STEM OPT Workshop

- STEM OPT Eligibility
- STEM OPT When to Apply
- STEM OPT Application Process
- STEM OPT Reporting Requirements

(updated 8/3/2022)
24-Month STEM OPT Extension Eligibility

- You are currently on 12 months of POST-COMPLETION OPT.
- You have had fewer than 90 days of unemployment while on POST-COMPLETION OPT.
- Your primary major/field as indicated on your I-20 form is a STEM field on this list.
- Your employer is enrolled in the E-verify program and has an EIN (Employer Identification Number). (E-verify and an EIN are not the same thing so you will need two different numbers).
- You have a job or a job offer of at least 20 hours per week that is PAID and related to your degree.
- Eligible for two STEM extensions in a lifetime, i.e., Bachelors and Masters, Masters and PhD, Bachelors and PhD.
- A previous STEM degree obtained from a U.S. institution can be the basis of a STEM OPT extension if current employment is in a STEM field.
When to Apply?

- 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 end date of your current OPT EAD.
- USCIS must receive your STEM OPT application no later than 60 days from the issuance of your most recent STEM OPT I-20 form.
Application Process

- See the IPO website for more information on STEM OPT
  - STEM OPT I-20 Request E-Form and application process
  - I-983 Training Plan and common errors that lead to IPO processing delays
  - Reporting Requirements
  - I-20 Reprints while on STEM OPT
  - Changing your status
- IPO issues new STEM OPT I-20
- You submit complete packet to USCIS (do not submit the STEM OPT application without the STEM OPT I-20 from the IPO)
  - Approx. 3 to 4 months processing time
  - May continue employment while STEM OPT is pending for 180 days
No STEM OPT Receipt yet? No Problem!

• If your OPT is expiring soon and you have applied to STEM OPT, please note that current F-1 regulations state that STEM OPT must be timely filed in order to continue working. F-1 regulations do not require a USCIS receipt or that the case be in pending status.

• USCIS states that the expired OPT EAD plus your updated I-20 with STEM OPT endorsement from the IPO should be sufficient in order to update your employer’s I-9 work authorization paperwork.

• The IPO recommends that you discuss this with your employer’s Human Resources office or other hiring authority if your initial 12-month OPT is expiring soon.
Two Submission Options

• Mail

• Online
  • Basic information about applying online can be found [here](#). The IPO cannot provide assistance with the online application. Technical issues should be resolved with USCIS.
  • Differences with online submission: I-765 done online, payment online, documents uploaded, mailing time eliminated

• How you choose to submit results in a slightly different application process with USCIS. See our website for the documents needed and the different submission processes.
  • You do NOT need to mail in the I-983 to USCIS. You should retain a copy of your I-983 for your records.

• Remember—DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR STEM OPT APPLICATION TO USCIS UNTIL YOU HAVE THE STEM OPT I-20 FROM THE IPO
# Mailing to USCIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USCIS Chicago Lockbox</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Postal Service (USPS):</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO Box 805373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, IL 60680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attn: I-765 C03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, IL 60603-5517</td>
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*If you mail your application to the wrong lockbox, USCIS will transfer your application to the correct location. There will likely be a delay in your receipt processing.*
USCIS PROCESSING TIMES

Approximately 3 to 4 months (90-120 days)

Monitor your pending case here:

https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do
STEM OPT Reporting Requirements

- Any residential address, email address, or phone number changes, please update SPIRE.
- From the start date of your STEM OPT, you will need to verify your employer and residential information every 6 months. i.e., 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, 24 months with the IPO.
- You will also need to update the IPO with material employment changes on the I-983

- Review the STEM OPT Reporting Requirements online for more detailed information

The Department of Homeland Security has indicated that failure to provide any of the reporting requirements mentioned above can result in the automatic termination of your SEVIS immigration record and corresponding F-1 immigration status. The IPO will not take responsibility for a student’s failure to update information accordingly and to adhere to these considerable STEM OPT reporting requirements.
Cap Gap Provision (STEM OPT and H-1B)

- STEM OPT work authorization will be automatically extended until September 30 for an F-1 student who has a timely-filed H-1B petition requesting change of status and an employment start date of October 1.
- Student must have employment authorization through STEM OPT beyond April 1 to be eligible.
- The “Cap-Gap” extension automatically terminates upon rejection, denial, or revocation of the H-1B petition filed on the student’s behalf.
- Request a Cap-Gap I-20 using the I-20 Reprint E-Form on the STEM OPT website.
QUESTIONS? Please contact your IPO advisor listed here: https://www.umass.edu/ipo/iss/ipo-advisors.