

# STEM OPT Extension Tutorial



Office of International  
Students & Scholars

Welcome to the STEM Optional Practical Training tutorial for Rice F-1 international students! This tutorial is a comprehensive guide to STEM OPT extensions at Rice University, we hope you find it helpful. Please contact OISS should you have any questions.

The topics covered include:

- [Overview – What is the STEM OPT Extension?](#)
- [Eligibility Requirements](#)
- [Application Process](#)
- [Application Timeline](#)
- [Required Documentation](#)
- [Sample STEM OPT I-20 Authorization](#)
- [Mailing Instructions](#)
- [USCIS Processing Timeline](#)
- [Travel During STEM OPT](#)
- [Cap Gap and STEM OPT Extensions](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)

## What is STEM OPT Extension?

The **STEM OPT Extension** gives F-1 students currently on valid post-completion OPT the option to extend their authorization for an additional **24 months** of practical training.

### Important Factors to Consider:

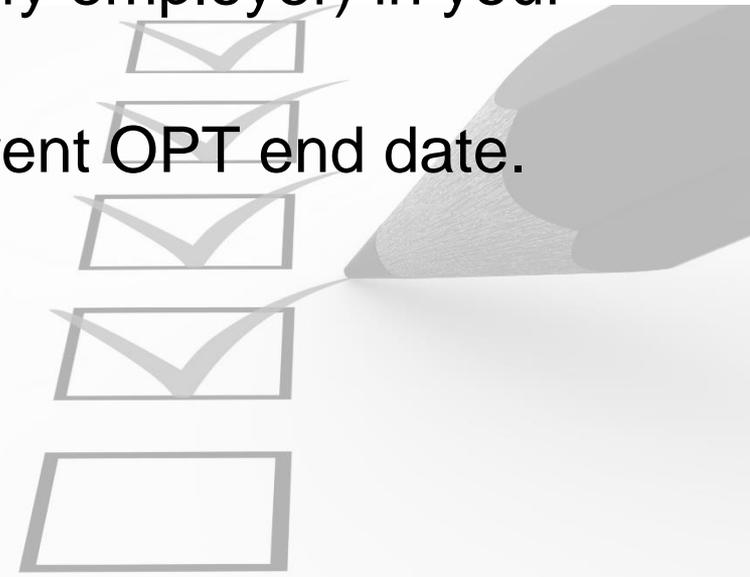
- You can work anywhere in the U.S. related to your STEM field, as long as your employer is enrolled in E-Verify.
- Since you will continue to stay in F-1 status during STEM OPT, you must report to OISS.
- The STEM OPT extension can only be applied twice in your lifetime – not for each degree level.

### **8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(C)**

*24-month extension of post-completion OPT for a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) degree. [...] An extension will be for 24 months for the first qualifying degree for which the student has completed all course requirements [...] If a student completes all such course requirements for another qualifying degree at a higher degree level than the first, the student may apply for a second 24- month extension of OPT while in a valid period of post-completion OPT authorized [...] In no event may a student be authorized for more than two lifetime STEM OPT extensions.*

## Eligibility Requirements

1. Must be in valid F-1 status & currently authorized for OPT.
2. Must have completed a degree in a DHS approved STEM field (science, technology, engineering, or math).
3. Must be working for an E-Verify employer (or have an offer of employment from an E-Verify employer) in your major area of study.
4. Must be within 90 days prior to current OPT end date.





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## Eligible Fields of Study and E-Verify

- **STEM eligible fields** can be verified by your CIP Code on <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension>. This is listed on the 1<sup>st</sup> page of your I-20 with your Major information, as a 6 digit numerical code “xx.xxxx.”
- You **must have** a job offer with an employer enrolled in E-Verify to apply. It is best to check with your employer’s HR department to obtain their E-Verify information.
- Your employer **must** provide a formal training plan articulating your learning objectives during the STEM extension on the Training Plan Form I-983.
  - If you change employers or information within the Form I-983 changes, you must submit an updated copy to [oiss@rice.edu](mailto:oiss@rice.edu) within 10 days of the change.
- You **must** submit your current OPT employment via the SEVP Portal *before* we can process your request.



