OPT STEM Extension
Overview

- Introduction to STEM OPT
- Application process
- Maintaining status
- Reporting requirements
- After STEM OPT
What is OPT STEM extension?

- Benefit of F-1 status for certain science, technology, engineering or math degree holders
- Extension of initial OPT by 24 months for a total of 36 months
- Job must be related to STEM-eligible **major**
You are eligible to apply for the STEM extension if:

- You are currently on post-completion OPT.
- You are working in a paid position related to your STEM-qualifying major.
- Your employer is registered with E-verify employment verification system.
- Your position is more than 20 hours per week.
STEM extension based on previous degree

You may be eligible for a STEM extension based on a previously earned degree if you meet the following criteria:

- Your degree must be earned from a currently accredited, SEVP-certified school. You are responsible for providing documentation that the school is accredited.
- You must currently be on OPT for your most recently awarded degree (current degree does not need to be STEM eligible).
- The prior degree must be at the bachelor’s level or higher and have been conferred within 10 years from the date you submit your application to USCIS.
- The prior degree must be on the current STEM designated degree programs list at the time of application.
- The employment must be related to the previously earned STEM degree.
Application process
Application: Three step process

**Step 1:** Gather and complete required documents

**Step 2:** Submit online request through myStatus

**Step 3:** File USCIS application online and wait

-OR-

**Step 3:** Mail application to USCIS and wait
Step 1: Gather and complete paperwork

- I-983
- I-765
- Copy of current OPT I-20 (do not staple documents)
- Copies of passport, visa, I-94 and any previous EAD cards
- $150 OPT STEM extension processing fee
  > Credit/debit card payable in myStatus
Step 1: Gather and complete paperwork

- Copy of diploma
- Documentation of complete employment history while on OPT (for example, copies of previous job offer letters)
- Letter from employer confirming employment status related to STEM degree, name and title of supervisor, and employer contact information
I-983

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) Optional Practical Training (OPT)

SECTION 1: STUDENT INFORMATION (Completed by Student)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):</th>
<th>Student Email Address:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of School Recommending STEM OPT:</th>
<th>Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Missouri</td>
<td>KAN214F00635000</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information:</th>
<th>Student SEVIS ID No.:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International student adviser name</td>
<td>See I-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N52 Memorial Union</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia, MO 65211</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (OP) Code:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level/Type of Qualifying Degree:</th>
<th>Date Awarded: (mm-dd-yyyy)</th>
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Based on Prior Degree?  □ Yes  □ No

Employment Authorization Number: USCIS # printed on EAD card

<table>
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<tr>
<th>STEM OPT Requested Period: (mm-dd-yyyy)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From:</td>
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<tr>
<td>To:</td>
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I-765 Online

Welcome to your USCIS Account
Select what you want to do
- Edit My Profile
- Login to a USCIS Service
  - my USCIS: Apply for immigration benefits, find tools and resources to assist in preparation for naturalization, and search for doctors in your local community.
  - FIRST: Submit, manage, and receive Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.
  - myE-Verify: Confirm your records for employment eligibility, track E-Verify or Self-Check case status, and protect your identity by locking your Social Security Number (SSN).

Not sure what service you need? Start at USCIS.gov.
Eligibility code: (C) (3) (C)
After completing the questions, **DO NOT** submit to USCIS. Download the draft snapshot & submit to ISSS for review.
Filing the I-765 electronically

> Complete form at uscis.gov/i-765
> Select ‘view draft snapshot’
> Upload draft I-765 to myStatus for international student adviser review
Step 2: Submit OPT STEM extension request to ISSS

- Submit request in myStatus
  - Read instructions
  - Read STEM OPT fee information
  - Complete questionnaires
  - Complete STEM OPT acknowledgement

- Submit documents from step 1 in-person or upload to myStatus
  - Pay $150 STEM processing fee in myStatus
Step 2: Receive documents from ISSS

- Processing time for International Student and Scholar Services takes up to five business days after all required documents are submitted.

- Receive documents from International Center:
  - New I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation
  - Pre-paid FedEx express mailing envelope (if applying by mail)
  - Any documents submitted in-person

- Before mailing/submitting your application, please let your international student adviser know if you need to make any changes.

