STEM Extension Application
An information session for F-1 students
University Immigration Services  Nov 2023
STEM Extension of OPT

Post-completion Optional Practical training (OPT) is a 12-month employment authorization available to F-1 students who have completed an academic degree at the Associates, Bachelors, Masters, or Doctoral level. F-1 students are permitted one period of OPT after each degree level.

Students who complete degrees in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics may be eligible for a two-year STEM extension of their post-completion OPT, depending on the support and eligibility of their employers. STEM extensions do not stand alone, but can only be added on to a period of post-completion OPT.

University Immigration Services (UIS) can provide guidance but has no power to intervene in the process. Students may use an immigration attorney if desired, but most prefer to file the application on their own.
Eligibility

To be eligible for the STEM extension, a student must

• Have completed a qualifying degree, as listed on the DHS STEM designated program list, from an accredited and SEVP-certified school;
  o The CIPP code determines whether a program is designated by DHS. Look for the number next to the major listed in the Program section of your I-20.
• Be employed full-time (20+ hours per week) in a qualifying job that is related to your field of study; AND
• Work for a qualifying employer that is E-Verified and able to fill out an I-983.
  o The employer must participate in the STEM application process and “sponsors” the student.

The STEM Extension Application, like all employment authorization applications, is submitted to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to be adjudicated. Students are responsible for their own applications.
Application Timeline

The STEM Extension request application must be received by USCIS before the expiration date on the EAD card and within 60 days of the date the STEM Request I-20 was issued. The earliest a student may apply for a STEM Extension is 90 days before the expiration of post-completion OPT (as per the EAD). Students who file a timely application are permitted to continue employment while the extension application is pending for 180 days beyond the EAD expiration or until a final decision is made, whichever comes first.

You need a specific I-20 with the STEM request on page two. When you have put together the necessary paperwork, including the I-983, request the I-20 from UIS using the eform. Resources, including this form are found on the University’s external website so you can access them even though your myCharger log-in credentials expired.

UIS begins to use your non-student email in SEVIS after you graduate because we don’t know how long your University credentials will remain valid.
UIS Process

Students submit the following documents to UIS to request an I-20 with a STEM Extension Request on page 2.

UIS will review your submission and if acceptable, issue the STEM Request I-20. We’ll contact you if there are problems with your submission.

- STEM OPT Request Form
- Copy of completed Form I-983
  
  Instructions for filling out a Form I-983 can be found on the SEVP Website. (Do not fill out the self-evaluation section on page 5.)

- Copy of completed Form I-765
  
  (If filing online a draft copy is OK or upload a copy of the practice form. DO NOT submit the online application until you have the STEM Request I-20 to upload.)

- Copy of current EAD card

- Copy of offer letter (dated within last 4 months)
**USCIS I-765 Application**

If you filed PC OPT online, some documents will be saved on your USCIS account.

- With your supervisor complete the I-983 and submit it to UIS to review and approve.
- If the I-983 is complete and addresses all program requirements, the DSO will issue the STEM Request I-20.
- Gather all supporting evidence for the I-765.
- Include your diploma AND transcripts as evidence of STEM coursework.
- Get new passport style photos.
- Check the [USCIS website](https://www.uscis.gov) for any updated fee information or instructions.
- Get the STEM Request I-20 from UIS and submit the I-765 online.
- Use category (c)(3)(C) and include additional answers for this category.
- This is not a renewal of your previous EAD because you are requesting in a different category.
- The online I-765 is recommended, but you may want to practice on the fillable form on the USCIS website.
The I-983

SECTION 1
Fill out the information about yourself and the University of New Haven.

- Name of school recommending and name of school where STEM degree earned are usually the same (UNH)
- SEVIS school code is on your I-20 in the school information block (BOS214F...)
- Request period starts the day after EAD expiry
- Qualifying major (match diploma) and CIPP code (on your I-20).

STEM-Designated Programs - University of New Haven

- No. Not based on prior degree. (This question refers to a prior degree at a previous university. If on rare occasion you are applying for STEM based on a prior degree, you will need to submit evidence that the previous university was accredited.)
- EAD number

Sign SECTION 2
The I-983

SECTION 3
You and your employer fill out this section.
• Employer address (page 2) is company headquarters. Site of employment could be a separate location (page 3).
• EIN number is a different number from the E-Verify number
• NAICS code can be googled

Employer signs SECTION 4
The I-983

SECTION 5
The employer fills out this section.

• The site address is where you physically work: can be a worksite you are sent out to work in, or a remote office at home.
• Training plan relates to your job description and how you are supervised.

Your supervisor signs SECTION 6
The I-983

For the initial application, you leave page 5 blank.

You will be reporting participation during the STEM extension every 6 months. You will need to submit an evaluation on the top half of page 5 at 12 months, and an evaluation on the bottom half of page 5 at 24 months. All reporting is made to UIS using our eforms.

If you change jobs, you submit a final evaluation for the employer you are leaving on the bottom half of page 5. You will submit a new I-983 for the new employer and for any substantive changes to your employment with that employer. The SEVP Website gives more information about this.

The I-983 is not included in your application packet if mailing, but it must be reviewed by the DSO before you can get the STEM Request I-20.
Submit the STEM extension I-765 application to USCIS within the prescribed time period.

USCIS adjudicates the application (3 - 5 months regular, but premium processing is available)

Contact UIS for assistance if you get an RFE.

When approved, student gets an approval notice and a new EAD.

Report any changes to UIS even if you can add to your portal. (employment and personal contact info)
Changes to employer/employment require a new I-983. Use the OPT/STEM Update Form.

Report participation every 6 months. 12- and 24-month reports require page 5 of I-983. (Use the same OPT/STEM Update Form)

Any time during the 24 months of the STEM extension the employer may sponsor the student for the H1-B visa, or the student can change to another visa status for which they may be eligible. (The UIS does not assist with the H1-B application. Student works with the employer and an immigration attorney)

When the STEM extension ends, the student may start a new academic program at the same school or transfer to another school. If not, the student has 60 days to depart the U.S.
UNIVERSITY IMMIGRATION SERVICES

Campus Location:
One Stop Shop, Bergami Hall
300 Boston Post Road, West Haven, CT 06516
Phone: 203-932-7475
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Slides and recording will be posted at
University Immigration Services Office - Information on OPT/STEM - University of New Haven

University of New Haven