited U.S. college or university (not abroad)
STEP 1: Request a STEM OPT Recommendation from ISSS

1. Read the STEM OPT Information and Instructions
2. Complete the following required forms
   a) 24-month STEM OPT Student Request Form
      • Previous STEM degree: also complete Supplement Form
   b) Form I-983: Training Plan – Instructions
3. Email the required forms to isss@umn.edu
   a) Your materials will be forwarded to an ISSS adviser who will work with you to complete your request.

Send to USCIS: Online or Mail

• You will choose whether to submit your Form I-765 and STEM OPT application materials to USCIS online or through the mail.

• If you want an ISSS advisor to review your I-765, you should email a draft copy to isss@umn.edu with the other required forms.
Student Request Form

- Type of request:
  - Check appropriate box
    – A) most recent STEM degree (most common)
    OR
    – B) previous STEM degree (rare)

- Complete #1-9

Student Request Form

- Update your financial information for the next 24 months
- Is your employment your source of funding? If yes, write “OPT salary” and the amount of your annual salary.
Student Request Form

- Current EAD dates
  - STEM OPT begins immediately after current OPT ends
- Employer's name and address
  - Name of the company
  - Company address, even if you work remotely
- Your job title

Student Request Form

- Choose how you would like to receive your new I-20
- Read, sign and date
I-765: Your Choice

File online? OR File by mail?

Online:
- Instructions are in myUSCIS.gov
- Your eligibility category is c(3)(C) STEM Extension
- Your application is saved for 30 days

By mail:
- See ISSS instructions z.umn.edu/i765STEM
I-765: Your Mailing Address

- Your name must be written on the mailbox
- If you put someone else’s name in “In Care Of Name” on page 2 of the I-765, that person’s name must be written on the mailbox

I-765: Your Mailing Address

- If you move before you receive your EAD, you must change your address
  - In MyU, and
  - with USCIS
    - Filed online? Change address in myUSCIS
    - Filed by mail? Change address on Form AR-11

Mail from USCIS cannot be forwarded, even if you ask the US post office to forward your mail to another address.
Form I-983: Training Plan

▪ Fill out the I-983
▪ Detailed instructions and step-by-step tutorial are available on Study in the States “STEM OPT Hub” website
  - Instructions: z.umn.edu/i983instructions
  - Tutorial: z.umn.edu/i983tutorial

Form I-983: Frequently Asked Questions

▪ Where do I find the E-Verify number and/or EIN? Ask your employer.
▪ Where do I find the school SEVIS code? See page 1 of your I-20.
▪ What should I put down for DSO contact information? Write the name of the ISSS adviser who signed your OPT I-20.
Form I-983: Frequently Asked Questions

- Do I need to submit I-983 for every employer if I have multiple employers?

  Yes, every time you change or add employers, you need to submit a new Form I-983 to ISSS.

  [Link](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students-and-the-form-i-983)

- My employer says I need a new EAD to continue working. What do I do?

  Immigration regulations allow you to continue working for up to 180 days without receiving a new EAD as long as your application was timely filed (the receipt notice is proof of this). However, employer policy may differ from the regulations. You may tell your employer that ISSS advisors can explain the regulation if necessary.
Submit forms to ISSS

Email to isss@umn.edu:
- ISSS Student Request
- I-983
  - ISSS takes 10 business days to issue your I-20
  - Send your draft I-765 if you want ISSS to review
- While you are waiting for your STEM OPT I-20, begin working on Step 2

STEPS 2-5

See instructions for Steps 2-5 [here](#).

Continue with the following slides for more helpful filing tips and FAQs.
Submit to USCIS

As soon as you receive the new I-20 from ISSS, be ready to submit your application to USCIS.

And remember…

STEM OPT Application Timeline

Your application must be received by USCIS prior to the end of your post-completion OPT EAD expiration date. You may not apply for 24-month STEM OPT extension after your post-completion OPT expires.
Sending online?

- Make sure you have $410 available in your payment method
  - credit or debit card or bank account
- USCIS receives your application immediately

Sending by mail?

- Use Certified or Express Mail from USPS
- You may use a private carrier such as FedEx, UPS, etc.
Waiting for EAD

- In 3-4 months, you will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from a USCIS Service Center
- You may continue to work for up to 180 days without receiving a new EAD if your application is timely filed

After you receive your STEM OPT EAD
STEM OPT: Different Requirements

During STEM OPT, you must report these changes within 10 days:

- **Home address** (where you live)
- **Mailing address** (if different from home)
- **Telephone**, and
- **Employment information**

Details you need: [z.umn.edu/stemoptreq](z.umn.edu/stemoptreq)

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STEM OPT: Reporting Requirements

What do you report to ISSS?

- Validation reports **every 6 months**
  - Name, address, employment information
- Form I-983
  - Self-evaluations at **12 and 24 months**
  - *Changes* to employer or job
- Report within 15 days before/after
STEM OPT: Reporting Requirements

Where do you report to ISSS?

24-month STEM OPT Reporting Form:

z.umn.edu/stemoptreq

STEM OPT: Reporting Requirements

Set reminders and submit to ISSS:

- Validation reports (every 6 months)
- Self-evaluations (at 12 and 24 months)
- Job changes (as soon as the change occurs)

z.umn.edu/stemoptreq
STEM OPT: Reporting Requirements

Question: “What happens if I do not report my 6-month validation, Annual Self-Evaluations, or Job Changes to ISSS?”

Failure to report this information may result in loss of your STEM OPT status or other immigration benefits.

STEM OPT: Update MyU

To stay in contact with UMN and to receive tax information if you worked (or are working) at the U:

– Also update your Home address, Mailing address, and Telephone in MyU:

myu.umn.edu
STEM OPT: Additional Requirements

- Send the following to ISSS:
  - EAD card copy
  - Passport copy, if you change your name

Unemployment Limit

- During STEM OPT you are allowed an additional 60 days of unemployment in addition to the 90 days during post-completion OPT.

  \[ 90 + 60 = 150 \text{ days total} \]
Travel During STEM OPT

- **Required documents** (in addition to passport, I-20, and valid F-1 visa)
  - EAD card for STEM OPT
  - Job letter

  If any of the above items is missing, then you are assuming risk.

- I-20 travel signature is valid for 6 months

- [z.umn.edu/stemreq](https://z.umn.edu/stemreq)

Changing STEM OPT Employers

- If you change employers during STEM OPT
  - I-983 Final Evaluation (p. 5) signed by you and old employer
  - I-983 Training Plan (p. 1-4) completed and signed by you and new employer

- [z.umn.edu/stemreq](https://z.umn.edu/stemreq)
Ending STEM OPT

▪ When you complete your STEM OPT
  ▪ Submit your I-983 Final Evaluation to z.umn.edu/stemreq
  ▪ Also contact ISSS (isss@umn.edu) to tell us your plans.
    ▪ You may submit a Departure Form to ISSS
    ▪ ISSS advisers will update your SEVIS and UMN records

Employer Noncompliance

▪ If you believe that your employer is not complying with the terms and conditions of the regulations and Form I-983 instructions, you may report violations to the Department of Homeland Security.
  https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students-stem-opt-reporting-requirements
Employer’s Responsibility

▪ Review and sign student’s annual self-evaluation on Form I-983
▪ Report material changes to ISSS
  – EIN
  – Reduction in student compensation
  – Decrease in hours
  – Changes to the employer’s commitment
▪ Report loss of employment to ISSS

Conclusion of Workshop

This ends the STEM OPT workshop.

If you have additional questions, please contact ISSS:

iss@umn.edu
612-626-7100