F-1: STEM Extension of Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Definition of the STEM OPT Extension

The STEM OPT extension is a 24-month extension of F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) for individuals who majored in the fields of study with specific classification of instructional program codes or (CIP) codes in science, technology, engineering, or math. For more detailed information on STEM OPT extensions please go to the Department of Homeland Security website; Study in the States STEM OPT HUB at https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub.

Eligibility

To qualify for the STEM OPT extension:

- You must have earned a bachelor’s or master’s degree in a field included on the U.S. government's list STEM fields. The government list of CIP Codes that are eligible for STEM OPT extensions may be viewed on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) website at https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension.
- You must be currently participating in post-completion OPT in a job directly related to your STEM major.
- Your job must be in a paid position, not a volunteer job or self-employment and work at least 20 hours per week.
- Your current or prospective employer must be registered with the Department of Homeland Security E-Verify employment verification system and must agree to meet all the requirements listed in the Employer Responsibilities section of this handout.

How to Apply for the STEM OPT Extension

Step 1: Request information about the STEM OPT extension

Send an email to slatercenter@wellesley.edu requesting information and the appropriate immigration forms for the STEM OPT Extension.

Step 2: Submit the required completed documents to the Slater International Center for review

You can Email the following documents to slatercenter@wellesley.edu or set up an appointment to meet with your International Student & Scholar Advisor three to four months before your initial OPT ends.

- ☐ Form I-765 (https://www.uscis.gov/i-765)
  - The Form I-765 should be typed, saved, and printed. After printing, please sign in blue ink. Use Adobe Acrobat to fill in the application.
  - For number 3, carefully consider the address you indicate. You should use the address where you will be in 2-4 months, when your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will be mailed to you.
  - For number 20, write (c) (3) (C).
  - For number 21, add your degree, the name of your employer, and their E-Verify number. Ask your HR department for their E-Verify number.

- ☐ Form I-983 (https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview) [See the Guide for Completing Form I-983 on page 5 of these instructions]

- ☐ Copy of your passport ID page
- ☐ Copy of your F-1 visa (does not apply to Canadian citizens)
- ☐ Copy of your current Form I-20
- ☐ Copy of your most recent Form I-94 (https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/)
- ☐ Updated OPT Audit Form (https://www.wellesley.edu/international/forms_resources)
- ☐ Immigration Document Mailing Form (https://www.wellesley.edu/international/forms_resources)
Step 3: Correct any errors on your Form I-765 and Form I-983 and receive your new Form I-20
A Slater International Center staff member will review your application and inform you of any necessary changes. STEM OPT Extension applications can take up to five business days to process. Your new Form I-20 with a recommendation for a STEM extension will be express mailed to you.

Step 4: Submit your STEM OPT application to United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS)
You may submit the STEM application up to 90 days before your initial OPT period ends. You must submit your completed application to USCIS and it must be received within 60 days of the date your Designated School Official (DSO)/International Student & Scholar Advisor signed your new Form I-20 and before your current OPT period ends.

Include the following documents in your application to USCIS:

- Form I-765
- Copy of new Form I-20 (signed)
- A personal check or money order for $410 (made out to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”. Write your SEVIS ID # on the front of your check in the memo section.)
- Copies of all previous Forms I-20 (include forms from previous U.S. schools)
- Copy of your passport ID page
- Copy of your F-1 visa (does not apply to Canadian citizens)
- Copy of your most recent Form I-94
- Copy of your diploma and official transcript (showing your major in a STEM field) (https://www.wellesley.edu/registrar/transcripts)
- 2 passport-sized photographs (taken within the past 6 months with your name and SEVIS ID# on the back in pencil)
- Copy of all previously issued EADs
- Form G-1145 (https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145) (optional)

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:
- Do not mail your Form I-983 to USCIS.
- Make copies or scans of all of your documents prior to mailing your application to USCIS

Send your application packet to the appropriate address with delivery confirmation.

By U.S. Postal Service (USPS):
USCIS
P.O. Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

By Express Mail or Courier Service:
USCIS
Attn: AOS
2502 S. State Hwy. 121
Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

NOTE: If you successfully file the application for your STEM OPT extension prior to the expiration of your current OPT period; you may continue employment up to 180 days following the expiration of your original OPT. If your application is denied, you must stop working immediately.

Step 5: Wait for approval
USCIS will send you a Receipt Notice for your STEM OPT application within 2-4 weeks. Once you have received your receipt notice, you can track the status of your case using the case status search feature of the USCIS website at https://www.uscitsizenship.info/uscis-status.htm. You may elect to receive e-mail alerts about your case status.
Step 6: Receive your new EAD
USCIS will send you your new EAD indicating your new STEM OPT dates to the address listed on your Form I-765. You must send a photocopy of your new EAD to the Slater International Center at slatercenter@wellesley.edu to update your record.

