



# 24-month STEM OPT Extension Guide

## What is OPT Extension?

The STEM OPT extension is a 24-month period of temporary training that directly relates to an F-1 student's program of study in an approved STEM field. On May 10, 2016, this extension effectively replaced the previous 17-month STEM OPT extension.

## Am I Eligible for OPT Extension?

- You have a valid F-1 student visa
- You are currently in a valid period of OPT
- Have earned a STEM degree (bachelor's, master's, or doctoral)
  - o Check here: <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf>
- Working in a paid position for participating E-verified employer.
- You can start applying 90 days before your current OPT end date found on your EAD card.
- You may not apply for STEM OPT during the 60-day grace period following an initial period of regular post-completion OPT.

## How to apply for STEM OPT Extension?

**IMPORTANT! Do not apply to USCIS until you receive the OPT recommendation I-20 from the International Student and Global Scholar Services Office. This I-20 must be included in your application to USCIS.** You can choose to apply online (recommended) or apply through physical mail.

Before receiving the I-20 for OPT from our office, you must submit the required documents to [ISGSS@LEWISU.EDU](mailto:ISGSS@LEWISU.EDU) in a PDF file first for review:

### Step 1: Fill out the I-983 form with your employer

- SEVIS School Code for Lewis is CHI214F11210000
- CIP code can be found on your I-20 next to your "major" in the "program of study".
- The Start Date of your OPT extension should be the end date of your OPT period.
- Download the form via:  
<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/i983.pdf>

### Step 2: Prepare the following documents and email in a clear PDF format to [ISGSS@LEWISU.EDU](mailto:ISGSS@LEWISU.EDU)

- a. Form I-983
- b. Form I-765(if you are applying online, please send a snapshot of your application found on the last part of the online application)
  - a. Please note of the filing fee: \$410 (subject to change)
- c. Copy(s) of your previous i20 with CPT or OPT authorization (only if you did CPT/OPT before)

- d. Copy of your passport & visa
- e. Copy of your most recent i-94
- f. 2 passport style photos (not older than 30 days)
- g. EAD card copy
- h. Cashier's check of \$410.00 (not needed for online application)
- i. Form G-1145 - optional if you want to request an electronic notification when USCIS accepts your application (not needed for online application)
- j. Transcript and diploma – request a copy from the Office of the Registrars at [registrar@lewisu.edu](mailto:registrar@lewisu.edu)

**If you choose to file through physical mail, please inform us and send an email to ISGSS@LEWISU.EDU.**

**What do I need to do after submitting my STEM OPT application?**

1. Wait for your STEM OPT approval notice and EAD card. This may take 30-45 days.
2. After receiving your EAD card, email ISGSS@LEWISU.EDU:
  - a. Fill out the STEM OPT Information Sheet (page 4)
  - b. Fill out the STEM OPT employer form (page 5)
  - c. Submit a copy of your EAD card
  - d. Submit a copy of your current STEM OPT offer letter
  - e. Our office will issue an updated i20 with approved OPT and employer information in 1-2 business days after receiving your approval email.

**IMPORTANT! SEVIS Reporting Requirements**

**Deadlines for Validation Reports and Self-Evaluations:**

DSOs must validate a student’s employment data three times during the STEM OPT extension. Validation reporting is done in SEVIS. Paper documentation is NOT mailed to SEVP but must be submitted to the DSO. Timelines are below. Please refer to your STEM OPT Information Sheet for your particular reporting deadlines:

Activity	Timeline
Validation Reports due (received via email from SEVP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 months after start of STEM OPT Extension</li> <li>• 12 months after start of STEM OPT Extension</li> <li>• 18 months after start of STEM OPT Extension</li> <li>• 24 months after the start of STEM OPT Extension</li> </ul> <p>For each reporting period listed above</p>
Self-evaluations due or I-983	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 months after STEM OPT start date (midway)</li> <li>• 24 months after STEM OPT start date (final)</li> <li>• At conclusion of training opportunity (final; usually at 24 months, but possible any time during the period of authorized employment)</li> </ul>

## **Unemployment**

DHS allows STEM OPT students an additional 60 days of unemployment during the 24-month STEM OPT extension period.

