

24- MONTH STEM OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING EXTENSION INSTRUCTIONS

THE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION, JUNIATA COLLEGE

Eligibility

To qualify for the 24-month STEM OPT extension, you must:

- **Be in F-1 status**
- **Be currently working in a period of post-completion OPT**
- **Have a bachelor's degree or higher degree in an [eligible STEM field](#)**
 - You *may* be eligible use a prior STEM degree earned in the U.S. for this requirement; to use a prior STEM degree, you must:
 - Have received your most recent degree (which does not need to be STEM-related) from a currently accredited Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified school in the U.S.
 - Have received your prior, qualifying STEM degree in the U.S. within 10 years of applying for the STEM OPT extension.
 - The qualifying STEM degree must be on the Department of Homeland Security's [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#) at the time you submit your STEM OPT extension application (rather than at the time you received the degree).
- **Have a job offer that meets the following requirements:**
 - The job is with an employer enrolled in the USCIS [E-Verify](#) program.
 - The job offers at least 20 hours of work per week
The job will provide formal training and learning objectives directly related to your qualifying STEM degree
- **Be able to complete the [I-983 Training Plan](#) with your employer**

Employment Requirements During the 24-month STEM OPT Extension

You must work at least 20 hours per week for an employer that a) participates in the E-Verify program and b) agrees to follow all the employer requirements in the 24-month STEM rule.

Unlike the 12 month OPT, volunteer/unpaid work or self-employment is not permitted under the 24 month STEM OPT Extension regulation.

When to Apply

Students with a STEM degree and currently in the 12-month OPT period:

- USCIS must receive your STEM OPT extension application ***before*** your current 12-month OPT EAD card expiration date.
- Apply as early as 90 days before your current 12-month OPT EAD card expiration date.
- Take into consideration:
 - The Center for International Education Staff needs a minimum of 10 business days for processing your new I-20.
 - Allow sufficient time to mail your application to USCIS for processing.

How to Apply

Students with a STEM degree and currently in the 12-month OPT period:

STEP 1: Report your Employment

Report your employment/training to the Center for International Education. We must update your SEVIS record before processing your STEM Extension request.

STEP 2: Complete and submit your STEM OPT Extension Application to the Center for International Education

1. Gather and complete the following documents
 - o Email international@juniata.edu with your intent to apply for STEM OPT Extension
 - o [I-983 Training Plan](#) (see [ISS Tips for Form I-983](#))
 - o [I-765 form](#) (to confirm that your employer is enrolled in E-Verify)
 - o If OPT extension is based on previous U.S. STEM degree not from UW, also submit:
 - Copy of previous U.S. Stem degree
 - Copy of I-20 issued for previous U.S. STEM degree
2. Submit your completed STEM OPT Extension application via email at international@juniata.edu. Your application will be reviewed and you will be issued a new, updated I-20 with a STEM OPT Extension recommendation printed on the back page.
3. Allow 10 business days for processing of your new I-20.
4. Provide a full address with phone number where your new I-20 can be mailed via UPS express mail.

STEP 3: Prepare your application

1. When you receive your new STEM OPT Extension endorsed I-20, sign at the bottom of page 1.
2. Gather the following documents
 - o Copy of Form I-20 with your signature and STEM Extension endorsement by your PDO/DSO (must be sent within 60 days of issuance)
 - o Form I-765 (Be sure to include your employer's name as listed in E-Verify and E-Verify Company Identification Number or valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number)
 - o Copy of your diploma (if your diploma only states the degree and not the program, include a copy of your official transcript with or without the raised seal).
 - o A copy of Form I-94 (which can be obtained at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>)
 - o A copy of your current EAD card (front and back)
 - o 2 passport-style photos. Lightly write your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo. (Review number 2. C on page 8 of the "Required Documentation" section of [USCIS photo instructions](#))
 - o \$410 check or money order payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" (Do not use a future date. Use the date that you signed the check. The date format for your check should be as follows: month/day/year)

STEP 4: Mail your application to USCIS:

Review the USCIS [mailing instructions](#) to find the correct Lockbox location.

