



STEM Optional Practical Training Extension (STEM OPT)

SJSU | INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
AND SCHOLAR SERVICES

Topics Covered in Tutorial

What is STEM OPT?
Eligibility Requirements
Application Process Overview
Application Steps
Reporting Responsibilities
Unemployment
Travel
End of STEM OPT
iSpartan Hub

STEM OPT Extension

“24-month extension of post-completion OPT for a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) degree.”

- You must meet ALL of the following criteria on the next 2 slides to be eligible to apply for STEM OPT Extension.
- *If you do not meet all of them, then you are not eligible for STEM OPT.*
- For more information: [Study in the States STEM OPT HUB](#)

Eligibility

* You must meet **ALL** of the following criteria to be eligible to apply for STEM OPT extension.

1. Been granted and currently active on Post-Completion OPT. ;

2. Have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment on your current Post-Completion OPT. ;

3. Earned a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics) from a SEVP-certified school. See the list of eligible STEM majors. You can find your CIP code on page 1 of your I-20. ;

Eligibility Continued

* You must meet **ALL** of the following criteria to be eligible to apply for STEM OPT extension.

4. Work for an employer that is enrolled in USCIS' E-Verify employment eligibility verification program. Contact your employer for the requisite E-Verify Company ID number. **Therefore, self-employment is not allowed on STEM OPT. ;*

5. The employer must guarantee you a minimum of 20 hours of work per week and provide you formal training plan and learning objectives. You must engage in paid employment that is directly related to your STEM degree. ;

6. Have not previously used STEM OPT more than once. You cannot have more than one STEM OPT extension based on the same degree level;

7. Be physically present in the U.S. when requesting the STEM OPT I-20 from ISSS and submitting your application to USCIS.

When to Apply

STEM OPT Extension

100 days before Post-Completion End Date:

First day to submit STEM OPT I-20 request to ISSS in iSpartan.

90 days before Post-Completion End Date:

First day to submit STEM OPT I-20 request to ISSS in iSpartan.

14 days before Post-Completion End Date:

Final day to submit STEM OPT I-20 request to ISSS in iSpartan

- You may submit the STEM OPT I-20 request to ISSS in iSpartan up to **100 days** BEFORE your Post-Completion OPT ends.
- ISSS is unable to do your STEM OPT recommendation until **90 days** before your Post-Completion OPT ends.
- You need to submit the STEM OPT I-20 request to ISSS in iSpartan no later than **14 days** before your Post-Completion OPT ends.
 - Please be mindful of submitting your STEM OPT I-20 request in iSpartan. We need time to review, get corrections (if needed) and process the I-20, so you do not miss your filing deadline.
- **STEM OPT applications can take up to 3 months (sometimes longer) to get approved by USCIS. Therefore, we recommend that you apply early.**

You must get a new I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation BEFORE filing your STEM OPT application with USCIS.

STEM OPT Process

1. **Update your personal information (telephone number, and/or living address) and current employment information using your [SEVP Portal](#).**
2. **Pay the one time \$300 administrative STEM OPT fee to ISSS.**
 - a. A payment link is on the ISSS STEM OPT webpage.
3. **Complete the [Form I-983](#), Training Plan for STEM OPT Students.**
 - a. Review [SEVP's Form I-983 instructions](#).
 - b. Review ISSS [I-983 Completion Guide](#).
 - c. Work with your employer to complete this form.
4. **Student requests a STEM OPT I-20 from ISSS. **You will need this I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation from ISSS to file your STEM OPT application with USCIS.****
 - a. Log into iSpartan - <https://globalspartans.sjsu.edu>, using your SJSU credentials.
 - i. Go to the [iSpartan Hub](#) for login instructions, follow the **Limited Services E-form** tutorial for former students (towards the end of the page).
 - b. Click on the 'F-1 Practical Training' link. Select 'STEM OPT I-20 Request' or access the form [here](#).
 - c. Complete the e-form. Uploading proof of payment of ISSS STEM OPT fee, I-983 training plan, post-completion OPT EAD card (front and back), and I-94 record of arrival.