- If you are no longer living in Columbia, shipping instructions will be provided to you.
Step 3: Submit application to USCIS electronically

- Payment for $410
- Two passport-style photographs (taken recently)
- I-765 questionnaire
- Copy of new STEM OPT I-20
- Copies of previous OPT I-20
- Copies of I-94, visa, passport, any previous EADs
Step 3: Mail application to USCIS

- Check or money order for $410 payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”
  > For credit card payment, include Form G-1450
- Two passport-style photographs (taken recently)
- I-765 (original, signed and dated)
- Copy of new STEM OPT I-20
- Copies of most recent OPT I-20
- Copies of I-94, visa, passport, any previous EADs
- G-1145 form (recommended)
I-765 Online

I-20, Certificate Of Eligibility For Nonimmigrant Student Status

Upload a copy of the Form I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status endorsed by the Designated School Official (DSO). For the (C)(3)(B) eligibility category, your DSO must have entered the recommendation for OPT into your SEVIS record within 20 days of you submitting Form I-765. If you fail to do so, we will deny your OPT request. For the (C)(3)(C) eligibility category, the Form I-20 must have been endorsed by the DSO within 60 days of submitting Form I-765.

File requirements

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPEG, PDF, TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator's certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 64KB per file

$410 application fee paid through Pay.gov

Upload OPT Recommendation I-20
That section is not required. The institution accreditation is not required for the STEM OPT request. It is only required if the STEM OPT request is based on a prior earned degree, not the most recent degree.

Upload evidence that the institution that granted your STEM degree is currently accredited by the U.S. Department of Education and certified by the Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP), if this STEM OPT extension is based on a previously earned STEM degree.
OPT STEM extension timeline

24-month employment period

Grace period

90-day application window

Initial OPT end date

STEM OPT End Date

90 days before

Earliest date to apply for STEM OPT Extension

60 days after

Deadline to transfer, start a new program, change status or exit the U.S.
After you apply

- You will receive a receipt in the mail two to three weeks after your application is received by USCIS.
- Check the status of your application through the USCIS website, using “IOE” number.
- International student adviser cannot contact USCIS on your behalf.
# USCIS decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approved</th>
<th>Rejection/denial</th>
<th>Request for evidence</th>
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| Yay! Congratulations! | ▪ **Application**  
  - Received more than 90 days before program end date  
  - Received after initial OPT end date  
  - Received more than 60 days after OPT recommendation  
  - I-765 not signed/box not checked  
  ▪ **Old or previously used photos**  
  ▪ **Check**  
    - Wrong date, filled incorrectly, not signed, not in your name | RFE  
More information needed to make a decision |
Timing tips

- Application must be received by USCIS before initial OPT ends
- Mail or submit online application within a timely manner
- As long as your OPT STEM extension application has been received by USCIS and is pending, you can continue working up to 180 days beyond your initial OPT end date with the STEM OPT employer
Maintaining F-1 status
Maintaining F-1 status on STEM OPT

- Employment must be paid
- Employer must be registered with E-verify
- Must work more than 20 hours per week
- Can switch employers
- Can work for multiple employers, but each job must be more than 20 hours per week
- Can take part-time incidental courses, but cannot start another academic program
- No more than 150 days of total unemployment (this includes whatever you have already used of the 90 days of unemployment allowed during initial OPT)
Reporting requirements
Reporting requirements

Update myStatus within 10 days of:

> Moving to a new address

> Finding employment or switching employers
  ▪ Must include a new I-983 which corresponds to new employment opportunity

> Ending employment
  ▪ Must include a completed I-983 “Final Evaluation” section for your recently-ended position

> Any material changes to, or deviations from, your formal training plan that was initially reported on the I-983
Six-month reporting

- You must report your employment to International Student and Scholar Services through myStatus every six months while you are on your STEM extension, even if there are no changes.
- These can be completed within your original STEM extension request in myStatus.
- You will receive email reminders from SEVP in advance of these deadlines.
- Failure to report may result in SEVIS record termination.
Six-month reporting

At 12 and 24 months, you must also submit completed self-evaluations in myStatus
STEM reporting timeline

- **6 months**
  - Verify address and employment

- **12 months**
  - Verify address and employment AND submit an I-983 “Evaluation on Student Progress”

- **18 months**
  - Verify address and employment

- **24 months**
  - Verify address and employment AND submit an I-983 “Final Evaluation on Student Progress”
After STEM OPT
60-day grace period

- Leave the United States
- Continue your studies at Mizzou
- Transfer your SEVIS record to a different school
- Change to another visa status

If you are not sure which option is best for you, meet with an international student adviser to discuss your situation.
Questions?

- International Student and Scholar Services website: international.missouri.edu/isss
- Advising sign-up: international.missouri.edu/isss/advising/walkin-advising/
- Contact your ISSS adviser: international.missouri.edu/isss/advising/people/