Employers’ STEM OPT Responsibilities
If you are an employer who wants to hire an international student for the STEM OPT extension you must:

- Be enrolled in the E-Verify program and remain in good standing.
- Provide an employment opportunity that is commensurate with those of similarly situated U.S. workers in duties, hours, and compensation
- Document and provide a formal training program to augment the student’s academic learning through practical experience.
- Complete the Form I-983, Training Plan. In this form, you must attest that:
  - You have enough resources and trained personnel available to appropriately train the student;
  - The student will not replace a full- or part-time, temporary or permanent U.S. worker; and
  - Working for you will help the student attain their training objectives.
- Report material changes to the student’s employment to the DSO within 5 business days.

The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) may visit your worksite(s) to verify whether you are meeting the STEM OPT program requirements, including whether you are maintaining the ability and resources to provide structured and guided work-based learning experiences for the student.

Maintaining F-1 Status during the OPT STEM OPT Extension

Reporting
You are required to report the following information to the Slater International Center throughout the entire period of your STEM OPT extension:

- Your legal name
- Your residential or mailing address
- Your email address
- Your employer’s name
- Your employer’s address

You must report any change in this information to the Slater International Center within 10 days of the change. Failure to report properly could be considered a violation of your F-1 student immigration status and could result in the termination of your SEVIS record.

It is your responsibility to follow these reporting requirements but the Slater will send reminder emails with a form to update every six months to verify your contact and employment information. Please complete the form and return it to the Slater International Center within 5 business days.

Evaluation Reporting
You must also complete two self-evaluations. These evaluations are found on page 5 of the Form I-983. The first evaluation must be submitted within 12 months of the STEM OPT start date. The second evaluation must be submitted at the end of the STEM OPT period. You and your immediate supervisor must sign the evaluation and submit it to the Slater International Center.

Changing Employers while on STEM OPT
If you leave your current place of employment while on STEM OPT, you must let the Slater International Center know within 5 days of ending employment and complete the “Final Evaluation on Student Progress” on page 5 of the Form I-983.
If you begin new employment, you must also submit a new Form I-983 with your new employer information and training plan. Please submit the new Form I-983 to slatercenter@wellesley.edu prior to beginning your employment. A Slater International Center staff member will review your training plan and if it is complete, issue you a new Form I-20 with your new employer information. **You may not begin employment until your Form I-983 has been reviewed and approved.**

**Unemployment**

For STEM OPT, you are granted an additional 60 days of unemployment for a total of 150 days of unemployment for the duration of your OPT. Please let the Slater International Center know if you are approaching 150 days of unemployment so we may assist you in maintaining your status.

**Additional Resources**

You may have additional questions about whether or not you meet the eligibility requirements or want further details on the requirements; we recommend three excellent resources for more information:

Study in the States: [https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub)

Planning tool for 24-month extension of STEM OPT: [https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/OPT%2024%20Month%20STEM%20Planning%20Tool_0.xlsx](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/OPT%20%2424%20Month%20STEM%20Planning%20Tool_0.xlsx)

NAFSA STEM OPT: [http://www.nafsa.org/Find_Resources/Supporting_International_Students_And_Scholars/ISS_Issues/STEM_OPT_Rulemaking/](http://www.nafsa.org/Find_Resources/Supporting_International_Students_And_Scholars/ISS_Issues/STEM_OPT_Rulemaking/)

The formal training plan for the STEM OPT extension must be outlined on the Form I-983, and must clearly articulate the STEM OPT student’s learning objectives and affirm the employer’s commitment to helping the student achieve those objectives. The student and their employer must complete and sign Form I-983 and submit it to the student’s International Student & Scholar Advisor for review and approval before the STEM OPT extension can be recommended. STEM OPT students and their employers are subject to the terms and conditions of the STEM OPT extension regulations as indicated on the Form I-983.

The information below is to assist students and their employers to properly complete the Form I-983.

**Section 1: Student Information (Completed by Student)**

**Student Name:** Enter your full name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name) exactly as it appears on your Form I-20.

**Student Email Address:** Enter current non-Wellesley email address

**Name of School Recommending STEM OPT:** Enter “Wellesley College”

**Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned:** Enter “Wellesley College”

**SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT:** Wellesley College’s F-1 School Code is BOS214F00363000

**DSO Name and Contact Information:** Enter: Karen Zuffante Pabon kpabon@wellesley.edu, 781-283-2084

**Student SEVIS ID Number:** Enter your SEVIS identification (ID) number (see “SEVIS ID” at the top of your Form I-20, beginning with N)

**STEM OPT Requested Period:** The duration of your STEM OPT extension is based exclusively on your current OPT end date, regardless of whether the authorized dates match actual training dates. For a student currently on 12-month OPT requesting a STEM OPT extension, the start date should be the day after your current 12-month OPT ends and the end date is fixed at 24 months after the start date.

- **Start date** - date immediately after your current 12-month OPT ends (e.g. 05/31/2018)
- **End date** - add 24 months from the start date determined above, minus one day (e.g. 05/30/2020)

**Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code:** Enter your major and code per Form I-20 for the particular school and degree program you are basing your STEM OPT request. The CIP code can be found in the “Program of Study” section on page 1. The CIP code is a six-digit code (xx.xxxx) following the major.