STEM OPT Process

5. ISSS Receives STEM OPT I-20 Request

- a. Once submitted to ISSS, processing time is 7-10 business days.
- b. ISSS Advisor (DSO) will review your eligibility for STEM OPT as well as your I-983 for completeness.
 - i. They will email you directly if they have further questions or need additional information, when reviewing your request.
- c. ISSS Advisor (DSO) will recommend STEM OPT in your SEVIS record and issue you a new I-20 with the STEM OPT recommendation on page 2.
 - i. DSO will email you the I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation.
 - ii. **You will need this new I-20 to file your STEM OPT application with USCIS.**

STEM OPT Process

6. Student files Form I-765 and supporting documents with USCIS.

- a. **Do not file your application with USCIS until you have the I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation from ISSS.**
- b. USCIS must receive your STEM OPT application *within 60 days of the date your STEM OPT was recommended by ISSS or by your OPT end date (whichever is first), or your STEM OPT application will be denied.*
 - i. DSO will tell you when your STEM OPT recommendation was done, when they email you the I-20.
- c. Review documents that USCIS requires you to submit to file your application.

Filing I-765 (STEM OPT) with USCIS

You must have a new I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation from ISSS to file I-765 (STEM OPT) with USCIS.

As of April 2021, USCIS offers 2 different ways to file an I-765 (STEM OPT) application with USCIS.

*You must choose one option. You cannot choose both options. ISSS recommends you file online.

1. Online filing of [I-765](#).
2. Mail application to [USCIS lockbox](#).

See next slide for Comparison

*Go to ISSS [STEM OPT Webpage](#) for the following tutorials:

1. Online filing of I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT
2. Mailing I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT

Online Filing vs. Mailing Application

ISSS recommends that you file online. ***You must choose one option. You cannot choose both options. *Do not file with USCIS until you have the I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation from ISSS.**

Online Filing

- Save all required documents for STEM OPT application on your computer.
- Create online account with USCIS.
- File I-765 for STEM OPT.
- Upload supporting documents in online application.
- Receive same day notification, receipt number, that application has been filed with USCIS.

Review slides 12-15

Mailing Application to USCIS

- Gather all required documents for STEM OPT application.
- Complete I-765.
- Make a copy of your complete application, prior to mailing.
- Mail application to USCIS.
- If application is rejected, it will be returned to you. ****If your application is returned back to you, contact ISSS. You may need to get a new I-20, since you might be outside of the filing period.**

Review slides 16-17

Required Documentation (Evidence) if Filing Online

For filing the online I-765 STEM OPT Application to USCIS

- **2 x 2 Photo of You**
 - You will need to get a new passport style color photograph taken.
 - Review the [Department of State photo guidelines](#).
 - **Form I-94**
 - Retrieve I-94 at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>
 - If you have a paper I-94, include a copy both sides of the card.
 - If you changed your status to F-1 and have not left the US since getting F-1 status, you will need to submit a copy of your I-797A approval notice.
 - **Employment Authorization Document (EAD)**
 - Copy of post-completion OPT EAD (front and back sides).
 - **Form I-20**
 - I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation from ISSS.
 - **College degree**
 - Official transcript from SJSU or diploma showing degree completion.
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- **Institutional accreditation**
 - This is not required. This is ONLY required if your STEM is based on a degree that was completed prior to your SJSU STEM degree.

****Filing code is (c) (3) (C) for STEM OPT Extension***

Additional Information if Filing Online

For filing the online I-765 STEM OPT Application to USCIS

Additional Information

Complete this section to give additional useful information that you would like USCIS to know.

**You are required to indicate any current or previous employment authorizations that have been authorized in your SEVIS record (CPT, OPT, STEM OPT from SJSU and/or other schools) (See next slide for details).*

Additional information may also include:

*Passport information: Only if your I-94 information or F-1 visa has your old passport number on it, then enter the expired passport information here.

*SEVIS ID number: If you have had a different SEVIS ID number, other than the number listed on your current I-20.