This is in addition to the 90-day maximum period of unemployment that students are allowed during the initial period of post-completion OPT. Students who obtain a 24-month STEM OPT extension are therefore allowed a maximum of 150 days of unemployment.

If a student completes one period of OPT (including a STEM OPT extension), and then pursues a second period of OPT on the basis of having earned a second degree at a higher educational level, the student will be able to benefit from the rule's authorized 90-day and 150-day periods of unemployment (as appropriate) at both educational levels.

In other words, a student receives unemployment eligibility each time they participate in a period of post-completion practical training (including STEM OPT).

## **Traveling while on STEM OPT**

It is not recommended to travel while STEM OPT is pending. You may travel outside of the US; however, there will be risks in re-entering the US without proper documentations. If your OPT is approved and you have a job offer, prepare the following before traveling and for re-entry:

1. Email [ISGSS@lewisu.edu](mailto:ISGSS@lewisu.edu) 2 weeks before your travel date
2. Bring your valid passport and visa
3. Bring your updated I-20
4. Bring your EAD card and OPT job offer letter

**STEM OPT STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET AND REPORTING DATES**

This form provides the information required by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for granting a STEM Extension request for Optional Practical Training.

**SECTION I: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE STUDENT AFTER RECEIVING THE STEM EAD CARD APPROVAL**

Name (first, middle, last): \_\_\_\_\_

Lewis ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_ SEVIS ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Degree:  Bachelors  Masters  PhD Major/Program of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

*[] I understand that, once approved for STEM OPT, I must comply with reporting requirements below.*

Student signature: _____	Date Signed: _____
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**SECTION II: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE DSO**

1983 Training Plan Submitted \_\_\_\_\_ STEM OPT Start Date \_\_\_\_\_

STEM OPT Students Must Report to their DSOs every 6 months. As part of this reporting, you must confirm the validity of your SEVIS information including your: Legal Name, Address, Employer Name and Address, and Status of Current Employment/Practical Training. Both the student and employer are obligated to report to the student’s DSO any changes to the student’s formal training i983 plan. For more information about reporting requirements, [click here](#).

**6 Month Validation Report Due:** \_\_\_\_\_

Student checks in the [SEVP Portal](#) to ensure the following information is correct: physical home address, mailing address, telephone numbers, email, employer information, and employment authorization. Once the student has made any necessary changes and verifies the information is correct, they must inform [ISGSS@lewis.edu](mailto:ISGSS@lewis.edu) and the DSO will validate the student’s SEVIS record.

**12 Month Validation Report and Self-Evaluation (i983) Due:** \_\_\_\_\_

In addition to the validation report due every 6 months, STEM OPT students must complete an annual self-evaluation and report to the DSO about the progress of their training experience. Students must sign the self-evaluation before submitting to the DSO, who will include it in the student’s record.

**18 Month Validation Report Due:** \_\_\_\_\_

Same process as the 6-month validation report.

**24 Month Final Validation Report and Final Self-Evaluation (i983) Due:** \_\_\_\_\_

The final validation report and self-evaluation is due at conclusion of the training opportunity (usually at 24 months, but possible any time during the period of authorized employment).

**CHANGING EMPLOYERS:** If you change employers, you and your employer are responsible for emailing [ISGSS@lewisu.edu](mailto:ISGSS@lewisu.edu) within 10 days of the change with the following information: (1) end date of your employment (2) [final i983 self-evaluation](#) (3) new offer letter, employer information, and new i-983 training plan.

**STEM OPT EMPLOYER FORM: To be completed by the F1 Student**

Full Name (last, first, middle):
Lewis ID Number:
SEVIS ID Number:
Degree/ Program of study:
Current US Address (street, bldg./apt #, city, state, zip code):

Explain how this employment is related to your degree:

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Employer Name:
Employer EIN:
Job title:
Start Date:
End Date:
Employer Address (street, city, state, zip code):
Supervisor Name:
Supervisor Phone:
Supervisor Email

**Signature of Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Please include a copy of your offer letter and EAD card**

Return form to: International Student and Global Scholar Services Office  
Email: [isgss@lewisu.edu](mailto:isgss@lewisu.edu)