**Level/Type of Qualifying Degree:** Enter “Bachelor’s”

**Date Awarded:** Enter the program end date listed on the Form I-20.

**Based on Prior Degree?** Check “No”

**Employment Authorization Number:** Enter your USCIS Number, found on your EAD. It is usually in the format of xxx-xxx-xxx.
Section 2: Student Certification (Completed by Student)

*Student Certification:* Review each item carefully and affirm the statements by signing the Form.

Section 3: Employer Information (Completed by Employer)

*Employer Name:* Enter your company, university, etc. name.

*Street Address, Suite, City, State, Zip Code:* Enter the business’s complete mailing address.

*Employer Website URL:* Enter the employer website URL, if available. If no website exists, enter N/A.

*Employer ID Number (EIN):* You may refer to your HR office for this information.

*Number of Full-Time Employees in the United States:* Enter the total number of employees of the business

*North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Code:* You may refer to your HR office for this information. This code is used by federal statistical agencies to classify business establishments for the purpose of collecting, analyzing and publishing statistical data related to the U.S. business economy.

*OPT Training Hours Per Week:* Enter the agreed-upon number of average working hours per week. In order to qualify for STEM OPT, the student must work a **minimum** of 20 hours per week for each job.

*Start Date of Employment:* Enter the date when the student will begin STEM OPT with the employer.

*Compensation:* Enter the dollar amount of salary, stipend, and/or other compensation, and the frequency of pay (per hour, per week, bi-weekly, monthly). Other compensation may include housing, tuition waivers, transportation costs, etc.

*Note:* The terms and conditions of a STEM OPT (including duties, hours, and compensation) must be commensurate with those applicable to similarly situated U.S. workers, except that a STEM OPT participant must work at least 20 hours per week while employed.

Section 4: Employer Certification (Completed by Employer)

*Employer Certification:* The Employer Official with signatory authority must be an individual who is familiar with the student’s goals and responsible for supervising the student during the employment period. The signatory must review each item carefully and affirm the statements by signing the Form.

Section 5: Training Plan for STEM OPT Students (Completed by Employer)

In order to better ensure the academic benefit and integrity of the extension, Federal regulations require each STEM OPT student to prepare and execute with her prospective employer a formal training plan that identifies learning objectives and a plan for achieving those objectives. The STEM OPT student and his or her employer must work together to finalize the plan.

*Student Name:* Enter student’s full name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name) exactly as it appears on their Form I-20.

*Employer Name:* Enter the employer’s name, as it appears in “Section 3: Employer Information.”
**Site Name:** Enter the employer’s site name, which may be the same as employer name in Section 3. However, if the student is working for a branch or subsidiary of a large entity, or anywhere other than the headquarters, provide the name of the actual work site.

**Site Address:** Enter the exact address of the work site where the STEM OPT will take place.

**Name of Official:** Enter the name of the individual who is familiar with the student’s goals and responsible for supervising the student during the employment period. This may or may not be the same Employer Official as in Section 4.

**Official’s Title:** Enter the title of the above individual

**Official’s Email:** Enter the email address of the above individual

**Official’s Phone Number:** Enter the phone number of the above individual

**Student Role:** Describe what specific tasks and assignments the student will carry out during their employment, and how these relate to the student’s STEM degree. The plan must cover a specific span of time, and detail specific goals and objectives.

**Goals and Objectives:** Describe the specific skills, knowledge, and techniques the student will learn or apply; how the student will achieve the goals set out for his or her training; and the training curriculum including the timeline.

**Employer Oversight:** Explain how the employer provides oversight and supervision to the student. If the employer has a training program or related policy in place that controls such oversight and supervision, a description of the program or policy may suffice to answer the question.

**Measures and Assessments:** Explain how the employer measures and confirms whether the student is acquiring new knowledge and skills. If the employer has a training program or related policy in place that controls such measures and assessments, a description of this program or policy may suffice to answer the question.

**Additional Remark:** Provide any additional pertinent information.

**Section 6: Employer Official Certification (Completed by Employer)**

**Certification of Official with Signatory Authority:** Signature by the individual who is familiar with the student’s goals and responsible for supervising the student during the employment period. The signatory must review each item carefully and affirm the statements by signing the Form. This person should be the same as the Official listed in Section 5.

**Evaluation on Student Progress (Completed by both Student and Employer)**

During the course of the STEM OPT employment, the student is required to submit self-reported evaluations and assessments. Student evaluations are a shared responsibility of both the student and the employer to ensure that the student’s practical training goals are being satisfactorily met. The student is responsible for conducting a self-evaluation based on his or her own training progress. The employer must review and sign the self-evaluation to attest to its accuracy.

These evaluations are required at the following times:

- First evaluation: required after completion of 12 months of STEM OPT period
- Final evaluation: due at conclusion of 24-month STEM OPT period
- **Enter the range of the student evaluation dates:** Enter start and end dates for first or last 12 months of STEM OPT training period.
**Student Signature:** Student must sign, print name, and enter date of signature.

**Employer Signature:** Signed by the signatory upon agreement with the assessment information that the student has entered for the evaluation portion of Form I-983.

**Upon Completion of the Evaluation:** Student will provide page 5 of the Form I-983 to the international student office at their school for record purposes.