Enclosed are two Forms I-20 endorsed for OPT STEM employment authorization. You will file one I-20 with the U.S. government, as instructed below, and use the second I-20 to document your continued eligibility for F-1 status. Please sign and date both I-20 Forms. The next step is for you to mail the completed application for employment authorization with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services via FedEx or UPS. You will not make a personal visit to the USCIS. Please follow the instructions below very carefully.

**OPT STEM APPLICATION PACKET CHECKLIST FOR USCIS**

- $410 non-refundable application fee paid by personal check or money order to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”.
  - For credit card payment, complete Form G-1450. Make sure the card has enough money as USCIS will reject your application if card is declined.

- Two identical color passport-size photos taken within the past 30 days. Do not reuse old photos.
  - Write name and SEVIS number on back of photos with pencil or felt pen.

- Completed and signed Form I-765. Visit USCIS for instructions on how to complete the I-765. You may also refer to our sample.

- One original new Form OPT STEM I-20 endorsed for OPT provided to you by the ISO. **Don't forget to sign your OPT STEM I-20 before mailing!**

- Photocopy of current OPT EAD. If you still have the approval notice (Form I-797), attach a copy as well.

- Photocopy of your diploma and official transcript showing the major and degree level that matches your eligible STEM degree.
  - If basing application on prior degree, include an official transcript and copy of degree from the prior degree program.

- Photocopy of identification page of passport and any validity pages.

- Photocopy of latest visa. If applicable, also include any change of status documents prior to F-1.

- Print out of your I-94 OR photocopy of both sides of I-94 card.

- Photocopies of all Forms I-20 you have been issued.

**OPTIONAL:** Form G-1145 - Use this form to request a text message and/or email when USCIS accepts your form.

Visit USCIS to view filing location based on your mailing address. If using a Virginia mailing address, send your complete application by courier (Federal Express, USPS Priority/Express, or UPS) to:

USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121, Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

**FILING TIPS**
- Your OPT application must be received by USCIS within 60 days of the advisor’s signature date in the “School Attestation” section of pg. 1 of your OPT I-20 request and before the expiration of your post-completion OPT.
- Do **not** send your original passport.
- Clear **color** photocopies of your immigration documents are highly recommended.
- If you are not filing using a Virginia mailing address, I-765 filing address are available on the [USCIS website](https://www.uscis.gov).
- Keep your tracking number when mailing your OPT application.
- Use your receipt number to check your case status online.

  > **The EAD will be sent to the address indicated on Form I-765. Note that the USCIS will not forward your card to a different address.**

  > - If you move from the U.S. address you entered on your I-765 and are no longer receiving mail, and have not yet obtained your Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card), you must update your address information in the [USCIS Online Change of Address System](https://www.uscis.gov). For USCIS inquiries and status requests, please use the [USCIS online tools](https://www.uscis.gov), or call the National Customer Service Number at 1-800-375-5283.

### REMINDERS, RULES, & RESPONSIBILITIES

- **The 24-month STEM OPT extension period begins on the day following the expiration of your standard post-completion OPT. If the Form I-765 is still pending as of that date, you are authorized to continue employment for up to 180 days after the expiration of the post-completion OPT.**

  > **If you have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment on post-completion OPT,** approval of STEM OPT adds an additional 60 days of unemployment for a total of 150 days of unemployment permitted throughout the 36 months of STEM extended OPT. **Unemployment for an aggregate period of greater than 150 days during the STEM-extended OPT will result in a loss of legal status.**

- **For travel abroad during post-completion STEM OPT, be prepared to present:**
  - Your EAD card (if approved) or application receipt notice (if pending approval)
  - Proof of employment
  - OPT STEM I-20 (Check your I-20. Travel signatures are valid for **six months**)
  - Valid passport (at least six months beyond date of return)
  - Valid visa

  Make sure your F-1 visa will be valid upon re-entry from foreign travel. If not, please apply for a new F-1 visa before attempting readmission to the U.S. Remember to bring your employment letter, OPT STEM EAD Card, OPT STEM Receipt Notice, valid I-20 (signed within 6 months of travel) and your valid passport (valid for six months beyond your date of return) to your appointment.

- **You must continue medical insurance coverage throughout your F-1 status including the time that you have OPT and during any grace periods.**

- If you wish to begin a new degree program, consult the ISO office to begin a change of level or transfer procedure. OPT work authorization is terminated when your SEVIS record is transferred to a new school and/or you begin a new program of study at a new degree level.

### REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- **You must report any changes in address, employment and contact information within **10 days** through the [SEVP Portal](https://www.sevis.uscis.gov).**

  > - If you wish to obtain a new OPT I-20 with your employer information, please email [issp@virginia.edu](mailto:issp@virginia.edu).

- Any changes in your employment must be reflected in the Form I-983 Training Plan and reported to ISO. You are required to submit the Form I-983 Self-Evaluation attested by you and your employer to ISO at the 12-month and 24-month points of your STEM OPT Extension. This is a legal requirement.

  > - In addition, students must confirm employment every six months to ISO at [issp@virginia.edu](mailto:issp@virginia.edu). Ensure your information is correct in the SEVP Portal.

- **If you will no longer continue STEM OPT,** please email our office at [issp@virginia.edu](mailto:issp@virginia.edu) so we may properly complete your F-1 SEVIS record.