

## 24 Month STEM Extension: Optional Practical Training New I-20 Application

Biographical Data:			
Family Name:		First and Middle Name:	
UNT Student ID:	Birth Date:	Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	
U.S. Street Address:			
City:	State:	Zip:	Phone #:
Email #1:		Email #2:	
Country of Citizenship:	Passport Expiration:	Visa Expiration:	
Major:	Degree Level Completed:	Date Completed:	
Current OPT Start Date:		Current OPT End Date:	

Employment Information:
Name of Company as Listed in E-Verify System:
Company Address: _____ <i>(No PO Boxes, _____ Physical Location City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____ Of Employment)</i>
Start Date with Employer (MM/DD/YYYY): _____
Employer Identification Number (EIN) (if known): _____
Job Title: _____
Brief Job Description: _____ _____ _____

I-20 Pick-Up Information:
<input type="checkbox"/> I will pick-up the I-20 myself.*
<input type="checkbox"/> Please mail the I-20 to my current address listed above. <i>(Please note, we will mail by regular USPS unless you want to pay for Express mail via eShipGlobal: <a href="http://international.unt.edu/ISSS/using-eshipglobal-express-mail">http://international.unt.edu/ISSS/using-eshipglobal-express-mail.</a>)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Someone will pick up the I-20 for me.* Name of Person: _____
*Please note, any individuals picking up items will be asked to present an official photo ID.



## 24 Month STEM Extension: Optional Practical Training New I-20 Application, Continued

### Form I-983 Training Plan:

- I have attached the completed Form I-983 Training Plan (pages 1-4) with this request. I understand that this form may be requested by USCIS or ICE at any time.
- I understand that if I change employers during my STEM OPT time period, I must submit a new Form I-983 to UNT ISSS within 10 days of beginning at the new employer.
- I understand that if any material change or deviation in my original Form I-983 occurs, I am required to submit an updated Form I-983 to UNT ISSS. *Material changes may include, but are not limited to, change in Employer Identification Number, reduction in compensation from the amount previously submitted on Form I-983, any significant decrease in hours per week that I engage in, or the goals/objectives, purpose, oversight, or assessment of my training has significantly changed.*
- I understand that I am required to submit a self-evaluation of my employment (page 5 of Form I-983) signed by my employer at 12 and 24 months of my STEM OPT extension to UNT ISSS.

***Failure to comply with any of the above will be considered a status violation.***

### Previous Degree Information:

Are you applying for the STEM extension based on a previous degree?

No

Yes:

Degree Completed: (Level and Major): \_\_\_\_\_

Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of University: \_\_\_\_\_

*If you obtained your previous degree from a university other than UNT, you will need to attach a copy of your transcript and the completed STEM Clearance form to this request.*

***Submit this completed form, your completed I-983 Training Plan (pages 1-4), and any needed Previous Degree information indicated above, to ISSS and a new I-20 will be created with your OPT recommendation.***

***Normal processing time is 7-10 business days.***

**I have fully completed the above information and understand the regulations regarding this process:**

***If I have any questions, I will consult with an ISSS Advisor.***

Signature:

Date:

## HOW TO APPLY FOR 24 MONTH STEM OPT

### CRITERIA: (You must meet all criteria to be eligible to apply for STEM OPT.)

- You have graduated with a Bachelor's, Master's or PhD in a STEM field. These are identified by CIP code. For a complete approved list please go to <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf>
- Application must be submitted to USCIS during the period of your current OPT.
- You have not applied for more than two 24 month extensions previously.
- Your employer is registered in the E-Verify Program.
- Your employer has completed Form I-983.

### STEP 1: International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) Procedures

- Submit the Optional Practical Training application, Form I-983, the completed ISSS STEM OPT Quiz and the STEM Clearance Form (if needed), to ISSS.
- ISSS will review your application and prepare a recommendation (new I-20) to USCIS. This may take up to 10 working days.
- During this time, it is advised that you begin **STEP 2** below.
- ISSS will notify you via email when your OPT I-20 is ready to pick up.
- Pay the OPT Case Management Fee here: <https://international.unt.edu/iss-store>, before you can pick up your I-20.

