



STEM OPT Extension Application Instructions

Students in certain degree programs in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) may extend their OPT for an additional 24 months.

Only students whose majors are listed on the official STEM program can request the STEM-OPT Extension. See official list at the link below: <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf>

A. Requirements.

To qualify for the 24-month STEM OPT extension, you must:

- Be in F-1 status;
- Be currently working in a period of post-completion OPT;
- Have a bachelor's degree or higher degree in an eligible **STEM field** (see list on link above);
- Have a **paid** job offer (unlike the 12 month OPT, unpaid work is not permitted under the 24 month STEM OPT Extension regulation) in an eligible STEM field;
- The job is with an employer enrolled in the USCIS **E-Verify** program (double-check with your employer to see if they are enrolled in E-Verify: <https://www.e-verify.gov/>);
- The job offer is for a **full-time employee position** (at least 20 hours of paid work per week).

Attention: Jobs paid by the hour are usually not considered an employee position, but independent contractor. Since a 1099 contractor is generally considered self-employed, this position will not qualify for STEM-OPT Extension approval. You need to be a W-2 employee to ensure compliance with the bona fide employer-employee relationship requirement. Unauthorized types of employment under STEM Extension include: unpaid or volunteer positions, employment through a temp or staffing agency, and self-employment.

When to apply: within 90 days before your current EAD expiration date.

B. Application

Step One: All of the following documents must be part of your file in the HU International Office:

1. Copy of your current and previous I-20s.
2. Copy of your passport.
3. Copy of your visa.
4. Copy of your most recent I-94.
5. Your current addresses (Home Country, U.S. Physical, and U.S. Mailing addresses).
6. Your current phone number, and personal e-mail address (as your HU email may be disconnected after graduation).

Step Two: Documents you will need to bring to the International Office to process your request for a new I-20 with the STEM OPT Extension request:

1. **The attached STEM OPT Extension Eligibility Form**, signed by your advisor or department chair explaining why the practical training is related to your field of study.
2. **The attached STEM OPT Extension Responsibilities Form**, initialed and signed by you.
3. **The attached STEM OPT Extension Statement of Understanding**,

4. **Job Offer Letter** from your employer stating the beginning and ending dates of the offer of employment, the address of the company for which you will be working, the number of hours per week, your position, salary, and your duties. The letter should be submitted on the company letterhead, with original signature.
5. Completed **Form I-983 Training Plan** by your employer (see form and instructions attached). Sections 3, 4 and 6 to be completed by employer, Section 5 to be completed by student and employer. Do not complete page 5 (see reporting requirements below when self-evaluations are due).
6. Employer's **E-Verify** company identification number.

Note: It can take up to 10 business days for the SEVIS system to issue the new I-20.

Step Three: Apply for your Work Authorization Document (EAD Card) with USCIS

1. Go to <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>. Download the current instructions for filing the I-765 and the form I-765 itself.
2. Print out and complete the application form (I-765).
3. Bring the form with the following supporting documentation to the International Office Inbound Immigration Specialist:
 - The completed application form I-765 (your work category will be (c)(3)(C)).
 - A check or money order for the application fees, made to the order of the “US Department of Homeland Security” (currently \$410, subject to change).
 - Copy of your new I-20 with the STEM OPT Extension request endorsement
 - Copy of your official school transcript and diploma showing STEM major
 - Copy of your current EAD card (front and back)
 - Copy of your most recent Form I-94 (can be obtained online at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>)
 - 2 passport-style photos. Lightly write your name and A-number on the back of each photo
 - Completed [G-1145 Form](#) (download online at : <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/g-1145.pdf> to put on top of application, to receive email/text message notification when you application is received by USCIS)

Note: the I-983 Training Plan does not need to be submitted to USCIS. You should keep the original of the training plan for your own records, and your employer and DSO also keep a copy for compliance.

Step Four: Once your file has been reviewed and approved by the Inbound Immigration Specialist, you must mail all documents to:

Via U.S. Postal Service (USPS):

USCIS
P.O. Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

Via FedEx or UPS:

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

C. After submitting your application:

- Please allow 2 to 5 months before receiving your EAD Card. To check the current USCIS time processing, visit <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>: select “Form I-765; Potomac Service Center.”
- If you change of address while your application is pending, you must update your new address within 10 days via: <https://egov.uscis.gov/coa/displayCOAForm.do>. You must also inform HUIO of your change of address to update your SEVIS record.
- You should receive an email/text notification, and letter confirming your case has been received within 2-3 weeks after filing. This letter will contain your Receipt Number. You must provide this Receipt Number to HUIO within 10 days of receipt. You can check the status of your case online at:

<https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>.

