UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA
INTERNATIONAL ADVISING

Optional Practical Training - STEM

Steps to Apply for OPT

Students who received a degree in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) included on the STEM Designated Degree Program List may apply for a one-time 24-month extension of OPT. Students must currently be in post-completion OPT to apply for the extension. Employers must be enrolled in the USDHS E-Verify program. Applications must be received at USCIS before the expiration date on the OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card and may be submitted up to 120 days prior to the post-completion OPT end date. Applicants who file on time, before the expiration date on the OPT EAD card, may continue to work after the expiration date of the card for up to 180 days while the extension request is pending.

1) Complete Form I-983 Mentoring and Training Program with your employer.
2) Obtain all documentation listed below
3) Turn in your documents (except your check) to the International Programs front desk. If you are outside of the Omaha metro, email an international advisor regarding how to complete this process.
4) An international advisor will review your documents and, if approved, issue a Form I-20 recommending the STEM OPT extension.
5) We will give your documents back to you in a pre-addressed envelope to mail to USCIS (don't forget to include your check!).

Required documentation with each application:

❑ Form G-1145, e-Notification of receipt available from uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/g-1145.pdf
❑ **Official** transcript showing completion of coursework
❑ $410.00 – Fee can be paid by a cashier's check, money order, or a personal check made payable to "U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security"
❑ A copy of your SEVIS I-20 updated by an international student advisor recommending the 24-month extension of OPT.
❑ A copy of your current OPT EAD
❑ Form I-765 available from **uscis.gov/i-765**. The answer to # 16 is (c) (3) (C)
❑ A copy of your I-94 Departure Record printed from **https://i94.cpb.dhs.gov**
❑ A copy of the U.S. visa in your passport
❑ Two pictures **taken within the last 30 days** (see **important** specifications on pg. 2)
❑ A copy of the ID page in your passport
❑ Form I-983 signed by you and your employer. Available from **tinyurl.com/gwoc8a7**
   NOTE: Form I-983 will not be returned to you. Form is kept for INPR records.

Ideal size, background, and pose

PHOTOS

Photos should be in the standard passport size 2 X 2 inches and the standard, full frontal face position taken from slightly above the top of the hair to the middle of the chest. Photos should be in color with a white background; taken within the past 30 days; unmounted; printed on thin paper; glossy; and unretouched. Your head should be bare unless you are wearing a headdress as required by a religious order to which you belong. Lightly print your family name on the back of each photo in pencil.

Important Information to know:

➢ **Immigration regulations require employers to report to the Designated School Official (DSO) within five (5) business days any of the following changes:**
   o Termination of employment
   o Any material changes or deviations from the training plan on the I-983
   o Non-compliance of the training plan by the student
➢ **Immigration regulations require students to report to the Designated School Official (DSO) within 10 days any of the following changes:**
   • Legal name change
   • Change in residential or mailing address
   • Termination of employment
   • Change of employment (requires completion of a new I-983)
   • Any material changes or deviations from the training plan on the I-983
   • Non-compliance of the training plan by the employer
➢ **Every six months, the student must report to the international student advisor confirming the information listed below, even if there are no changes. This requirement to report continues if the student's 24-month STEM extension is extended further by the automatic cap-gap extension.**
   • Full legal name
   • Current mailing and residential address
   • Name and address of current employer
   • Date the student began working for the current employer

➢ **Within the first 12 months of STEM OPT employment, the student must complete a self-evaluation based on the training plan on the I-983.** This evaluation must be signed by both the student and the supervisor in charge of the student. The evaluation must then be submitted by the student to the DSO within 10 days after the first-year anniversary of your STEM OPT extension start date.

- **At the end of the STEM OPT period, the student must complete a final self-evaluation based on the training plan on the I-983**. This evaluation must be signed by both the student and the supervisor in charge of the student. The evaluation must then be submitted by the student to the DSO within 10 days of your STEM OPT extension end date.

- **Students granted the 24-month OPT extension may not accrue an aggregate of more than 150 days of unemployment during the total 36-month OPT period.** The only exception is that periods of up to 10 days between the end of one job and the beginning of the next job are not included in the calculation of time spent unemployed. The 10 day exception also applies to the first 10 days from the start date on the student's EAD.

- **Students on OPT are advised to have the following documents prior to any travel outside the United States:** proof of employment, EAD card for OPT, a valid passport, form I-20 endorsed for travel, and a valid visa. If your F-1 visa has expired, speak to an international advisor before making travel plans. It is more difficult to obtain a student visa while on practical/academic training, as the issue of intent to return to your home country is harder to prove once you have finished your degree and are working in the United States.

- **OPT ends if you transfer to another school, enroll full-time as a student, or begin a new program of study.** Part-time study is allowed as a non-degree student

- **OPT employment must be related to a STEM degree that you have obtained.** The STEM degree does NOT have to be earned at the same level as your current education level but must have been obtained from a SEVP-certified school within the U.S. at the bachelor education level or above.

Types of employment that are allowed for students on the OPT STEM extension:
Students authorized for an OPT STEM extension must work at least 20 hours per week for an E-Verify employer in a position directly related to each individual student's STEM degree.

- **Paid Employment:** All employment during the STEM extension must be paid employment. Volunteer experience does not count as employment for the purpose of maintaining F-1 status during the STEM extension.

- **Multiple Employers:** Students may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to each individual student's degree program and all employers must be enrolled in E-Verify and you must complete a I-983 training plan for each employer.

- **Work for hire:** This is also commonly referred to as 1099 employment where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. The company for whom the student is providing services must be registered with E-Verify. If requested by DHS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.

➢ **Employment through an agency or consulting firm:** Students on a STEM extension may be employed by an employment agency or consulting firm. The employment agency or consulting firm must be registered with E-Verify, but the third parties contracting with the agency or firm (for which the student is providing services) need not be.