

International Student Affairs (ISA)

Division of Student Affairs
202 Roosevelt Hall
130 Hofstra University
Hempstead, NY 11549-1260
INTERNATIONAL@hofstra.edu
Tel: (516) 463-6796 Fax: (516) 463-5328

How to Apply for the STEM OPT Extension

Please review the information below to learn how to apply for the STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) Extension. Please make sure to submit your request for the STEM OPT Extension at least 30 days before your current OPT end date.

Application Process

Step 1: Submit a request to International Student Affairs for an I-20 recommending you for STEM OPT by completing the 'F-1 STEM OPT Extension Request Form E-Form', available at <https://internationalforms.hofstra.edu/>

You will be required to upload your fully completed I-983 signed by you and your employer and copies of the front and back of your current EAD card when you fill in the e-form.

Form I-983 – Training Plan for STEM OPT Students

- Download the form: <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983.pdf>
- I-983 Instructions: <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983Instructions.pdf>

After you submit your request to International Student Affairs, the DSO will review it and contact you for any additional information. **Do not submit your application to USCIS until you receive the STEM OPT recommendation I-20 and instructions from ISA.** Please allow up to 10 business days for ISA to review and process your STEM OPT request.

Step 2: If your STEM OPT Extension request is approved, ISA will email your electronic OPT recommendation I-20 to your Hofstra email address with additional instructions.

Step 3: Prepare your remaining documents for the STEM OPT application using the checklist on the next page. For additional guidance on how to fill in the forms and prepare your materials, you may attend ISA's OPT workshops or use the guide available on ISA's website. To access the guide on hofstra.edu/isa, go to 'Resources', select 'Student Resources', then on the Student Resources page, under 'Immigration Resources', click 'Forms'.

Step 4: Mail your OPT application using FedEx/UPS to USCIS, **OR** file your I-765 application online using your USCIS Account (https://myaccount.uscis.gov/users/sign_up).

Things You Need to Know for STEM OPT:

- Type of Employment – The Department of Homeland Security clarifies that students cannot qualify for STEM OPT extensions unless they are bona fide employees of the employer signing the Training Plan, and the employer that signs the Training Plan must be the same entity that employs the student and provides the practical training experience.
- Volunteer – Department of Homeland Security has determined that a student seeking a STEM OPT extension will not be allowed to use a volunteer opportunity as a basis for a STEM OPT extension.
- E-Verify – Student's employer must enroll in E-Verify <https://www.e-verify.gov/> in order to for student to file STEM OPT extension.
- Hours – must be a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- Unemployment – The regulations state a 90-day maximum period of unemployment during the initial period of post-completion OPT but allows an additional 60 days (for a total of 150 days) for a student who obtains a 24-month STEM OPT extension.
- Expiration of current OPT – If a student's post-completion OPT expires while their timely filed STEM OPT application is pending in USCIS, the student will receive an automatic extension of employment authorization of up to 180 days upon the expiration of his or her current employment authorization.
- Travel – If your current EAD has expired, don't travel while your STEM OPT extension is pending. You will not be able to return in F-1 status to resume employment.

STEM OPT Checklist

Below is a checklist of all the materials you should gather to prepare your STEM OPT application. Incomplete or incorrect applications can cause processing delays so go over the checklist carefully and make sure you have included everything. *This resource is meant to provide you with best practices in preparing a STEM OPT extension application. Please note that this is not legal advice. You may choose to hire an immigration attorney to assist you with this process at any time.*

Mailing A Physical Application

If you plan to mail a physical application to USCIS, be sure to include the original check/money order, original photos and original I-765 and G-1145. Everything else should be a copy. Do not mail the I-983 to USCIS. Print all materials single sided and type information into forms whenever possible. Keep a photocopy of your complete OPT application for your records.

- STEM OPT Recommendation I-20: You will receive the OPT recommendation I-20 signed by an ISA advisor at the bottom of the first page. If the I-20 is not signed by an ISA advisor, please contact ISA. Print out and sign your signature by hand at the bottom of the first page of the OPT I-20 and then make a copy. Include the copy with both the ISA advisor's and your signature with your application.
- G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance: <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>
- I-765 Form: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> *Be sure to download the correct edition of the form from the USICS website. If you use an outdated form, your OPT application will be denied.*
- Copy of your valid passport and your F-1 visa
- I-94: you can print out the most recent I-94 from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/>
- Copy of all previous EAD cards (front and back)
- Copy of all previous Form I-20s (including all schools you have ever attended)
- Filing fee of \$410 as a check or money order (from a U.S. bank or U.S. Postal Service). Make payable to: **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**
- 2 recent passport-style photos - must be 2" x 2" (lightly write your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo)
- Copy of your diploma
- Official transcript

Online Filing

You can file the I-765 online by creating a USCIS account at <https://myaccount.uscis.gov/>. More information about filing online is available at <https://uscis.gov/file-online>. When filling in the online form and uploading documents, please note:

- Be sure to select the correct eligibility category. For STEM Extension, choose (c)(3)(C).
- The following file formats are accepted: JPG, JPEG, PNG, PDF, TIF, TIFF. The following file formats are NOT allowed: DOC, BMP, XLSX
- Maximum file size is 6 MB per file.
- Foreign and special characters are not allowed. The only characters allowed in document file names are: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, parentheses.
- Foreign language documents must have English translation.
- The system allows you to submit your application without all required evidence, which can lead to requests for evidence and delays if you forget to upload documents. Please be careful to ensure that everything is correctly uploaded before submitting the online application.
- For digital passport photos, you may use these websites: <https://tsg.phototool.state.gov/photo>
- Review your entries carefully before you pay the filing fee. Once you submit payment, you cannot make corrections.
- When you review your form before submission, print or download a draft snapshot for your records.
- To pay the filing fee you will be directed to Pay.gov, a secure government portal where you can pay by ACH withdrawal from a U.S. bank account, or a U.S. debit card, or accepted credit cards as listed on Pay.gov.
- After you pay the fee, your form will be submitted to USCIS. You will receive confirmation the form was submitted. Click on "Go to my cases" to see your case card and receipt notice. All notices will be mailed to the mailing address you provided in the I-765 form and posted to your account, including any requests for evidence (RFE) and decision letter.

For more information on STEM OPT, please visit:

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