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# Dates of STEM OPT Extension

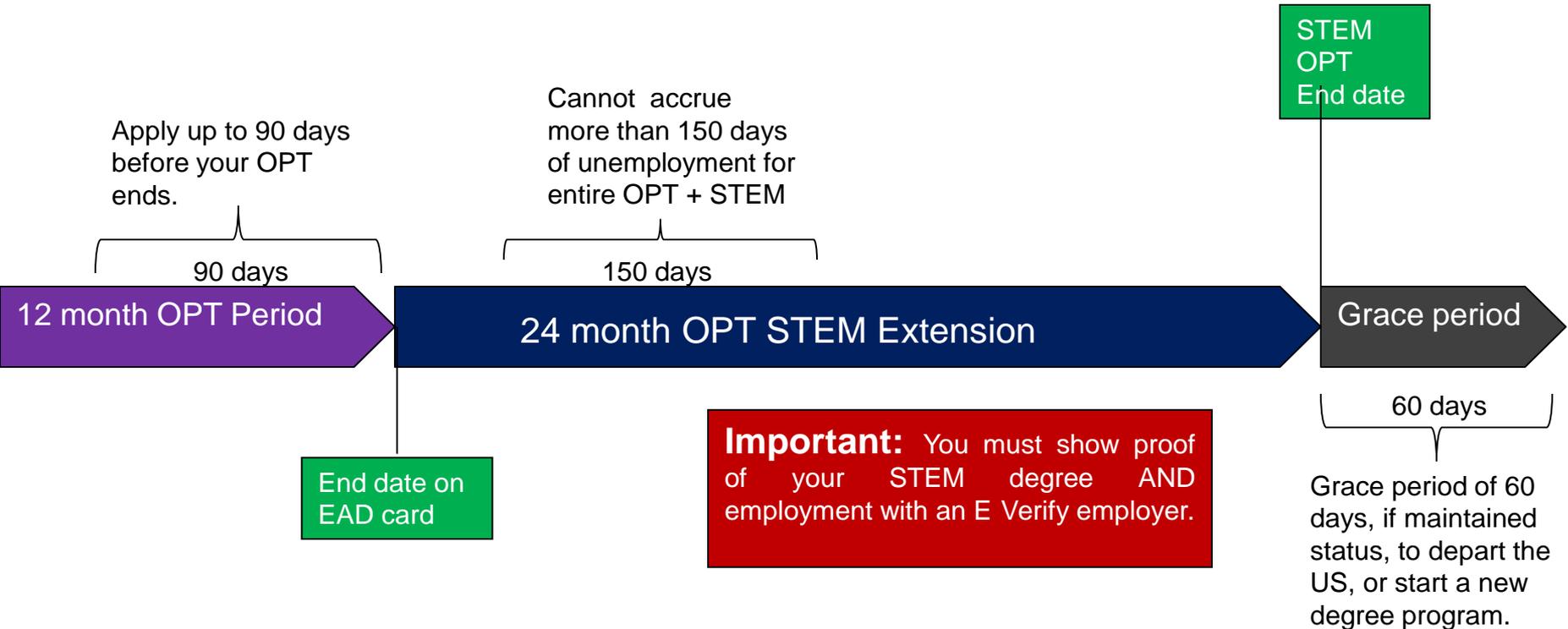
STEM OPT begins on the date after the expiration of standard OPT. For example:

Standard OPT:

07/15/2018 – 07/14/2019

STEM Extension:

07/15/2019 – 07/14/2021



### Important Factors to Consider:

1. Apply early. USCIS can take 90 or more to process STEM OPT applications.

2. USCIS must receive your STEM OPT Extension application before the end date of your current EAD.

3. You may continue working for your E-Verify employer while your STEM OPT application is pending with USCIS for up to 180 days. **8CFR213.2(f)(11)(i)(C)** and **8CFR274a.12(b)(6)(iv)**

