

STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) 24-Month Extension

Information and Application Procedures



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This packet explains eligibility, deadlines, application procedures, reporting requirements, and the Drury request process for the 24-month STEM OPT extension. It is intended to replace earlier standalone Drury handouts about STEM OPT procedures and online filing.

This packet provides general information only and is not legal advice. Students are responsible for the accuracy, completeness, and timely filing of Form I-765 and all supporting documents.

Overview

The STEM OPT extension allows certain F-1 students who are currently in a valid period of post-completion OPT to request an additional 24 months of employment authorization if they meet federal eligibility requirements. It is governed by DHS regulations and requires a new Form I-20 with a STEM OPT recommendation before the student files Form I-765 with USCIS.

A STEM OPT extension application is separate from the initial post-completion OPT application. It requires a completed Form I-983 Training Plan, a qualifying employer, and ongoing reporting obligations.

Eligibility

To qualify for the STEM OPT extension, the student must:

- Be in valid F-1 status and currently approved for post-completion OPT.
- Have earned, or be applying based on, a qualifying STEM degree from an accredited, SEVP-certified U.S. institution of higher education whose CIP code appears on the DHS STEM Designated Degree Program List.
- Have a paid position of at least 20 hours per week with each STEM OPT employer.
- Work for an employer that is enrolled in E-Verify and has a valid EIN.
- Have a bona fide employer-employee relationship; self-employment is not permitted for STEM OPT.
- Submit a completed Form I-983 Training Plan to the DSO before the DSO recommends STEM OPT in SEVIS.

Important deadlines

USCIS must receive the STEM OPT Form I-765 before the student's current post-completion OPT EAD expires and within 60 days after the DSO enters the STEM OPT recommendation in SEVIS and issues the STEM OPT I-20.

The 24-month STEM OPT extension begins the day after the expiration of the student's standard post-completion OPT. If the I-765 is timely filed and still pending when standard OPT ends, the student may continue working for up to 180 days after the post-completion OPT end date while the STEM OPT application is pending.

Drury application procedure

- 1 Confirm with your employer that the position meets the eligibility requirements above.
- 2 Complete Form I-983 with your employer.
- 3 Submit your STEM OPT request materials to International Support Services (ISS).
- 4 Wait for ISS to review your request, confirm eligibility.
- 5 Receive your STEM OPT-recommended Form I-20.
- 6 File Form I-765 with USCIS within the deadlines above.

Documents needed for ISS review

Submit the following to ISS:

- Completed Form I-983 Training Plan.
- Copy of current post-completion OPT EAD card, front and back.
- Copy of passport identification page, and extension page if applicable.
- Copy of most recent Form I-94.
- Copy of diploma and/or official transcript for the STEM degree.
- If applying based on a previously earned STEM degree, documentation showing institutional accreditation and SEVP certification for the qualifying school and degree. Contact ISS for more details.
- Any additional Drury request form or acknowledgment required by ISS.

File Form I-765 with USCIS

After ISS issues your STEM OPT-recommended Form I-20, file Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, with USCIS. For the STEM OPT extension, select eligibility category **(c)(3)(C)**.

Students may file online through a USCIS online account or by paper filing if permitted by current USCIS instructions. USCIS may change filing fees, evidence requirements, filing locations, and form instructions. Always use the current USCIS instructions at the time of filing.

FILING FORM I-765 ONLINE

To file online, create or sign in to your [USCIS online account](#). Start **Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization** and select:

- **Eligibility category:** (c)(3)(C) — STEM Extension.
- **Reason for applying:** "Initial permission to accept employment." STEM OPT is a different eligibility category from standard post-completion OPT, so do not choose the renewal option on that basis alone.

Complete the application carefully using information from your passport, most recent Form I-94, current post-completion OPT EAD, current STEM OPT I-20, and degree documents.

ONLINE FILING EVIDENCE

When filing online, students should be prepared to upload:

- A recent digital U.S.-style passport photo taken within the last 6 months.
- Most recent Form I-94.
- Passport identification page, plus extension page if applicable.
- Current post-completion OPT EAD card, front and back.
- STEM OPT I-20 issued within 60 days of filing.
- Diploma and/or official transcript for the STEM degree.
- Prior-degree accreditation and SEVP documentation, if applying based on a previously earned STEM degree.

IMPORTANT Before uploading the STEM OPT I-20, confirm that the program information and STEM OPT recommendation are correct and sign the student attestation on page 1.

