

The STEM Extension of Optional Practical Training (OPT) allows "...F-1 STEM students who have elected to pursue 12 months of OPT in the United States to extend the OPT period by 24 months (STEM OPT extension)."

[81 Fed. Reg. 13039 (March 11, 2016)], <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub>

It is available for students who are currently engaging in post-completion OPT, have secured employment with an E-Verify employer in their major field of study, **and** have completed a degree in a qualifying STEM field. To verify that your degree qualifies as an approved STEM program, please contact an OISS advisor.

STEPS TO APPLY FOR STEM OPT EXTENSION

STEP 1: Make an appointment to discuss your plans with an OISS advisor in person or over the phone AND/OR review the STEM OPT Extension PowerPoint online: <http://oiss.rice.edu/stem/>

STEP 2: Verify that your employment and personal information in the SEVP Portal is current and accurate.

Then provide the following completed forms to OISS:

- OISS Student Statement of Understanding (attached)
- Form I-765 "Application for Employment Authorization": Visit <http://www.uscis.gov/i-765> and download the "Form I-765". Make sure to also read the "Instructions for Form I-765", in particular the information under Foreign Student Categories that applies to Optional Practical Training, and the General Instructions. Please also read the OISS tips online at <http://oiss.rice.edu/OPTtips>. We strongly recommend that the form is typed on a computer and only printed for an original signature.
- Form I-983 "Training Plan for STEM OPT Students": Review instructions online and complete with your employer; available at <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/i983.pdf>
- Proof of payment of the \$500 Rice STEM OPT administrative fee (<https://signup.rice.edu/STEMextension>)
- If STEM OPT extension is based on a previous degree from another university, provide copies of corresponding I-20 and posted degree. You must also provide evidence that the institution is currently accredited by the U.S. Department of Education and certified by the SEVP.

STEP 3: OISS will send a confirmation email once your new STEM OPT I-20 and SEVIS Employment History are ready (allow for 5 business days). If you are no longer in Houston, you may authorize a friend to pick up your I-20, or send OISS a prepaid shipping label.

STEP 4: Work with an OISS advisor to assemble your STEM application packet. If you are no longer in Houston, an OISS advisor will work with you by email and phone to complete your STEM OPT application. Please prepare the following documents, in the following order:

- Recommended [G-1145 E-notification](#) form
- A check or money order for \$410.00 to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" OR Form [G-1450](#)
- Recommended cover letter (see attached template)
- Two passport-style photos *taken within 30 days* (<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/photos.html>)
- Completed Form I-765 Application for Employment Authorization
- Photocopy of signed STEM OPT I-20
- SEVIS employment history printout (OISS will provide this along with your STEM OPT I-20)
- Photocopies of your passport, most recent F-1 visa, and most recent I-94 card or printout (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>)
- Photocopy of the front and back of current (and any previous) EAD card(s)
- Photocopies of previous CPT I-20(s), if any
- Official Rice transcript (hardcopy; should remain in sealed envelope)
- Photocopy of diploma – if needed, you may purchase a Facsimile Diploma on letter-sized paper from the Registrar's Office (<https://registrar.rice.edu/students/diplomas>)
- Additional supplemental documents as stated in the cover letter

STEM OPT Extension FAQ

○ WHEN TO APPLY

You may apply as early as 90 days before the end of your 12-month OPT period. Your application *must* be received by USCIS before your 12-month OPT end date and within 60 days of the STEM OPT I-20 issuance date.

○ HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO APPLY

The USCIS application fee is \$410. Rice also charges a one-time per STEM OPT extension administrative fee of \$500. This will help offset additional resources needed to process compliance for this benefit.

○ WHAT SHOULD THE PHOTOS LOOK LIKE

Standard U.S. passport photos: Square 2" x 2" (5cm x 5cm), front view, full face, white or off-white background. For full specifications, please see <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/photos.html>.

Many FedEx, CVS, and Walgreens branches offer reasonably priced passport photo services near Rice. Note that the photos must be recent (taken within 30 days of your application submission to USCIS).

○ WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOUR STEM OPT APPLICATION IS MAILED

1. USCIS sends an I-797 Notice of Action once your application is received, usually in about two weeks. This notice will contain a receipt number to check application status at <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>.
2. USCIS mails your STEM OPT EAD card. Processing times vary but may take 90+ days.

○ WHAT IF MY STEM OPT EAD CARD DOES NOT ARRIVE IN TIME

Even if your new STEM OPT EAD card has not arrived by the start of your 24-month extension period, you may continue working for an E-Verify employer for up to 180 days according to the Code of Federation Regulations (8CFR 213.2(f)(11)(i)(C) and 8CFR 274a.12(b)(6)(iv)). Once your new STEM OPT EAD card arrives, you should provide a copy to your employer and OISS. Note that you may not be able to renew your driver license without the STEM OPT EAD.

