

24-MONTH STEM OPT EXTENSION (STEM OPT) COVER SHEET

Follow the steps below to prepare your 24-Month STEM OPT extension application packet and to file your request to USCIS in a timely manner.

Read the Cover Sheet in full before filing your request to USCIS.

Step 1- Review the items you receive from the International Student Advisor for accuracy and understanding:

- Cover Sheet
- **New I-20** with the STEM OPT recommendation listed in page 2 along with your current OPT employers.

Step 2- File your completed STEM OPT application to USCIS in a timely manner.

- Submit the Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, up to 90 days before your current OPT employment authorization expires, and within 60 days of the date your designated school official (DSO) enters the recommendation for OPT into your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record.
- You may not apply for STEM OPT extensions during the 60-day grace period of post-completion OPT.
- There are two options to file the STEM OPT application to USCIS: mail filing or online filing. Choose **only one** of the filing options.
 - **Disclaimer:** Be advised that those filing online may be required to make a Biometrics appointment. The ISS advisor will have limited ability to assist you with the online application.

Step 3- Review important STEM OPT F-1 status reminders.

- Travel is **not recommended** while your application is in pending status. Review our website for additional [travel guidance](#).
- Continue to work for **up to 180 days** after the end of your Post-Completion OPT end date while the STEM OPT application is pending with USCIS, as long as you have filed for STEM OPT in a timely manner.
- Familiarize yourself with the [STEM OPT mandatory reporting requirements](#). You will be accountable to fulfill all reporting requirements from the day your application is filed to USCIS.
 - Report any changes to your contact information, and changes to your employment status within **10 business days** from any change.
 - Report mandatory requirements within 10 business days from the **reporting requirement due date**.
 - **Report** by confirming certain information in your [SEVP Portal](#), and submitting the [STEM OPT Employment and Address Update Form](#) with the necessary supporting documentation to the ISS office.
- You will have an additional 60 days of **unemployment time**, therefore you can have up to 150 unemployment days during your OPT STEM period only if you did not use the 90 days limit during OPT.
- Work for a minimum of 21 hours per week per employer, in a job that fits your STEM designated CIP code/major.
- Work for an employer who meets all the requirements established by [USCIS STEM OPT Employer Responsibilities](#).
- If at any time you have questions or need assistance, you can [meet with an International Student Advisor](#) for guidance. For additional information, please refer to the [DHS STEM OPT Hub](#).

Keep in mind that you are solely responsible for understanding STEM OPT regulations including but not limited to application process, application deadlines, reporting requirements, unemployment limitations, etc.

A. Assemble your application packet.

- [Form G-1145](#) E-Notification of Application.
- Current edition of [Form I-765](#) signed with a written signature, in black ink.
- Copy of your **newly issued STEM OPT I-20 properly signed by you and the DSO.**
- Copy of qualifying U.S. Degree with [STEM OPT Designation](#).
- Copy of official transcripts (for your qualifying U.S. Degree).
- Institution accreditation, **only if** this STEM OPT extension is based on a **previously earned** STEM degree.
- Job offer letter from an employer that registered with the [E-Verify Program](#).
- A money order, personal check or cashier’s check **for \$410**, made payable to: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- Two identical [U.S. passport style photos](#) no more than 30 days old.
- Copy of passport photo ID page with expiration date showing (valid for at least another 6 months).
- Copy of your most recent I-94 record. The I-94 record can be a copy of the front and back of the paper card, change of status I-797 Form or [Electronic I-94 Record](#).
- Copy of your F-1 Visa (Expired Visas are acceptable).
- Copy of any previously issued EAD’s front and back.

USCIS Filing Tips: Use this link to review the full list of recommendations to properly file a paper application to USCIS. Other recommendations include: include only single-sided copies, remove all staples, use only paper that is 8.5 X 11 in. In size.