Ongoing responsibilities

STEM OPT students must keep employer and address information accurate and report changes as required. The current Drury handout instructs students to report address changes within 10 days and changes of employer by email and through the SEVP Portal.

Continuing employment while STEM OPT is pending

If USCIS receives your properly filed STEM OPT Form I-765 before your current post-completion OPT EAD expires, you may continue qualifying employment for up to 180 days after the EAD expiration date while USCIS processes the application, or until USCIS makes a decision, whichever occurs first. Your employment must continue to meet STEM OPT requirements, including a paid position of at least 20 hours per week with an E-Verify employer and a completed Form I-983.

WHEN IT DOES NOT APPLY Do not begin a new STEM OPT position or continue working after your post-completion OPT EAD expires unless USCIS received your properly filed STEM OPT extension application before the EAD expiration date. You must have an OPT-recommended STEM I-20 before filing and must meet all STEM OPT employment requirements.

Students on STEM OPT are also subject to additional federal reporting obligations, including validation reporting and evaluations on Form I-983.

Travel

Before traveling internationally, students should review their current documents and consult ISS about reentry documentation and timing.

Helpful links

- [USCIS Form I-765](#)
- [Form I-983](#)
- [DHS STEM Designated Degree Program List](#)
- [Department of State Passport Photo Guidance](#)
- [Higher Learning Commission Directory](#)
- [USCIS Online Account](#)
- [Form I-983 Instructions](#)
- [Retrieve Your Most Recent Form I-94](#)
- [SEVP School Search](#)

CONTACT YOUR DSO

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FORM

Drury STEM OPT Request and Student Acknowledgment

Complete this section and submit it to International Support Services (ISS) using the process listed above.

1 Student information

FULL LEGAL NAME

DRURY ID

SEVIS ID

DATE OF BIRTH

PHONE NUMBER

EMAIL ADDRESS

CURRENT ADDRESS

2 Current OPT information

CURRENT POST-COMPLETION OPT START DATE

CURRENT POST-COMPLETION OPT END DATE

CURRENT EAD CARD NUMBER

CURRENT DEGREE LEVEL

CURRENT MAJOR / PROGRAM

CIP CODE LISTED ON FORM I-20

3 Basis for STEM OPT request

Check one:

- ☐ Applying based on current Drury STEM degree.
- ☐ Applying based on a previously earned U.S. STEM degree.

If applying based on a previously earned degree:

DEGREE LEVEL

MAJOR / PROGRAM

INSTITUTION

DEGREE CONFERRAL DATE

School accreditation evidence attached

☐ Yes ☐ No

SEVP certification evidence attached

☐ Yes ☐ No

4 Employer information

EMPLOYER NAME AS LISTED IN E-VERIFY

E-VERIFY COMPANY OR CLIENT ID

EMPLOYER EIN

JOB TITLE

WORKSITE ADDRESS

START DATE

END DATE

HOURS PER WEEK

SUPERVISOR NAME AND TITLE

SUPERVISOR EMAIL AND PHONE

5 Required documents checklist

Attach the following, as applicable:

- ☐ Completed Form I-983 signed by student and employer.
- ☐ Copy of current OPT EAD card, front and back.
- ☐ Copy of passport identification page.
- ☐ Copy of most recent Form I-94.
- ☐ Copy of STEM degree diploma and/or official transcript.
- ☐ Documentation for prior STEM degree, if applicable.

6 Student certification

By signing below, the student confirms:

- The information provided in this request is true and complete.
- The employment is directly related to a qualifying STEM degree.
- The employer participates in E-Verify and meets STEM OPT employer requirements.
- The student understands that STEM OPT is not granted by Drury; USCIS must approve Form I-765.
- The student understands that the STEM OPT application must be filed before the current OPT EAD expires and within 60 days of the DSO's STEM OPT recommendation in SEVIS.
- The student understands ongoing reporting and Form I-983 obligations during STEM OPT.
- The student understands that failure to comply with federal reporting rules or Drury reporting instructions may affect F-1 status.

STUDENT SIGNATURE

DATE

ISS USE ONLY Do not write below this line

☐ I-983 reviewed.

☐ STEM degree eligibility verified.

☐ E-Verify information reviewed.

DATE REQUEST RECEIVED

ELIGIBILITY REVIEWED BY

SEVIS RECOMMENDATION DATE

STEM OPT I-20 ISSUED DATE

ADDITIONAL NOTES