- Request for Evidence (RFE): USCIS may send you a document requesting additional information or evidence in order to process your application. You must respond to this request by the deadline indicated or your case will be cancelled. See the International Office Inbound Immigration Specialist for assistance in responding to an RFE.
- What if you do not receive your new STEM-OPT EAD card before your current EAD card expires? As long as USCIS has received your application prior to your current EAD card end date, your legal status and work authorization in the U.S. are automatically extended until you receive a decision from USCIS regarding your request. As such, you are allowed to start or continue working for your current employer during the pendency of your case. The Receipt Notice (I-797) will serve as proof of your extended status, and will be required by your employer in order to complete Form I-9.
- Can you travel abroad when your STEM OPT Extension is pending and your current EAD card is expired? No. It is not recommended that OPT students travel during the period after their EAD card issued for the regular 12-month OPT has expired and before they have the new EAD card for STEM OPT. You should wait for your new EAD card to arrive in the mail.

D. After approval:

The Federal Regulations have strict reporting requirements for students under the STEM-OPT Extension. Please see details on the Appendix, or at the following links:

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students-stem-opt-reporting-requirements>

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/employers-stem-opt-reporting-requirements>

- Notify the HU International Office of your approval, provide us with a copy of the EAD (front and back), and create your SEVP Portal account: <https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/>
- If you **change of address** while your application is pending, you must update your new address **within 10 days** on your SEVP Portal & on USCIS website via: <https://egov.uscis.gov/coa/displayCOAForm.do>. If you do not have your SEVP Portal set up, you must inform HUIO of your change of address to update your SEVIS record.
- If you **change of employer** (or if your current employment terms changes, e.g. change of hours), you must update the information on your SEVP Portal or report it to HUIO no later than **10 days** after beginning of employment in order to update your SEVIS record. You must submit a **new completed Form I-983 training plan** to HUIO for your new employer. Your new employer must qualify under the same STEM OPT requirements (full-time paid position, and E-Verify employer).
- If your **employment is terminated**, you must update the information on your SEVP Portal or report it to HUIO no later than 10 days after termination. Remember: you are only allowed an additional **60 days of unemployment** under the STEM OPT Extension.
- You must submit your **annual self-evaluation 12-months after your employment start date, and/or your final evaluation upon termination of your employment (page 5 of Form I-983)** to HUIO within 10 days.
- You must keep us informed **every 6-months** to confirm name, address, and employment information.
- If you do not intend to carry out the entire 24 months period of your STEM OPT Extension because you plan to re-enroll in school in a graduate program, check with the HU International Office in **how to cancel your EAD Card**, and how this could affect any future post-completion OPT eligibility. Even though your OPT will automatically be canceled in SEVIS when you re-enroll for classes or on the date your records are transferred to another U.S. institution, it is important to inform USCIS of such change.
- If the USCIS checks with SEVIS or your employer and finds records indicating that you are not employed or have been unemployed for more than 150 days (90 days under OPT if unused, plus additional 60 days under STEM OPT), you will have to prove you were actually employed or out of the country for work or on authorized leave, in order to avoid cancellation of F-1 status.
- If you **travel outside the U.S.** while under STEM OPT, you must (1) obtain a travel endorsement from your DSO on your I-20; (2) have an unexpired visa (or re-apply for a visa while abroad); (3) have your unexpired EAD Card; (4) have your job offer letter from your current employer, and (5) a letter from your employer authorizing leave or indicating this is a work-related travel. P.S.: U.S. Embassies can decline to renew your F-1 visa if you do not have your EAD and current offer of employment.

Note: You are allowed to work for concurrent (multiple) employers under the STEM OPT extension, as long as both positions are full-time paid positions (at least 20h/week), all employers are enrolled in E-Verify, and all employers submit Form I-983 training plan.

Under the STEM OPT extension, you receive an **additional 60 days allotment to be unemployed** giving you a **total of 150 days of unemployment during your entire OPT time.**

At the end of your STEM OPT Extension, you will have the same **60 days grace period.** During your 60-day grace period after expiration of your EAD card, you can either (1) leave the country; (2) re-enroll in school, or (3) adjust status to another immigration status. Note: you cannot work during your grace period. Also, if you leave the U.S. during your grace period, you cannot reenter (unless you reapply for a visa, or re-enroll in school.)

Cap-Gap Extension: STEM OPT Extension recipients who have a pending H-1B cap petition filed on April 1, with an approval start date of October 1, will have their status extended until their H-1B start date (however, you cannot continue working until your H-1B start date).