## Application Steps

- 1) Review this STEM OPT Extension Tutorial and our [STEM website](#).
- 2) Schedule an appointment (in person or on the phone) if you have follow-up questions before applying.
- 3) Secure all the necessary documentation (\*\* see next slides for requirements).
- 4) Verify that your employment and personal information in the SEVP Portal is current and accurate.
- 5) Submit your required documents to OISS as close to 90 days before your OPT end date as possible (You may send them by email).
- 6) Respond to any inquiries from OISS regarding your STEM OPT Extension request.
- 7) Receive your new STEM OPT I-20 from OISS and discuss next steps with an OISS advisor.
- 8) Mail your application to the appropriate USCIS Lock Box location.
- 9) USCIS must receive your application no earlier than 90 days prior to your OPT end date, and within 60 days of I-20 issuance AND prior to the end of your authorized OPT period.
- 10) Send OISS a copy of your STEM OPT EAD card once your request is approved.



# Required OISS Documentation for a STEM OPT I-20

## **STEM OPT Handouts**

STEM OPT Handout (and required forms) can be found online at <http://oiss.rice.edu/STEM/>

## **The documents required to receive a STEM OPT I-20 are:**

- 1) Accurate employment information via the SEVP Student Portal
  - 2) STEM OPT Student Statement of Understanding
  - 3) Form I-765 Application for Employment Authorization
  - 4) Form I-983 Training Plan for STEM OPT Students (to be completed with employer)
  - 5) Proof of payment of the \$500 STEM OPT extension administrative fee –  
<https://signup.rice.edu/STEMextension/>
- If STEM OPT extension is based on a previous degree from another university, provide copies of the 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.

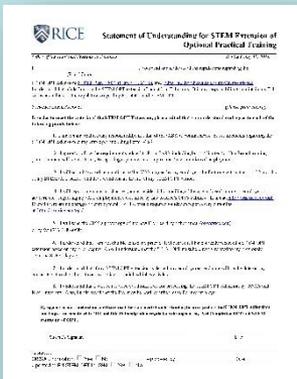
## **Not located in Houston?**

If you live outside the Houston area, please submit these documents to the OISS via email ([oiss@rice.edu](mailto:oiss@rice.edu)) and provide us with either 1) the name of a friend who will pick up your documents and mail them to you OR provide a prepaid shipping label from [FedEx](#), [USPS](#), or [UPS](#) with your address. When making a shipping label online you may use our mailing address and then send us the pdf attachment:

The Office of International Students and Scholars  
Rice University, OISS  
6100 Main St. MS-365  
713.348.6095 (telephone)

## 2) STEM OPT Student Statement of Understanding

This Statement of Understanding will outline the requirements of being in valid F-1 status while on STEM OPT Extension. Also provides OISS, SEVP Portal and SEVIS with a non-Rice email for continued communication.



## 3) Completed Form I-765 (<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>)

Before completing the Form I-765, please study the official instructions as well as tips provided by OISS:

- “Instructions for Form I-765” available at <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>. You should pay particular attention to:
  1. The information under Foreign Student Categories that applies to Optional Practical Training (p. 3-4 of the Instructions), and
  2. The General Instructions (p. 14-20)
- The OISS tips for the Form I-765 online at <http://oiss.rice.edu/OPTtips>

**IMPORTANT:** We strongly recommend that the form is typed on a computer and only printed for an original signature!

### New Requirements Included on the Form I-765

Please note that the current requirements include using Part 6. of the Form I-765 to provide all previously used SEVIS numbers and evidence of any previously authorized CPT or OPT and the academic level at which it was authorized. For more information, please see the next slide.



# Previous SEVIS Number(s) & CPT/OPT Authorization(s)

## **Previous SEVIS ID Number(s)**

If you have had a different SEVIS Number in the past, you must use Part 6. of the I-765 to report it. Please indicate Page Number 3, Part Number 2, and Item Number 26. On the lines, please indicate that you are providing a previous SEVIS Number. Include the SEVIS ID number and the dates when it was used.

