



International Studies Office
208 Minor Hall
Email: issp@virginia.edu
Phone: 434.982.3010
Advising Hours: Monday-Thursday
9AM-12Noon & 1-4PM

F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING – 24-MONTH STEM EXTENSION

You are required to receive an updated Form I-20 with OPT STEM issued on the 2nd page before submitting your application [online at USCIS](#). You can obtain your OPT STEM I-20 by submitting an OPT Request on [ISSP Connect](#).

OPT STEM APPLICATION PACKET CHECKLIST FOR USCIS

- Non-refundable application fee paid on USCIS online application.
- A color passport-sized photo taken within the last 6 months to reflect your current appearance. Do not use old photos that you previously used for your passport or visa application as they will get rejected.
 - Use the Department of State’s [photo composition tool](#).
- Completed [Form I-765](#) submitted through the USCIS portal. Double check you have uploaded all required documents before submitting your I-765 through USCIS.
- One original new Form I-20 endorsed for OPT STEM provided to you by the ISO.
Don’t forget to sign your OPT STEM I-20 in wet blue ink before uploading to your USCIS application.
- Copy of current OPT EAD, front and back.
- Copy 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.
- Copy of your [I-94](#).

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.
- Clear **color** photocopies of your immigration documents are highly recommended.
- **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.**
 - **It is strongly suggested that you place an address that will be accessible at least 5 months from your date of OPT submission.** If the mailing address you entered on your I-765 is no longer valid, and have not yet obtained your Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card), you must update your address information in the [USCIS Online Change of Address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](#). For USCIS inquiries and status requests, please use the [USCIS online tools](#), or call the National Customer Service Number at 1-800-375-5283.

REMINDERS, RULES, & RESONSIBILITIES

- 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.
- 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](#).**
 - **If you wish to obtain a new OPT I-20 with your employer information, complete an “I-20 Reprint Request” on [ISSP Connect](#).**
- **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 by completing the “Report STEM OPT Participation” request on ISSP Connect.*
 - *At the 12 and 24-month mark of your OPT STEM employment, you are required to complete a self-evaluation located on the last page of the I-983.*
 - *If you change employment, a final evaluation has to be submitted from your former employer and a new I-983 training plan must be submitted for your new employer.*
- **If you will no longer continue STEM OPT, please email our office at issp@virginia.edu so we may properly complete your F-1 SEVIS record.**