Reporting Requirements During OPT STEM Extension Period

To maintain legal F-1 status during your 24-month STEM OPT authorization period, you must report the following information to the Center for International Education:

Every Six Months

Confirm to the Center for International Education:

- Legal name
- Residential or mailing address
- Employer name and address
- Status of current employment

You must report any changes to the above information, including loss of employment, within **10 days of the change**.

Every Year

You must submit an annual self-evaluation to the Center for International Education about the progress of your training experience. This self-evaluation must be signed by you and your employer in the [I-983 Training Plan](#).

Within 10 Days of the Following Changes

- Material changes to an existing I-983 Training Plan
- Change in employer
- Unemployment

Employer Noncompliance

If you believe your STEM OPT employer is not complying with the terms and conditions of the 24-month STEM OPT extension regulations, the Form I-983 instructions, and the completed Form I-983 on file with the Center for International Education, you may:

- Contact the Student and Exchange Visitor Program at the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) by following the instructions found on [ICE.gov](#).
- Report violations through this [Homeland Security Investigations tip submission form](#).

There are a number of enforcement and oversight mechanisms to help ensure compliance, including reporting requirements, employer site visits, periodic evaluation of a student's training and required notification of any material changes to or deviations from the Training Plan.

Please note that if you believe that your employer is not complying with the 24-month STEM OPT extension regulations and Form I-983 instructions, you should consider whether you are still meeting the eligibility requirements of STEM OPT Extension. A period of student unemployment, caused by an employer's failure to comply with program requirements, on its own will not affect your status. Please report changes in employment status and adhere to the overall unemployment limits.

Important Reminders

- A **NOTICE OF ACTION** should be mailed to you within two weeks of sending your application. This Notice of Action will tell you when USCIS has received your application and how long it will take to process.
Please give the CIE a copy of this notice.
- You can check the status of your case on-line by using the Receipt Notice on your NOTICE OF ACTION (in the top left corner.) Type in EAC and the numbers without dashes or spaces.
<https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp>
- The EAC will be mailed directly to the student at the address you provide on the application.
- The Center for International Education requires a copy of the Notice of Action and the Employment Authorization Card.

- You will be granted a total of twenty four months of practical training at the undergraduate level.
- Once application has been made, you cannot cancel the application for practical training if the Service Center has already made a decision.
- You SHOULD NOT leave the USA after the completion of studies until the EAC has been issued! You will need the EAC, a signed I-20 document, and a job offer letter to re-enter the US!
- The longer you wait, the longer it will take to process!

STEM Post- Completion Optional Practical Training Responsibilities

During the 24-month STEM OPT extension period, both the student and the employer are subject to ongoing reporting requirements:

Student reporting obligations

The student must submit to the DSO:

- The required six-month validation report
 - Must be submitted within 10 business days of each six-month validation due date
- Any changes to the following, within 10 days of the change:
 - Student's legal name, and mailing and physical addresses
 - When the student stops working for an employer
 - When the student starts working for a new qualifying employer
- Required self-evaluations
 - Must be submitted "no later than 10 days following the conclusion of the reporting period or conclusion of his or her practical training opportunity"
- When there has been a material change to the training plan described on the Form I-983 on file with the DSO, by submitting a modified Form I-983 to the DSO, "at the earliest available opportunity"

The employer must report to the DSO

- When a student is terminated or leaves employment, within 5 business days of the termination or departure.
- A shared obligation with the student to submit a modified Form I-983 when there has been a material change to the training plan described on the Form I-983 on file with the DSO, by submitting a modified Form I-983 to the DSO, "at the earliest available opportunity"
- **Beginning a new course of study or transferring U.S. schools automatically terminates OPT employment.**
- **Obtain a P/DSO's (someone in the Center for International Education) endorsement to travel every six months.**
- **Employment authorization is automatically suspended in the event of a strike or other labor dispute involving work stoppage at the place of employment [8 CFR 214.2(f)(14)].**

If you have any questions about STEM Extension OPT responsibilities please contact staff in the Center for International Education. More information can be found on the Study in the States website:

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-extension-overview>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE ON STEM EXTENSION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

I have read and understand my F-1 student status responsibilities while I am on STEM EXTENSION OPT.

Signature

Name (please print)

Today's date