STEM OPT Application Checklist

Application Filing Window
USCIS can accept your application 90 days before your OPT EAD End Date and must be received by USCIS before your OPT EAD card expires. Applying outside of the application window will result in a denied application.

STEM OPT Application Steps
1. Request an OPT I-20 from the ISS Office. Please gather the following items and email them to internationalstudents@ucr.edu. Please allow 14-16 business days for an ISS Advisor/DSO to review your documents to determine if you are eligible to apply for OPT.

   - Form I-983 Training Plan (Completed by you and your employer), I-983 Remains with ISS & does not go to USCIS
     - I-983 Instructions
     - I-983 Sample
   - Form I-765 (Optional Practice Draft)
     - We recommend downloading the latest paper version to practice filling out the I-765 form before submitting it to USCIS.
     - Do NOT submit an I-765 to USCIS until you receive an OPT I-20 from the ISS Office. You must have an OPT I-20 before submitting your I-765 to USCIS.
   - Employment Verification Letter or Job Offer Letter (includes title and job description)
   - Copy of your OPT EAD (Front & Back)

2. Pay $300.00 ISS STEM OPT Fee. ISS will review your OPT STEM packet. Once ISS has determined that you are eligible to apply for STEM OPT, ISS will provide you with ISS OPT Fee payment instructions.

3. Receive your STEM OPT I-20 from the ISS Office. Once you have paid the OPT STEM Fee and submitted your payment receipt to ISS, an ISS Advisor will email your OPT STEM I-20 to your UCR email. Please review your OPT STEM I-20 and sign it at the bottom. If you would like to meet with an ISS Advisor to review your documents, please reach out to internationalstudents@ucr.edu.

4. Gather Final OPT STEM (I-765) Application Documents to Submit to USCIS. Please be sure to submit your documents to USCIS within the application window and within 60 days of the date that the International Student Advisor entered your OPT recommendation into SEVIS. Here are the documents that USCIS will require:

   - Form I-765
   - OPT STEM I-20 (MUST BE ISSUED BEFORE THE I-765 IS SUBMITTED TO USCIS)
     - The OPT STEM I-20 must have OPT Recommendation from a DSO on the 2nd page. OPT STEM recommendation is required before the I-765 Application is submitted to USCIS.
     - The OPT STEM I-20 must be submitted to USCIS within 60 days of issuance
   - Passport Photos
     - For Online Applications: 1 Digital Copy of your U.S. Passport-style photo
     - For Paper Applications: 2 Hard Copies of your U.S. Passport-style photos (Please lightly write your name and SEVIS ID or I-94 Number on the backs of each photo)
   - Government Identification
     - For Online Applications: Digital copy of a previous EAD card, valid passport, or most recent F-1 visa
     - For Paper Applications: Hard copy of valid passport and F-1 visa
   - Copy of your OPT EAD (Front & Back)
   - Copy of either your STEM Degree Transcripts or Diploma
     - Your Major on your I-20 Must be on the STEM Designation Degree List
   - If your STEM Degree was earned at a different institution, include that Institution’s Accreditation
   - Form I-94
☐ Form G-1145 to receive eNotifications (Only for Paper Applications)

☐ Supporting Documents (if applicable): Copies of previous CPT I-20, OPT I-20, EAD card, I-20 with different SEVIS ID number, or others

☐ $410 USCIS I-765 Fee (Review USCIS Fee Schedule for any Fee Changes)
  ○ Online Applications: Credit Card or Electronic Bank Transfer
  ○ Paper Applications: Personal Check, Money Order or Cashier’s Check → Payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security

☐ Optional USCIS Premium Processing Fee (Review USCIS Fee Schedule for any Fee Changes)
  ○ Decisions on OPT applications are made within 30 days of submission.

Mailing the I-765 Application to USCIS (Only for Paper Applications)
  ● Filing address under ‘Foreign Students’ on the I-765 Direct Filing Address page

Filing the I-765 Online (Only for Online Applications)
  ● REMINDER: You must first receive the OPT I-20 from the ISS Office
  ● Step One: I-765 Website
  ● Step Two: Scroll down the I-765 page and click ‘File Online’
  ● Step Three: Create USCIS Online Account

After Submitting the STEM OPT Application to USCIS
  ● USCIS will issue an OPT Receipt Number and mail you a paper I-797 Receipt Notice.
  ● You may continue working in your current STEM position up to 180 days after your OPT EAD expires while your STEM Extension is Pending.
  ● You can track your case through your online USCIS account or use the receipt number to track case status
  ● Within Approximately 3-5 Months: USCIS will mail the final OPT decision
    ● If USCIS sends you a Request for Evidence (RFE) or a Denial Notice, please make an appointment with an ISS advisor internationalstudents@ucr.edu
    ● If your OPT is approved, USCIS will deliver your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card to your mailing address.
      ○ Send scan of EAD Card to ISS internationalstudents@ucr.edu

After STEM OPT Approval
Set up Your SEVP OPT Portal
During STEM OPT, F-1 Students will only be able to use SEVP OPT Portal to update personal information, not employment information. Any changes in employment information must be updated through the ISS Office. The OPT Portal will send reminders of due dates of reports. Any Validation Reports or Self-Evaluation must be submitted through the ISS Office internationalstudents@ucr.edu. You must report any changes within 10 days of that change.

STEM OPT Reporting Requirements
All STEM OPT Reports must be submitted to ISS internationalstudents@ucr.edu before the due date of report. Once received, an ISS Advisor will submit the report into the SEVIS system.
  ● 6 Months on STEM OPT → Submit STEM OPT Reporting Form
  ● 12 Months on STEM OPT → Submit STEM OPT Reporting Form and Evaluation of Student Progress (1st portion of page 5 on Form I-983)
  ● 18 Months on STEM OPT → Submit STEM OPT Reporting Form
  ● 24 Months on STEM OPT → Submit STEM OPT Reporting Form and Entire I-983 with Completed Evaluation of Student Progress (2nd portion of page 5 on Form I-983)
  ● Changes in Personal or Employment Information (Must be Reported within 10 Days of Change)
    ○ Change of Employer → Must Submit I-983 Final Evaluation of Previous Employer, New I-983 of New Employer & Offer Letter of New Employer
    ○ Change of Personal Address or Contact Information → Update through SEVP OPT Portal