## **Previous CPT Authorization(s)**

If you have been authorized for CPT in the past – including during a previous academic level, by a previous school, or under a different SEVIS ID Number – you must use Part 6. of the I-765 to report it. Since providing evidence of previous CPT authorizations seems to be a requirement for only those people applying for an EAD for F-1 Optional Practical Training, we recommend referring back to the question about your Eligibility Category by indicating Page Number 3, Part Number 2, and Item Number 27. On the lines, please list the dates of previously authorized CPTs, specify the degree level at which the CPT was authorized, and indicate that copies of the CPT I-20s are included in the application. If you no longer have those CPT I-20s available, you may want to contact your previous school to see if you could get a printout of your SEVIS Employment History and/or if they could issue a letter for you confirming any CPT that was authorized for you. For CPT authorized by Rice during your current academic level, OISS will provide your SEVIS Employment History to include in your application, but you may want to include the I-20 copies as additional supporting documents.

## **Previous OPT Authorization(s)**

If you have applied for OPT in the past, you must use Part 6. of the I-765 to report it. Since providing evidence of previous OPT authorizations seems to be a requirement for only those people applying for an EAD for F-1 Optional Practical Training, we recommend referring back to the question about your Eligibility Category by indicating Page Number 3, Part 2, Item Number 27. However, since you are required to submit a copy of the previous EAD based on Page 2, Part 2, Item 12, it may be prudent to refer to both. For example, you may use Page Number 3, Part 2, Item Number 27 under 3.a. - 3.c., and start your response under 3.d. by stating something along the lines of "This information also pertains to Page 2, Part 2, Item 12". On the lines, please specify the degree level that your previous OPT was based on, and indicate that a copy of the OPT I-20 and EAD are included in the application.



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## Required OISS Documentation for an STEM OPT I-20 (continued)

### 4) Completed Form I-983

(<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/i983.pdf>)

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: _____			
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.			

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"

### 5) Proof of payment of the \$500 STEM OPT extension administrative fee

Pay the fee online at <https://signup.rice.edu/STEMextension>, and include a copy of the email confirmation with your application.

## What it is:

**Form I-983 “Training Plan for STEM OPT Students” only applies to the STEM OPT extension period and not your original/current OPT employment.** It is a training plan outline for the two years of STEM OPT, created by you and your E-verify employer. It is submitted to OISS for review of your eligibility to receive the STEM OPT I-20 and it will not be mailed to USCIS as part of your STEM OPT application.

## Most Common Mistakes on Form I-983

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

- 1) Ensure all applicable pages reflect your name in this order: [SURNAME, GIVEN NAME]
- 2) Start date of STEM OPT period is the day *after* OPT expires
- 3) End date of STEM OPT period is two years later *and one day less* (ex: 7/15/2018 – 7/14/2020)
- 4) Qualifying Major and CIP code (ex. Computer Science, 11.0101)
- 5) Based on prior degree? (if using same degree that OPT was granted for, then “No”)

### **Section 3: Employer Information (Completed by Employer)**

**Start Date of Employment** – Date when you begin the STEM OPT training with the employer (earliest date is the start of the STEM OPT extension, even if you are a continuing employee).

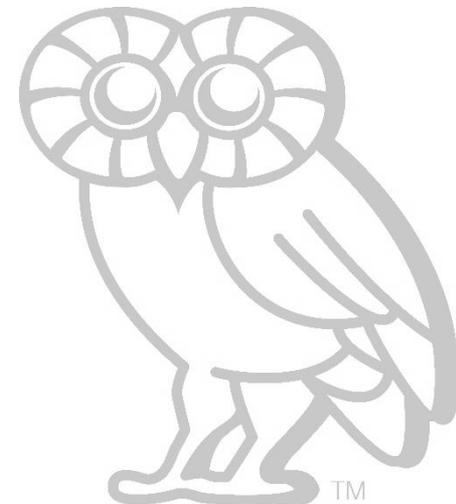
**Final Section: Evaluation on Student Progress (last page)** – Leave this page blank; evaluations will be due after completing 1 year on *STEM OPT* and at the end of employment.