B. Mail your application to the correct USCIS Lockbox

Eligibility Category 8 CFR 274a.12	To mail via U.S. Postal Service (USPS) use this address:	To mail via FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries use this address:
(c)(3)(C), 24-month STEM OPT extension	USCIS Attn: I-765 C03 P.O. Box 805373 Chicago, IL 60680-5374	USCIS Attn: I-765 C03 (Box 805373) 131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor Chicago, IL 60603-5517

C. Monitor your incoming USCIS mail by signing up for Informed Delivery by USPS

- Informed Delivery provides a digital preview of your mail and allows you to manage and track your packages scheduled to arrive soon.
- Sign up online at [Informed Delivery by USPS](#).

D. Track your OPT application with USCIS Case Status Online

- You will receive a **Receipt Notice of Action (Form I-797)** in the mail with your case number within a few week from filing.
- Use the case number to check the status of your application online at [Case Status Online](#).
- You should expect your **Employment Authorization Document (EAD)** to arrive by mail.
- Processing time may take an average of 90 days from your receipt date.
- Contact USCIS immediately if the correspondence you receive presents inaccurate information.

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STEM OPT_Online Filing Instructions

- A. Save your application documents, also known as “evidence”, in a valid format.
- Copy of your **newly issued STEM OPT I-20 properly signed by you and the DSO.**
 - Copy of qualifying U.S. College Degree with [STEM OPT Designation](#).
 - Copy of official transcripts for your qualifying U.S. Degree.
 - Institution accreditation, **only if** this STEM OPT extension is based on a **previously earned** STEM degree.
 - Job offer letter from an employer that registered with the [E-Verify Program](#).
 - 2x2 [U.S. passport style photo](#) of you, no more than 30 days old.
 - Copy of passport photo ID page with expiration date showing (valid for at least another 6 months).
 - Copy of your most recent I-94 record. The I-94 record can be a copy of the front and back of the paper card, change of status I-797 Form or [Electronic I-94 Record](#).
 - Copy of your F-1 Visa (Expired Visas are acceptable).
 - Copy of any previously issued EAD’s front and back.

[USCIS How to File a Form online](#): Use this link to review the full list of recommendations to properly upload evidence to your online application. Recommendations include: use files that do not exceed 6MB in size, do not encrypt or password protect files, use only these formats: PDF, JPG, or JPEG. If documents are in a foreign language, upload an English translation along with the original.

- B. Create your USCIS account.
- Go to [USCIS Sign Up](#) page to create your USCIS Online account.
 - Review [How to Create a USCIS Online Account](#) for specific instructions.
- C. Log in to your USCIS Account to start your application and upload your application evidence.
- In the welcome window click on “File a Form Online”, then click on “Start Form”.
 - Select the form you want to file: **Application for Employment Authorization (I-765)**
 - Read all information, disclaimers and acknowledgements carefully.
 - Select your appropriate eligibility category: **(c)(3)(C) STEM Extension**
 - Select your reason for applying: **Renewal of permission to accept employment**
 - Use the PDF I-765 form reviewed by your DSO to answer the I-765 questions.
 - Upload the required evidence for your eligibility category.
 - **Very important:** When prompted, upload your **new STEM OPT I-20**. This I-20 will serve as your Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status for the (c)(3)(C) eligibility category.
 - **Skip uploading the institution accreditation**, if your STEM OPT extension is based on your latest STEM degree.
 - You may use the “Additional Information” window to upload any additional evidence not previously uploaded to the application such as the **job offer letter**.
 - Have your form filing fee ready: \$410 dollars. You may pay with a withdrawal from a checking or savings account or with a debit or credit card.
 - **Review and Submit:** check your application responses for accuracy and review alerts.
 - Save your online request as a **draft** if you cannot complete it the same day.
 - **Pay for your request:** You will not be able to make changes to your online request after you pay.

Center for International Education
Office of International Students & Scholars

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D. Confirmation of online filing

- You will receive a **Receipt Notice of Action (Form I-797)** with your case number upon submitting your online request.
- You will have access to all case correspondence on your USCIS account.
- You can check your case status and update personal information on your [USCIS account](#).
- You may also use your case number to check the status of your application online at [Case Status Online](#).
- You should expect your **Employment Authorization Document (EAD)** to arrive by mail.
- Processing time may take an average of 90 days from your receipt date.
- Contact USCIS immediately if the correspondence you receive presents inaccurate information.