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**OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) 24-MONTH EXTENSION**  
**\* INFORMATION SHEET \***

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**Y ELIGIBILITY** (<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students-determining-stem-opt-extension-eligibility>)

- You have been approved for the initial 12-months of post completion OPT;
- You have had fewer than 90-days of unemployment while on OPT;
- Your primary major/field **as indicated on your I-20 form** is a STEM field; (<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf>)
- Your employer is enrolled in the E-verify program;
- You have a job or a job offer of at least 20-hours per week that is paid.
- Both the STEM OPT student and their STEM employer must prepare and sign a required Training Plan on Form I-983: <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/I-983.pdf> (instructions for the Form I-983 Training Plan instructions can be found here: <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/i983Instructions.pdf>)

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

Students who timely file an application for the 24-month OPT extension will be able to continue employment while the extension application is pending, until USCIS adjudicates the I-765 application, or for 180-days, whichever comes first.

F-1 students will now potentially be eligible for up to TWO separate periods of 24-month STEM OPT occurring after a separate and higher degree level from a U.S. institution is obtained. Example: Undergraduate 12-months OPT, plus STEM OPT, then a new graduate degree, 12-months of OPT, plus STEM OPT extension. Theoretically up to 6-years of STEM OPT work authorization is possible.

A *previous* STEM degree obtained from a U.S. institution can now be the basis of a STEM OPT extension if current employment is in a STEM field. Example: Undergraduate science degree. Student then obtains a new MBA degree. MBA student only eligible for 12-months of OPT, but if working in a STEM field MBA student can apply for 24-month STEM OPT extension based on previous undergraduate STEM degree.

*For students or faculty who wish to inquire further about whether a particular UMass academic degree program may be reconsidered to become STEM OPT eligible, please see the following Office of Institutional Research link: <http://www.umass.edu/oir/ir-resources/cip-code-stem-opt>. The IPO does not control the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code designations at UMass*

**Y APPLICATION TIME FRAME**

**USCIS recommends that you file for the STEM OPT extension as early as 90-days PRIOR TO YOUR CURRENT OPT END DATE. All applications must be received by USCIS before the ending date of your current 12-months of initial OPT.**

**Y APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

- 1) **Contact the IPO** ([ryam@ipo.umass.edu](mailto:ryam@ipo.umass.edu)) and request a Planning Tool\* for an initial 24-month STEM OPT application (if you are currently on your initial 12-months of post-completion OPT). \*The IPO will provide a separate [user's guide](#) to the Planning Tool.
- 2) Complete **Form I-765** <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf> – Fill out the form and then print, date & sign where indicated:
  - For question 20 on the I-765, enter (c) (3) (C).
  - For question 17, enter the name of the degree as shown on your I-20. Enter your employer's name as listed in E-verify and also your employer's specific E-verify identification number (your employer needs to provide you with this information)
- 3) Complete **Form I-983** (<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/i983Instructions.pdf>) signed by both your employer and the student.
- 4) Write a personal check for \$410 payable to **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**.
- 5) Complete the STEM OPT Planning Tool (see #1 above) and provide your STEM employment information and personal contact information, etc.
- 6) Obtain evidence of your degree in a STEM field. This can be an unofficial transcript (which must include

- your program of study), and/or a copy of your diploma which will state the degree level.
- 7) Obtain 2 passport-style photographs (for photo specifications see: <https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/general/photos/photo-composition-template.html>)
  - 8) Include copies of your photo information page from your valid passport, visa stamp page, **ALL** previously issued I-20 forms, your current EAD employment card and current I-94 record (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>)
  - 9) Submit by e-mail attachment the STEM OPT Planning Tool (Excel format), I-983, copy of your diploma, I-765, OPT address form (<http://www.umass.edu/ipo/sites/default/files/OPT%20Address%20Info%20Form.pdf>) and copy of \$125 receipt for OPT Extension I-20 processing fee ([https://quikpayasp.com/umass/commerce\\_manager/payer.do?orderType=IPO\\_1STEM\\_OPT](https://quikpayasp.com/umass/commerce_manager/payer.do?orderType=IPO_1STEM_OPT)) to IPO advisor Richard Yam at [ryam@ipo.umass.edu](mailto:ryam@ipo.umass.edu) and he will issue a new I-20 in **2 to 3 business days** with the STEM OPT extension endorsement.

Mail items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 listed above along with a copy of the NEW OPT extension I-20 which will be issued by the IPO to USCIS at the address based on your current residential location in the United States: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses#Lockbox%20Addresses>

If your employer changes while your OPT extension is pending, you must send an amended I-765 form with new E-verify #, referencing your pending USCIS receipt # to the USCIS facility address where you previously filed (see above). No fee required for this amendment.

**IT IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT THAT YOU READ AND REMEMBER THE FOLLOWING REGARDING STEM OPT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:**

- **It is the individual student's responsibility to report STEM OPT participation every 6-months to the IPO, even if there are no changes to your employment information or local address.**
  - An updated "Self-Evaluation" on form I-983 is required at the end of any employment and/or at the 12 and 24-month dates from the start date of your STEM OPT extension.
  - **If your employer has changed, your employer's Employer Identification Number (EIN) changes as a result of corporate restructuring, your salary is reduced or if there is a significant decrease in the amount hours worked per week YOU MUST contact the IPO, update form I-983 and send it to the IPO immediately.**
  - **The IPO needs a valid and frequently read e-mail address from you to remain in communication throughout your STEM OPT duration.**
  - The Department of Homeland Security has indicated that **failure to provide any of the reporting requirements mentioned above will result in the automatic termination of your SEVIS immigration record.** The IPO will not take responsibility for a student's failure to update information accordingly and to adhere to the considerable new STEM OPT reporting requirements.
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- **Travel during OPT Extension:** International travel for personal and professional reasons while employed on OPT Extension should be routine with the following: your EAD work document, valid passport, valid F-1 visa, valid I-20 form with travel signature obtained within the past 6-months, and evidence of appropriate OPT employment (such as a letter from your employer and/or pay statement/stub.

**Additional STEM OPT resources:**

**Employers & the Form I-983:**

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/employers-and-the-form-i-983>

**Instructions to the Form I-983:**

<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/i983Instructions.pdf>

**Study in the States information and video tutorial (US government site):**

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

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