○ UNEMPLOYMENT DURING STEM OPT EXTENSION PERIOD

Students are required to work full-time (defined as at least 20 hours per week) for an E-Verify employer during the STEM OPT Extension. Students are permitted a total of 150 days of unemployment in the combined 36-month period of OPT (12-months of regular OPT plus 24-month STEM OPT extension). Unemployment days accumulated during the regular 12-month OPT carry over to the 24-month extension period.

○ TRAVEL DURING STEM OPT PERIOD

Re-entry into the U.S. may be denied after the 12-month OPT end date if the STEM OPT extension application is still pending. Once the STEM OPT extension is approved, students may travel outside the U.S. provided they have all of the following documents: 1) Passport valid at least 6 months; 2) unexpired F-1 visa stamp in passport; 3) STEM OPT "Approved" I-20 endorsed for travel (must re-enter U.S. within 6 months of signature date); 4) valid STEM OPT EAD card; 5) employment letter from E-Verify employer. Application for F-1 visa renewal during STEM OPT can be risky. As the F-1 visa is a nonimmigrant visa, it is important to demonstrate strong ties to home country and nonimmigrant intent. When seeking re-entry into the U.S., inform the CBP officer that you are an F-1 student on practical training.

○ REQUIRED FOLLOW-UP ONCE STEM OPT PERIOD STARTS

1. Bring or send OISS a copy of your new STEM OPT EAD card.
2. Report changes in local address and/or phone number within 10 days through the [SEVP Portal](#).
3. Submit a new Form I-983 to oiss@rice.edu if there are any changes in your STEM OPT employment (employer's name, EIN, supervisor information, objectives, start/end date, etc.) and for new/additional employment.
4. Verify your employment and personal information with OISS by submitting a validation report every 6 months (even if nothing has changed) at <https://oiss.rice.edu/opt>.
5. Complete two self-evaluations (last page of Form I-983): the first one within the first 12 months of the STEM OPT start date, and a second by the end of the employment or STEM OPT period, whichever is earlier. The evaluations must be signed by you and your supervisor, and then submitted to OISS (oiss@rice.edu).
6. Report any changes in your visa status or departure from the U.S. to OISS at oiss@rice.edu.

○ CHANGING JOBS WHILE STEM APPLICATION IS PENDING

If you are considering changing employers while your application is pending, contact OISS immediately for guidance.

Please download the Word document file of this cover letter, edit it with your information (see all highlighted sections), and send it with your STEM OPT Extension application along with the rest of your documents!

[Your Full Name]

[SEVIS ID: Nxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]

[I-94: xxxxxxxxxxxxx]

RE: FORM I-765 APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION FOR OPT 24-MONTH EXTENSION FOR STEM STUDENTS (c)(3)(C), F-1 STUDENT

[Date used on I-765]

Dear USCIS Officer:

OPT 24-Month Extension for STEM Students Requested Dates [xx/xx/xxxx – xx/xx/xxxx]

This OPT 24-Month Extension for STEM Students (c)(3)(C) application includes the following:

Section 1

- Form G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance
- Check/money order of \$410 made out to U.S. Department of Homeland Security *OR* Form G-1450, Authorization for Credit Card Transactions (only include the option you are using for payment and remove the others)
- 2 passport-style photographs taken within the last 30 days with my name and I-94 on the back of the photo in pencil
- Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

Section 2

- Copy of STEM OPT I-20
- CPT History printout from SEVIS

Section 3

- Copy of passport
- Copy of visa (remove this line if you do not have an F-1 visa stamp [e.g. if you are a Canadian citizen])
- Copy of most recent Form I-94
- Copy of previous EAD
- Official transcript
- Copy of diploma showing degree received and field of study

Section 4 (Use only if you have had a previous SEVIS number and/or previous practical training. Examples include: transferring your status at the same academic level; changing levels — e.g. Bachelor's to Master's; leave of absence)

- Statement explaining previous history. Be as detailed as possible.
- Documentation verifying statement above. Items include: EADs, I-20s with CPT, letters from previous school(s) verifying practical training authorizations.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Respectfully,

[Your Signature]

[Your Full Name]

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS

Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) Optional Practical Training (OPT)