Additional Information if Filing Online

For filing the online I-765 STEM OPT Application to USCIS

Additional Information Continued

Give the details of your currently authorized post-completion OPT

Also, If you had previous CPT authorization:

Section: Select “Evidence”

Question: “Previously authorized CPT or OPT”

Additional Information: Enter the type of employment authorization, indicate if part-time or full-time, degree level, authorization dates, and any receipt numbers (IOE or YSC) associated with the authorization.

Example for CPT: CPT; Full-time; Master’s; Authorized (05/31/2020 - 08/15/2020).

Example for OPT: Post-Completion OPT; Full-time; Master’s; Authorized (01/21/2021 - 01/20/2022); IOE123456789.

Review and Submit Online to USCIS

For filing the online I-765 STEM OPT Application to USCIS

- **Review your application**
 - This is where you can check your application before you submit.
 - Check to make sure that you have spelled things correctly as well as entered any dates in the US format of MM/DD/YYYY.
- **Your application summary**
 - This is a summary of all the information that you provided in your application.
- **Your statement**
 - You must read and agree to the statements that are listed in this section.
- **Your signature**
 - Type in your full legal name, for the digital signature.
- **Pay and submit**
 - The final step to submit the Form I-765 is to pay the required application fee.
 - The filing fee is non-refundable and subject to change. Please go to <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> for the current filing fee.

Required Documentation if Mailing

For mailing the I-765 STEM OPT Application to USCIS

Assemble your documents using the suggested order below; held together by a paper clip or binder clip. Do not staple your documents together.

1. Application/filing fee. Fees are subject to change, so please refer to uscis.gov/i-765 for the current filing fee amount.
 - a. You will need to use a personal check, cashier's check or money order [from a U.S. bank account] payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security". If needed, search online about how to write a check.
2. 2 recent passport-style color photographs
 - a. You will need to get new passport style color photographs taken.
 - b. Review the [Department of State photo guideline](#) for size dimensions.
3. Form [G-1145](#), E-notification of Application/Petition Acceptance
4. Form [I-765 Application for Employment Authorization](#). (All pages, completed, and signed).
 - a. Read the [USCIS Instructions for Form I-765](#).
 - b. Review slides 7-27 of ISSS [Mailing I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT](#) for I-765 Completion Guide.
5. Photocopy of I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation.
6. Photocopy of valid passport biographical page.
 - a. *If your passport will be expiring within 6 months, you will need to write a letter acknowledging your passport expiration date and that you plan on renewing your passport before it expires.
 - b. *If your I-94 has your old passport number on it, then you will need to submit a copy of your current and your previous passport.
7. Photocopy of F-1 visa stamp, if applicable.
8. Form I-94 record of arrival.
 - a. Retrieve I-94 at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>
 - b. If you have a paper I-94, include a copy both sides of the card
 - c. If you changed your status to F-1 and have not left the US since getting F-1 status, you will need to submit a copy of your I-797A approval notice
9. Photocopy of any Employment Authorization Document (EAD), from SJSU and/or other schools.
 - a. Copy of post-completion OPT EAD (front and back sides)
10. Photocopies of all previous CPT, OPT or STEM OPT I-20's, from SJSU and/or other schools.
11. Photocopy of diploma or official transcript showing STEM OPT degree has been conferred.

Review and Mail to USCIS

For mailing the I-765 STEM OPT Application to USCIS

- **Review your application prior to mailing to USCIS.**
 - Review the [Form I-765](#) for the correct edition date and that you have signed the appropriate page.
 - USCIS will not accept a digital signature on the Form I-765.
 - We recommend that you make a copy of your entire application packet before mailing to USCIS.
- **Mail your entire application to the [USCIS lockbox](#).**
 - You will mail to the lockbox location for Foreign students.
 - You will have to select the correct address based on how you are mailing your application.
 - We recommend using Fed Ex or UPS.
 - If you mail via USPS, then use tracking.