### STEP 2: Prepare your Application for USCIS

Assemble your documents in this order:

- \$410 check or money order payable to *Department of Homeland Security*.
- Two (2) color passport style photos
  - o Guidelines: Color photos with a **white background** taken no earlier than 30 days before submission to the USCIS. They should be unmounted; glossy and unretouched. The photos should be a full frontal pose, such as a passport photo. Your head should be bare unless you are wearing a headdress as required by a religious order to which you belong. A photographer familiar with "passport photos" can help you. For additional information see the Guide Sheet and the Department of State website for details.
  - o Lightly print your name and your I-94 number, if known, on the back of each photo with a pencil. We recommend you place both photos in a small plastic bag or envelope so they don't get lost in the rest of application.
- Completed Form I-765 form (Print this online at <http://www.uscis.gov> to ensure you have the latest version.)
  - o Respond to Q. #20 by writing (c)(3)(C) within the parentheses.
  - o Fully complete Question #21.
  - o You can use either your personal address or our office address on the form. If you would like to use our address for the application, you may list this address on your I-765:
    - 1155 Union Circle #311067 (ISSS), Denton, TX 76203-5017
- Photocopy of pages 1 and 2 of the I-20 showing the OPT recommendation.
  - o Make sure to sign the I-20 (the "STUDENT ATTESTATION" on page 1) before you make a copy.
  - o I-20 must be issued within the last 30 days.
- Photocopy of both sides of your I-94 card (if you have one, it will be a white paper card in your passport), or if you've travelled since April 2013, print out your I-94 card online at <http://www.cbp.gov/i94>.
- Photocopy of your passport identity, expiry and visa pages.
- Photocopy of Previous EAD Cards
- Copy of your Diploma
- G-1145. This form will allow the Lockbox facility to send you an email or text message when they receive your application. You do not have to send it. You can download the form at <http://www.uscis.gov>.

### STEP 3: Mail your Application to USCIS

- Make a copy of the entire packet for your records.
- There are different mailing addresses based upon the address you list on the I-765. Review the I-765 instructions found online at <http://www.uscis.gov> to ensure the proper mailing address.

If the address you list on the I-765 is in Texas, you may mail to either of the two addresses below:

USPS Deliveries (Mail Certified mail, Return Receipt requested)	For Express Mail and courier service Deliveries (UPS, FedEx, DHL, etc.)
USCIS PO Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266	USCIS Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Highway 121, Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067

USCIS will send a receipt several weeks after they receive it. The estimated time for approval at USCIS is 90 days, although this varies.

## 24 Month STEM Extension Optional Practical Training FAQs

Optional practical training is authorization for employment in the U.S.A. issued by the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) for temporary work directly related to your major area of study. You will receive a total of 12-months of optional practical training for each higher degree. Additionally, you may be eligible to apply for another 24 months of OPT if you and your employer meet the requirements.

### ELIGIBILITY

- You have graduated with a Bachelor's, Master's or PhD in a STEM field. These are identified by CIP code. For a complete approved list please go to <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf>
- Application must be submitted during the period of your current OPT.
- You have not applied for more than two 24 month extensions previously.
- Your employer is registered in the E-Verify Program.
- Your employer has completed the Form I-983 Training Plan.

### MAINTENANCE OF STATUS

#### *What requirements must I fulfill while on the 24-month extension?*

Students pursuing STEM extension OPT must report to their DSO (by filling out this form <http://international.unt.edu/ISSS/opt-employment-report>), within 10 days, loss of employment or change to any of the following:

- The student's legal name
- The student's residential or mailing address
- The student's email address/phone number
- Employer name
- Employer address

Additionally, these students must send a validation report to their DSO every six months starting from the date the STEM extension OPT starts and ending when the student's F-1 status ends or the STEM extension OPT ends, whichever is first. The validation report must include the student's:

- Full legal name
- SEVIS identification number (if requested by the school)
- Current mailing and residential address
- Name and address of the current employer
- Employment start date for the current employer

Students are required to submit a self-evaluation at 12 and 24 months of STEM OPT. This can be found on page 5 of the Form I-983 Training Plan.

#### *Am I allowed any time of unemployment?*

Students who receive a 24-month STEM OPT extension are given an additional 60 days of unemployment for a total of 150 days over their entire 36 month post-completion OPT period.

#### *What types of employment are allowed for students during an OPT STEM extension?*

Students granted an OPT STEM extension must work at least 20 hours per week for an E-Verify-enrolled employer in a position directly related to the student's STEM degree. Students on an OPT STEM Extension must be a bona fide employee of an E-Verified employer. Volunteer work is not allowed.