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## Next Steps After Submission of Documents to OISS

- An advisor will review your documentation and either process your STEM OPT I-20 or ask for more verification from you. This process usually takes approximately 5 working days.
- You will then be directed to schedule a pick-up appointment time. If you no longer live in the Houston area, an advisor will work with you via phone and/or email to complete the remaining steps to submit your STEM OPT Extension paperwork.



## Please collect the following documents:

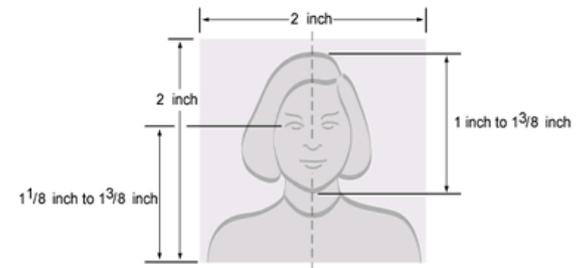
- [G-1145](#) (This will allow you to receive an electronic confirmation when USCIS has received your application)
- Check made out to U.S. Department of Homeland Security for \$410.00 (make sure to put your I-94 number in the Memo section) **OR** [G-1450](#) authorizing a credit card payment.
- Cover letter (template available at <http://oiss.rice.edu/STEM>)
- 2 U.S. Passport style photos, taken within 30 days, with your name and I-94 number written on the back in pencil
- Copies of your passport, F-1 visa, I-94, and current (and any previous) EAD(s) (front and back)
- Documentation regarding your previous SEVIS ID Number (if any) and/or previous CPT/OPT authorization(s) (if any)
- Official Rice Transcript
- Photocopy of diploma

*If you are using a personal check, make sure it looks like the example below:*



1025  
DATE MM/DD/YYYY  
PAY TO THE ORDER OF U.S. Department of Homeland Security \$ 410.00  
Four Hundred and Ten 00/100 DOLLARS  
MEMO SEVIS ID# and/or I-94 # Your signature  
⑆0000000000⑆ ⑆0000000000⑆ ⑆025

*Photograph requirements*





# Mailing Your STEM OPT Application to USCIS

**Please mail your application with the following documents to the appropriate USCIS Service Center, based on the mailing address on your I-765. To find out which address to use, visit <http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses#LockboxAddresses>.**

**Include the following when mailing your STEM OPT Application to USCIS in the order listed** (*make sure to make a copy of documents for yourself*):

- (Recommended) G-1145 E-notification
- \$410 check addressed to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security” **OR** Form G-1450 authorizing a credit card payment
- (Recommended) Cover Letter (see <http://oiss.rice.edu/STEM> for the template)
- 2 Passport-style photos *taken within 30 days*
- Completed and signed I-765 Application Form
- Photocopy of updated I-20 reflecting STEM OPT Extension Recommendation (be sure to sign in blue ink) (You will keep the original I-20, do not mail it out!)
- SEVIS employment history printout (OISS will provide this together with your new I-20)
- Photocopies of passport, F-1 visa (ok if visa is expired), I-94 card or [printout](#)
- Photocopy of front and back of current (and any previous) EAD(s)
- Explanation and documentation of any previous SEVIS ID(s) and CPT/OPT authorizations, if applicable
- Official Rice transcript
- Photocopy of Diploma
- Additional supplemental documents as stated in your cover letter, if applicable

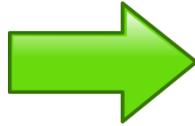
**\*\*USCIS must receive your STEM OPT Extension application before your OPT end date.\*\***



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# Cover Letter (Recommended)

Cover letter  
template



[Your Full Name]  
[SEVIS ID: Nxxxxxxxxxxxxx]  
[I-94: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]

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]

- **Two Weeks:** USCIS typically sends a Form I-797 Notice of Action once your application is received. This notice will contain a receipt number which you can use to check application status at <https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do>.
- **3-5 Months:** Times vary; average processing time for the STEM OPT Extension request.
- **180 Days:** Amount of time from your current OPT end date that you are allowed to work for your E-Verify employer while STEM application is pending with USCIS, as long as you filed your extension request before the end of your post-completion OPT.
- **10 Days:** Your reporting window to send updates to OISS and to the SEVP Portal. This includes a copy of your new EAD card once it arrives, and information on your address and employment!