STEM OPT Extension Eligibility Form

SECTION A (TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT):

1. First Name: _____ Last Name: _____
2. SEVIS #: _____ HUID: _____ Phone No.: _____
3. Personal E-mail: _____ HU E-mail: _____
4. Degree: Bachelor Master Ph.D. STEM Major Code: _____
5. Current EAD Card Date: From _____ to _____
6. Current Employer: _____
7. Has this above information changed since your last I-20? Yes No.
8. Employment Start Date: _____ Employment End Date: _____
9. Employer's Name: _____
E-Verify Number: _____ EIN: _____
Employer's Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
Supervisor's Name: _____ Supervisor's E-mail: _____
Supervisor's Phone No.: _____ Your Position: _____
10. Number of work hours per week: _____

I agree to keep my address and employment information updated throughout my STEM OPT Extension.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

SECTION B (TO BE COMPLETED BY ACADEMIC ADVISOR):

1. Please confirm the student's STEM major program: _____
2. Please indicate how this training extension opportunity is related and relevant to the student's STEM program of study: _____

Academic Advisor's Name: _____ Phone No.: _____ E-mail: _____

Academic Advisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

This form must be submitted to Hampton University International Office for approval.



STEM OPT EXTENSION RESPONSIBILITIES FORM

STEM OPT applicants must ensure they have met all immigration-mandated responsibilities to maintain their status. Please INITIAL EACH SECTION in the space provided to indicate your understanding of the items below. **I understand that:**

PRIOR OPT COMPLETION: I must have completed my post-completion OPT before being eligible to apply for the STEM OPT Extension. ____

STEM FIELD OF STUDY: My degree and the proposed employment must be in a STEM field of study. ____

PAID EMPLOYMENT: I must have a paid job offer in order to request the STEM OPT Extension. ____

WORKING HOURS: I must be working full-time (more than 20 hours per week) under the STEM OPT Extension.. ____

EMPLOYMENT DATES: the earliest possible start date is the first day after current EAD card expiration date, and the latest possible end date is 24 months after new EAD card start date. ____

STEM OPT EXTENSION APPLICATION: I must send my STEM OPT Extension application with USCIS within the period of 90 days prior to expiration of my current EAD Card. The EAD card will be valid for up to 24 months. ____

PROCESSING TIME: Processing time for my EAD card may take up to 5 months. I can continue or start working until I receive my EAD Card. I cannot travel until I receive my new EAD card. ____

REQUEST FOR EVIDENCE (RFE): USCIS may send me a document requesting additional information or evidence in order to process my application. I must respond to this request by the deadline indicated or my case will be cancelled. ____

SEVP PORTAL: I must report any changes of address, phone number, and changes to my employment on my SEVP Portal to meet my legal reporting requirements, or ask my DSO to report it for me in SEVIS. If I report the changes myself on SEVP, I must still inform my DSO of any changes, as well as to obtain a new I-20 with updated employment information. ____

EMPLOYMENT REPORTING: If I change of employer (or if my current employment terms changes, e.g. change of hours), I must report it on my SEVP Portal or to HUIO as soon as possible but no later than 10 days after beginning employment to update my SEVIS record. I also must submit a new form I-983 Training Plan and E-Verify number for my new employer within 10 days. Additionally, I must report to HUIO every 6 months to confirm name, address, and employment information. ____

UNEMPLOYMENT: I am only allowed up to 150 days of unemployment during my entire OPT period (90 days under OPT, plus additional 60 days under STEM OPT Extension). If I already used my 90 days of unemployment under my regular OPT, I will only be allowed 60 days of unemployment during my entire STEM OPT Extension period. If my employment is terminated, I must report it on my SEVP Portal or to HUIO no later than 10 days after termination. ____

ADDRESS UPDATES: I must keep all my required addresses (U.S. Physical Address, U.S. Mailing Address, and Home Country Address), my email address, and phone number current. Any changes must be submitted within 10 days. Out-of-date addresses are a violation of my status. I must also submit changes to U.S. Physical and U.S. Mailing addresses to USCIS within 10 days. ____

SELF-EVALUATIONS: I must submit my annual self-evaluation 12-months after my employment start date. In addition, I must submit my final self-evaluation upon termination of my employment (page 5 of Form I-983). These self-evaluations must be signed by my supervisor, and submitted to my DSO within 10 days. ____

RE-ENROLLMENT IN SCHOOL: If I decide to re-enroll in school while on OPT, I must consult with HUIO on how to cancel my EAD Card. I am eligible for a new 12 months OPT authorization if I change to a higher education level. ____

POLICY UPDATES: This responsibilities form is valid for current HUIO policies and U.S. Immigration regulations. I will follow any updates in policies by contacting HUIO and/or visiting the USCIS/DHS websites directly. ____

I have read and agree to follow these regulations, policies and procedures.

Student's Name: _____ Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____



STEM OPT Extension Statement of Understanding

I, _____, acknowledge that I have read and understood Hampton University's protocol concerning the STEM OPT Extension. I understand that this extension is not guaranteed to me, and that the application fees to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) are non-refundable. I will not hold Hampton University, or any of its affiliates, liable should USCIS denies my STEM OPT Extension application.

Should I refuse to sign this document, I understand that Hampton University is going to uphold the approval or denial decision made by USCIS concerning my STEM OPT Extension application, and that no contestation will be made on my behalf.

Date: _____ Signature: _____

HUID: _____