## **E-VERIFY**

***If an F-1 OPT STEM student currently works for two employers and wishes to apply for the 24-month extension, would both employers have to be enrolled in E-Verify?***

Yes, if a student wishes to continue with both employers, each employer would need to be enrolled in E-Verify. Additionally, each job must be directly related to the student's STEM degree. Form I-983 must be on file for each employer and the student must be employed for no less than 20 hours per week with each employer.

***What if my company is enrolled in E-Verify at some locations, but the hiring site where the student will be employed is not enrolled – is this sufficient?***

If the hiring site where the student will be employed has not been identified in the MOU that the company signed during enrollment, that hiring site is not considered to be enrolled in E-Verify and therefore cannot employ an F-1 OPT STEM student under a 24-month extension.

Employers seeking to employ an F-1 OPT student under a 24-month extension may enroll in E-Verify in one of two ways: register the hiring site individually by signing its own MOU or registering the intended job location as an additional hiring site under the employer's existing MOU.

## **JOB OFFER**

***Must I have a job to apply for OPT?***

Employment is required to apply for the 24 month STEM extension.

***What is the Form I-983 Training Plan?***

Form I-983 is a formal training plan instituted by Department of Homeland Security as part of the 2016 Final STEM OPT Rule. The formal training plan must clearly articulate the STEM OPT student's learning objectives and affirm the employer's commitment to helping the student achieve those objectives. The training plan is required in order to apply for the extension.

## **WHEN TO APPLY FOR THE STEM EXTENSION**

***How early can I apply?***

You can apply to USCIS up to 90 days before your current OPT expires.

***How late can I apply for OPT?***

USCIS must receive and receipt the application by the last day as listed on your current EAD. If this is the case, you may continue employment while the application is pending up to 180 days. Processing time at USCIS varies, and is usually about 3 months.

## **TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE U.S.A.**

If you have completed your course of study, you must have your practical training authorization, EAD card, before temporarily leaving the U.S.A. Upon re-entering you must present to the border officials the EAD card, a valid visa, *and* a valid I-20 endorsed for travel. That signature is valid for multiple entries, and is valid for 6 months.

***If I travel while on OPT, can I come back to the U.S.?***

The regulations state that you can reenter the U.S. "to resume employment." Please carry with you proof of employment.

***How long can I stay home on my visit and still come back to my OPT?***

Technically, if you are outside the U.S. for 5 months on an F-1, you end your status. However, if you stay a long time, you will have a hard time convincing the port of entry official that you are returning "to resume employment." Please use good judgment.

***My visa has expired, and I really want to go home for a visit. Can I get a new visa while I am on OPT?***

Technically, this is possible. However, it is difficult. It may be a good idea for you to plan travel at a different time. Please see an advisor to discuss your situation and options, and to assess your priorities.

## EMPLOYER INFORMATION

### *Does my employer have any requirements?*

Employers will be required to provide training, assist the student in drafting and signing the formal Training Plan and the self-evaluations, be subject to random site visits by DHS, and must sign and submit various attestations. This includes attesting that:

1. The STEM OPT employment terms and conditions (including compensation, hours, duties and benefits) are similar to the terms offered to U.S. workers in similar positions. “Similarly situated U.S. workers” include U.S. workers performing similar duties subject to similar supervision and with similar educational backgrounds, industry expertise, employment experience, levels of responsibility, and skill sets as the student;
2. The employer will report termination or departure of the student on STEM OPT within 5 business days directly to UNT-ISSS;
3. The employer will notify UNT-ISSS regarding any material changes to the Training Plan;
4. The student will receive on-site supervision and training, consistent with the Training Plan, by experienced and knowledgeable staff.

### *What documentation can I show my employer that I am eligible to work while my STEM extension is pending?*

The expired Form I-766 EAD (issued under category (c)(3)(C)), the USCIS receipt notice showing a timely filing of the STEM extension application (Form I-797, Notice of Action), combined with an I-20 updated to show that the DSO recommended the STEM extension for a work authorization period beginning on the date after the expiration of the EAD is the equivalent of an unexpired Employment Authorization Document under List A, #4 of the Form I-9. This combination of documents satisfies the Form I-9 requirements for 180 days (or less if the application is denied beforehand). If the 24-month STEM extension is approved, the student should receive a new Form I-766 EAD reflecting the 24-month STEM extension within the 180-day period.

### *What is an OPT Case Management Fee and why do I have to pay it?*

While you are on OPT, ISSS is still responsible for maintaining your immigration record as well as continuing to provide you services after graduation. The OPT Case Management Fee is a substitute for the International Student Fee and is used to subsidize the costs of the mandatory case management for students on OPT.