STEM OPT Process

7. USCIS processes STEM OPT application.

- a. Within 2-3 weeks of USCIS receiving your STEM OPT application, a paper receipt (Form I-797c) will be mailed to the mailing address that you provided as your mailing address in your application (form I-765).
 - i. If you filed online, then you will receive notification that your application was received on the day that you filed the application with USCIS.
 - ii. Review the receipt for any errors in your name or date of birth. If there are errors, please contact ISSS.
 - iii. As long as your application was received within a timely manner by USCIS, your employment authorization is automatically extended for up to 180 days while your STEM OPT application is pending.

***You will need to provide a copy of your STEM OPT filing receipt to your employer for them to extend your employment authorization.**

- b. Processing of your STEM OPT application can take 2-3 months, sometimes longer.
 - i. If your application is returned back to you (if you mailed it) or if you receive a RFE 'Request for Evidence' or RFI 'Request for Information' from USCIS, please contact ISSS.
 - ii. As of April 3, 2023 USCIS offers premium processing.

*Review the ISSS [24 Month STEM Extension](#) webpage regarding this. ISSS does not recommend the premium processing option.

As long as your application was received within a timely manner by USCIS, within 60 days of ISSS STEM OPT recommendation or by your Post-Completion OPT end date (whichever is first), your employment authorization is automatically extended for up to 180 days while your STEM OPT application is pending.

While I-765 is Pending

What you can do while your application is pending with USCIS.

1. Use [USCIS Case Status Online](#) to check the status of your application.
2. Give employer copy of I-797c filing receipt for STEM OPT, so they can extend your employment authorization.
3. Practice being patient and continue to work.
 - a. STEM OPT applications can take 2-3 months (sometimes longer) for USCIS processing.
4. If you receive an RFE 'Request for Evidence' or RFI 'Request for Information', please contact ISSS.

Maintaining Status on STEM OPT

- Report employment and any changes in employment within 10 days of the change directly to ISSS, via iSpartan at the [STEM OPT Employment Update Report](#).
 - This includes material changes on your I-983 which can be salary, employer address, Supervisor/Manager.
- All employment must be for an e-verified employer, related to your major field of study, paid, and more than 20 hours per week.
- Reporting requirements at the following times: 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, 24 months.
 - We recommend that you create a reminder on your calendar one month before your reporting is due.
- Do not exceed 150 days of unemployment, applied to the entire period of standard Post-completion and STEM OPT.
- Maintain a valid travel signature (endorsement) on your I-20.
 - Validity of 6 months, when on STEM OPT.

Reporting Changes in Employment

Must be reported directly to ISSS, since we have to review a new I-983.

1. Report employment and any changes in employment within 10 days of the change directly to ISSS, via iSpartan at the [STEM OPT Employment Report Form](#).
 - a. Do not use your SEVP portal for making changes to your employment. You are required to report directly to ISSS via iSpartan.
2. All employment must be for an e-verified employer, related to your major field of study, paid, and at least 20 hours per week.
3. Changes in employment, include the following:
 - a. Change in employer.
 - i. You cannot work for a non e-verified employer on STEM OPT.
 - b. Any material change on the I-983. This may include: salary, employer address, manager (page 3), etc.
 - i. Per SEVP [Form I-983 instructions](#), "Material changes in the plan can include (but are not limited to) the following: any change of EIN resulting from a corporate restructuring; any reduction in compensation from the amount previously listed on the Form I-983 that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked; any significant decrease in hours per week that a student engages in a STEM training opportunity; and any decrease in hours below the 20-hours-per-week minimum required for STEM OPT.

Use the following e-form to report any change in employment while on STEM OPT to ISSS: [STEM OPT Employment Report Form](#)

Required Reporting Responsibilities

Throughout the duration of your STEM OPT period, you are required to confirm your continued participation in STEM OPT, every 6 months.