If you have any questions regarding your application, we advise you to contact an OISS advisor before calling USCIS Customer Service.



## ***Can I travel outside of the U.S. while my STEM OPT application is pending?***

Traveling during this time is **not** recommended and should be undertaken with caution. Please speak with an OISS Advisor for more information.

If USCIS approves your application, you will be expected to have your new EAD in hand to re-enter the United States. Remember, USCIS can only send the EAD to your U.S. address. Application for F-1 visa renewal during OPT (especially while the STEM application is still pending) can be risky.

## ***Can I re-enter if I left the U.S. while on STEM OPT?***

F-1 students authorized for STEM OPT can travel outside the U.S. and re-enter provided they have all of the following documents:

- 1) Passport valid at least 6 months;
- 2) Unexpired F-1 visa stamp in passport;
- 3) I-20
  - Showing “STEM OPT Approved” on pg. 2,
  - Employment info has been updated to OISS and is accurate on the I-20, and
  - Signed for travel by OISS advisor. Travel signatures are valid for 6 months. Be sure to get a new travel signature from OISS if you re-entry date to the U.S. will be more than 6 months after the most recent travel signature on pg. 2 of the I-20.
- 4) STEM OPT EAD card;
- 5) Employment letter. Application for F-1 visa renewal during STEM OPT can be risky.

*Note: If you need a new travel signature, please keep in mind that OISS does not express mail documents. You will either need to leave enough time for regular mail or have a Rice friend pick up your new I-20 and express mail it to you.*

**\*\*Please meet with an OISS advisor and refer to <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/> for further discussion of travel during OPT (or travel while STEM OPT application is pending).\*\***

## Required Communication with OISS

- Email OISS ([oiss@rice.edu](mailto:oiss@rice.edu)) a copy of the front of your EAD card
- Notify OISS if you permanently left the U.S. or change to another visa status, and send corresponding documents.
- Complete F-1 STEM OPT validation report online at <https://oiss.rice.edu/opt> (required every 6 months)
- Submit an update to the SEVP Portal anytime your personal information is updated (physical and mailing addresses and telephone)
- Submit an updated Form I-983 to OISS when you complete your self evaluations (1<sup>st</sup> evaluation within 12 months of your STEM OPT Extension, 2<sup>nd</sup> evaluation at the end of your employment / STEM OPT Extension)
- Submit an updated Form I-983 to OISS if you change employers during your STEM OPT Extension

**\*\*For more detailed information, please visit: <http://oiss.rice.edu/opt/>\*\***



## Unemployment During STEM OPT

Students are required to work full-time (defined as over 20 hours per week) during STEM OPT. Students are permitted 150 total days of unemployment during the entire 36-month OPT (+STEM) period.



# When Your STEM OPT Extension Has Ended

## Grace Period

You have a 60-day grace period at the end of your STEM OPT Extension before you must depart the U.S. You cannot work during that time, but you can travel within the U.S., transfer to another institution, or change your visa status. If you do leave the U.S. during your grace period you will not be allowed back in on your F-1 visa. Please complete the [OISS Departure Form](#) online.

## Cap-Gap Extension

Cap-Gap provides an extension of OPT for students whose H-1B applications are pending or approved before the annual October 1st H-1B start date. This allows F-1 students to remain in the U.S. and continue working even after the completion of OPT. The extension should be automatic but it is best to verify with an OISS advisor. Please send OISS a copy of your H-1B Approval Notice so that we may update your record. Note that cap-gap extensions are typically issued to students with a pending **Change of Status to H-1B** and not for consular processing. You may verify whether you have a pending change of status to H-1B with your employer.