OMB CONTROL NO. 1653-0054
EXPIRATION DATE: 03/31/2019

SECTION 1: STUDENT INFORMATION (Completed by Student)			
Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):		Student Email Address:	
Name of School Recommending STEM OPT:	Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned:	SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT (including 3-digit suffix):	
Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information:		Student SEVIS ID No.:	STEM OPT Requested Period: (mm-dd-yyyy) From: _____ To: _____
Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: _____			
Level/Type of Qualifying Degree: _____			
Date Awarded: (mm-dd-yyyy) _____			
Based on Prior Degree? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Employment Authorization Number: _____			

Mark "Rice University"

Use the following:
Adria Baker
6100 Main St., MS-365
Houston, TX 77005
713-348-6095
oiss@rice.edu

Rice' School Code is listed on your I-20 under the section "School Information"

Your SEVIS ID is listed at the top of the first page on your I-20

Your CIP code is listed on your I-20 under the Major information in the section "Program of Study"

SECTION 2: STUDENT CERTIFICATION

I declare and affirm under penalty of perjury that the statements and information made herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.



Student Statement of Understanding for STEM OPT

Office of International Students & Scholars

Revised October 18, 2018

STUDENT NAME: _____ STUDENT ID: _____

In order to meet the criteria of the STEM OPT Extension, please initial that you understand and agree to each of the following:

- _____ 1. I have read and understood the regulations regarding the STEM OPT extension: [81 Fed. Reg. 13039 \(March 11, 2016\)](#) and <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub>. I understand that while I am on the STEM OPT extension I am still in F-1 status. It is my responsibility to maintain my F-1 status and adhere to the regulations regarding F-1 status and STEM OPT.
- _____ 2. I understand that I may only work for employers enrolled in E-Verify during my authorized STEM OPT period.
My STEM OPT employer's E-Verify number is _____.
- _____ 3. While on STEM OPT, I must use a non-Rice email address to access the [SEVP Portal](#) for reporting changes in local address and phone number. All SEVP Portal communications will also be sent to this email address.
Non-Rice Email Account: _____ (please print clearly).
- _____ 4. I understand that it is my responsibility, and not that of the OISS, to communicate the requirements regarding the STEM OPT extension to my employer, including Form I-983. If my employer has questions regarding their reporting and other requirements, I will direct them to the resources available at <http://oiss.rice.edu/stem>.
- _____ 5. I agree to follow the requirements related to Form I-983, including but not limited to: 1) a formal training plan, 2) annual self-evaluations, 3) reporting any material changes, and 4) termination of employment.
- _____ 6. I will submit the required I-983 self-evaluations to the OISS, signed by my employer: by the 12-month mark of my STEM OPT period, at the conclusion of each employment, and at the end of my STEM OPT period.
- _____ 7. I will report, as required by law, any material changes or deviations in my STEM OPT employment (employer's name, employer's EIN, employer's address, decrease in compensation, significant decrease in hours, supervisor information, goals and objectives, employment start/end date, etc.) to OISS by submitting an updated I-983 to oiss@rice.edu soon as possible but no later than 10 days of the change.
- _____ 8. Even if there are no changes in employment, I will submit a required validation report every 6 months at <https://oiss.rice.edu/opt>.
- _____ 9. I will report changes in my local address and/or phone number within 10 days through the [SEVP Portal](#).
- _____ 10. I understand that if I do not meet all self-reporting and self-evaluation deadlines, I may be auto-terminated by SEVIS, and subject to deportation.
- _____ 11. I understand that OISS does not send reminders of timelines for self-reporting and self-evaluating deadlines. It is my responsibility, and will follow the DHS STEM HUB reporting laws (<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/assets/sevpstemoptreportingrequirementsfinal.pdf>)
- _____ 12. I will provide OISS with a photocopy of my new STEM OPT EAD card by email (oiss@rice.edu), by fax (713-348-6058), or in person as soon as I receive it.
- _____ 13. I understand that my STEM OPT employment must be directly related to my STEM degree. Furthermore, I understand that I am not eligible to use my prior STEM degree if I have already received a STEM OPT extension based on my prior degree.
- _____ 14. I understand that if my STEM OPT extension is denied, my employment end date will be the date on my current EAD card or the date on my notice of denial, whichever is later.
- _____ 15. I understand that I will be charged additional fees for processing the STEM OPT extension by USCIS and Rice University. In addition, I understand that the fees may be paid by either myself or my employer and they are non-refundable.

By signing below, I have read and understood the Student Statement of Understanding for STEM OPT and I agree to comply with DHS and USCIS immigration regulations throughout my Post-Completion OPT and STEM extension of OPT.

Student Signature Date

For OISS Use Only

I-765 Complete: Yes No I-983 Complete: Yes No Paid STEM Fee: Yes No
Updated Profile to F-1 STEM OPT: Yes No
OISS Authorization: Yes No Processed by: _____ Date: _____