Mandatory reporting requirements at the following times (calculate from your STEM OPT start date):

- ❖ **6 months** - Provide a validation report (confirming name, address, employment information, even if there are no changes in your employment.
- ❖ **12 months** - Provide a validation report (confirming name, address, employment information AND Annual evaluation on student progress (the top part of page 5 of the I-983).
- ❖ **18 months** - Provide a validation report (confirming name, address, employment information, even if there are no changes in your employment.
- ❖ **24 months** - Provide a validation report (confirming name, address, employment information AND Final evaluation on student progress (the bottom part of page 5 of the I-983).

We recommend creating a reminder on your calendar, one month before your 6 month reporting is due, so you will be reminded to complete this.

Use the following form to complete your required reporting every 6 months while on STEM OPT to ISSS:
[STEM OPT Employment Report Form](#)

Unemployment on STEM OPT

Important

If you accrue more than 150 days of unemployment or you forget to complete the required reporting to ISSS every 6 months, then you are considered not to be maintaining status. A SEVP official may terminate your SEVIS record.

STEM OPT

- With the approval of your STEM OPT, once your STEM OPT goes into effect, you will get an additional 60 days of unemployment, for a total of 150 days. ***90 days during the initial period of post-completion OPT plus the additional 60 days during the extension period.*
- Unemployment is cumulative.
- **It is your responsibility to keep track of number of unemployment days, so you do not exceed 150.**

SEVIS employment counter

- Change of employment must be reported to ISSS via iSpartan: [STEM OPT Employment Update Form](#)
- Report information to ISSS via iSpartan within 10 days of the change.
- This includes any change that is on the I-983 (salary, manager, employer name, employer address, etc.)

Travel While on STEM OPT

To return to the U.S. you will need:

Approved STEM OPT Extension

- Valid passport;
- Valid F-1 visa;
- I-20 with travel signature dated w/in 6 months;
- Unexpired EAD card;
- Employment verification letter.

Can travel with a PENDING STEM OPT application, as well as renew your F-1 visa during this time (if it has already expired). Please keep in mind the following before you decide to travel if your STEM OPT application is pending:

***If your application is denied and your post-completion OPT has ended, then you do not have an option to re-enter the U.S. and reapply for STEM OPT.**

***Before leaving the U.S. while your STEM OPT application is pending, make sure that you have a I-797c filing receipt confirming your STEM OPT application has been received by USCIS.**

Inform ISSS if you are leaving the U.S. prior to your STEM OPT end date with no plans to return and resume STEM OPT.

Requesting an Updated I-20

We recommend that you request an updated I-20, once the following has occurred:

1. STEM OPT has been approved.

Replacement/Updated I-20

2. After ISSS has confirmed reported employment or changes in employment have been updated in your SEVIS record.

Replacement/Updated I-20

Traveling overseas?

- Request a travel signature I-20.
 - Travel signatures on page 2 of the form I-20 are valid for 6 months when on STEM OPT.

Travel Signature/I-20 Request

Unable to access iSpartan to submit e-form? Please go [here](#) for further instructions.

End of STEM OPT

At the end of your STEM OPT, you have a 60 day grace period after your STEM OPT ends to do one of the following:

1. Get a new I-20 from SJSU to pursue a new degree program;
2. Transfer I-20 to another U.S. school to pursue a new degree program;
3. Leave the U.S.

If you have any questions about these options, please [schedule an appointment](#) with an ISSS Advisor.

iSpartan (ISSS Student Portal)

iSpartan - You will use this portal to submit requests to ISSS. *(Recommend using Google Chrome or Firefox as your web browser).*

E-forms

STEM OPT I-20 Request

- Need this I-20 from SJSU with STEM OPT recommendation, **before** you can file your STEM OPT application with USCIS.

STEM OPT Employment Update Report

- Use the e-form to report the following:
 - Required employment reporting every 6 months;
 - Any changes to STEM employment. This includes changes to the I-983, salary, work location, supervisor, etc.

Replacement/Updated I-20 Request

- To request an updated I-20 after your STEM OPT has been approved.

Travel Signature/I-20 Request

- To request an updated travel signature from ISSS.

Unable to access iSpartan to submit e-form? Please go [here](#) for further instructions.

THANK YOU!

Email: international-office@sjsu.edu

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