*\*\*For more information on possible options for working in the U.S. after OPT, please contact an OISS Advisor.\*\**



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## OISS Contact Information

### Office Location

Lovett Hall, Entrance A,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

### Phone

713-348-6095

### Email

[oiss@rice.edu](mailto:oiss@rice.edu)

### Website

<http://oiss.rice.edu/stem/>



**What is a STEM OPT Extension?**

Students in STEM fields are eligible to apply for an additional 24 months of OPT. However, employment with an E-Verify employer is required in advance and application must be made before the regular OPT has expired. For additional information, make an appointment with an OISS advisor.

**When should I apply for STEM OPT Extension?**

You may begin applying for a STEM OPT Extension as early as 90 days before the end date of your current OPT. Please keep in mind USCIS must receive your STEM application before your current authorization expires. In addition, please note that typically it is not possible to renew a Texas driver license until your STEM OPT has been approved and you have the new EAD card. Applying for the STEM OPT Extension early is therefore also beneficial to avoid having a gap in your driver license validity.

**What do the photos for my application need to look like?**

Standard U.S. passport photos: Square 2" x 2" (5cm x 5 cm), front view, full face, white or off-white background. For full specifications, see <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/photos/photos.html>. Many FedEx, CVS, and Walgreens branches offer reasonably priced passport photo services near Rice.

**What happens after my STEM OPT application is mailed to USCIS?**

1. USCIS sends a Form 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 time varies but expect it to take between 90-120 days.

**What happens if my plans change after applying for STEM OPT?**

Immediately schedule an appointment with an OISS advisor if your plans change after your STEM OPT application has been submitted.

**What if I want to travel outside of the U.S. during my STEM OPT period – what do I need to keep in mind?**

F-1 students authorized for STEM OPT can travel outside the U.S. and re-enter provided they have all of the required documents, which are outlined on the *Travel While on STEM OPT* slide. Application for F-1 visa renewal during STEM OPT can be risky. Please meet with an OISS advisor and refer to [http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq\\_f2.htm#\\_Toc81222042](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq_f2.htm#_Toc81222042) for further discussion of travel during STEM OPT (or travel while STEM OPT application is pending).

### What is “Cap-Gap”?

Cap-Gap provides an extension of OPT for students whose H-1B applications are pending or approved before the annual October 1st H-1B start date. This allows F-1 students to remain in the U.S. and continue working even after the completion of OPT. The extension is automatic and does not require a new I-20 (one may be requested, however, if needed to prove ongoing work authorization to an employer). The Cap Gap extension expires on September 30th even if the H-1B has not yet been approved, and cannot be extended. The 60-day grace period is granted at the end of the Cap Gap extension per F-1 status regulations, which gives legal right to remain in the U.S. but no work authorization. Students are encouraged to consult their employer / immigration attorney filing the H-1B petition regarding legality and any possible work eligibility past the Cap Gap and/or grace period end date.

### Is there any required follow-up with OISS when I am on STEM OPT?

Yes! You are required to:

1. Bring or send OISS a copy of your STEM OPT EAD card
2. Notify OISS if you permanently leave the U.S. or change to another visa status, and send corresponding documents.
3. Complete F-1 STEM OPT validation report online (required every 6 months) at <https://oiss.rice.edu/opt>.
4. Submit an update to the SEVP Portal anytime your personal information is updated (physical and mailing addresses and telephone)
5. Submit an updated Form I-983 to OISS when you complete your self-evaluations (1<sup>st</sup> evaluation within 12 months of your STEM OPT Extension, 2<sup>nd</sup> evaluation at the end of your STEM OPT Extension)
6. Submit an updated Form I-983 to OISS if you change employers during your STEM OPT Extension

**\*\*For more detailed information, please visit: <http://oiss.rice.edu/opt>\*\***

### What information do I update via the SEVP Portal?

- Physical home address
- Mailing address
- Telephone number

### What information do I update through OISS?

- New Employer
- Gaps in Employment
- Make sure to also send a copy of an updated I-983 anytime you have a new employer or if there are changes to the original document (new supervisor, etc.)

**What status am I on while on STEM OPT?**

You are still on F-1 status. OPT is not a status in itself.

**Once I receive my STEM OPT I-20, how much time do I have to send my application to USCIS before it is voided?**

USCIS must receive your application within 60 days of I-20 issuance, and before the end date of your current OPT EAD.

**My EAD states ‘not valid for re-entry’ on it. Does that mean I cannot travel outside of the U.S. while on STEM OPT?**

No. It means that your EAD card alone will not allow you admission into the U.S. You will need to bring the other required documentation (see travel slide).

**I’ve had a STEM OPT Extension before, can I have another one?**

Possibly. Under the new 24-month STEM extension regulations, students are now eligible for up to two STEM Extensions during their lifetime. Please contact OISS for more information.

**May I apply for the STEM OPT Extension based on a previous STEM degree, even if my current degree is not in a STEM field?**

Possibly. Students may apply for the 24-month STEM Extension based on a prior eligible STEM degree if they did not have a STEM Extension associated with this degree in the past. However, the work performed under the STEM Extension must be directly related to the STEM degree obtained, instead of the most recent degree.

**Can I use a previous STEM degree from abroad to apply for a STEM extension?**

No, only U.S. accredited universities may be considered. In addition, the degree must be within 10 years.

**How much does it cost to apply for the STEM Extension?**

There are two separate fees that you must pay:

1. The USCIS application fee is \$410
2. The one-time Rice STEM OPT Extension administrative fee is \$500.

**How do I pay for the \$500 Rice STEM OPT Extension administrative fee?**

Please go to <https://signup.rice.edu/STEMextension>, where you will be able to pay the fee with a credit or debit card. You will receive a confirmation email once the fee has been paid, which you will need to submit to OISS as proof of payment.

**Is my employer allowed to pay the fees on my behalf?**

Yes, your employer is allowed to pay both the USCIS application fee and the Rice STEM OPT Extension administrative fee.

**Can I start my own business or work for a start-up company on STEM OPT?**

The official communication states that the employment “Must be a bonafide employer and employee relationship.” If you have a start-up, there must be someone else in the company that can serve as a supervisor and train you in the STEM field you have studied. Additionally, the company must also fit all the government requirements to be a STEM OPT eligible employer.

**I still have questions, where can I get more information?**

You can schedule an appointment with an OISS advisor either in person or over the phone by emailing [oiss@rice.edu](mailto:oiss@rice.edu) or calling our mainline at 713.348.6095. Please also see the following helpful websites:

- [Study in the States STEM OPT HUB](#)
- [STEM OPT Extension Overview](#)
- [Overview of the Form I-983 Training Plan](#)
- [The 24-month STEM OPT regulation](#)

### What is the Form I-983 Training Plan?

The Form I-983 is the Training Plan required under the 24-month STEM regulations. Please visit the [Study in the States website](#) for an explanation of the Form I-983 as well as guidance on how to complete it.

### What information about Rice and my DSO do I need to complete the Form I-983?

In section 1 of the Form I-983 you will be asked to complete the following:

- SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT – You will find Rice’s School Code on your I-20 under the section titled “School Information”
- Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information – Please use “Adria L. Baker, 6100 Main Street, MS-365, Houston, TX 77005, 713-348-6095, oiss@rice.edu”
- Student SEVIS ID – You will find your SEVIS ID at the top of the first page of your I-20
- Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code – You will find your CIP code on your I-20 under the Major information in the section “Program of Study”

There is also a slide in this tutorial with tips on completing the first page of the Form I-983, and it is also included in our 24-month STEM Extension Handout, available at: <http://oiss.rice.edu/STEM>. Please note that Form I-983 applies to the STEM OPT period only! This means that the earliest “start of employment” on page 2 should be the start of your STEM OPT extension, even if you are a continuing employee with the company. Additionally, the final page should be left blank as the evaluations are not due until completion of at least 1 year of STEM OPT. You and your employer are highly encouraged to review the instructions at <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/i983Instructions.pdf>

### Will my training be evaluated during my STEM OPT employment?

Yes, in addition to submitting a validation report to OISS every 6 months, you are also required to conduct an annual self-evaluation which will be reviewed and signed by your employer and submitted to OISS on the Form I-983.