STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) Tutorial

Fall 2020

International Students and Scholars (ISS) Office
900 University Ave, Skye Hall 321
Riverside, CA 92521
(951) 827-4113
internationalstudents@ucr.edu

This does not constitute as legal advice.
Table of Contents

- COVID-19 Updates
- Basic Information on STEM OPT
- STEM OPT Eligibility
- Application Process
- STEM OPT Application Documents
  - Form I-983 Training Plan
  - Form I-765
- Mailing your STEM OPT application
- While STEM OPT application is pending
- USCIS Decision
- STEM OPT Reporting Requirements
- After STEM OPT
- Helpful Resources
COVID-19 - USCIS Updates

New USCIS Ruling

- Per the Sept 29, 2020 court order, new fee increase and updated form requirement are now on hold until further notice.

- For more information on updates, please check the USCIS website

USCIS Office Changes

- USCIS offices remain open and are still accepting OPT applications

- Delay in EAD card delivery - I-9 Flexibility Rule

Mailing OPT

- OPT applications must be physically mailed - no electronic method

- Students still required to apply for OPT while inside the U.S.
OPT Application and Fee Changes

Update (Sept 29, 2020): Per the Sept 29, 2020 court order, new fee increase and updated form requirement are now on hold until further notice.

Using the chart below, please make sure that you are using the correct version of Form I-765 and the I-765 Fee amount before mailing your OPT documents to USCIS. For more info, please visit [I-765 page](#).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Postmark Date</th>
<th>Form I-765 Version used</th>
<th>I-765 Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before August 25, 2020</td>
<td>Must use 12/26/19 edition</td>
<td>$410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On or after August 25, 2020 but before October 2, 2020</td>
<td>Must use 08/25/20 edition</td>
<td>$410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On or after October 2, 2020</td>
<td>Check the <a href="#">I-765 site</a> and use the most current form</td>
<td>*$410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COVID-19 - OPT Updates

Remote Working

- OPT students may work remotely if your employer can properly assess your performance

OPT Hours

- USCIS has NOT released exceptions for OPT unemployment time
- STEM OPT Applicants must have (paid) employment at the time of application

Link: SEVP Frequently Asked Questions - COVID-19
Basics of STEM OPT
Basic Information on STEM OPT

What is STEM OPT?

F-1 students who graduated in eligible science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees may apply for a 24-month extension after their standard 12-month Post-Completion OPT.

NOTE: F-1 students may participate in STEM OPT employment up to two times per lifetime.
When does STEM OPT start?

- STEM OPT begins the day after Post-Completion OPT
- Extension of F-1 I-20 status
Eligibility for STEM OPT
## Eligibility for STEM OPT Extension

### 01 Valid Immigration Status
- Valid F-1 I-20 status
- Currently on Post-Completion OPT
- EAD Card unexpired

### 02 Eligible Degree
- Bachelor's or higher degree in eligible STEM field
- Major CIP Codes must be on [DHS STEM Designated Degree List](#)
- Within the last 10 years and unused for STEM OPT

### 03 Qualified Employment
- E-Verified Employer
- Paid employment
- At least 20 hours per week
- Must complete I-983 Training Plan with employer
Checking your STEM Degree

Check if your degree is eligible for STEM OPT by checking the CIP code listed on your I-20.

Your STEM degree must be listed in the [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#).

---

### STEM Designated Degree Program List

**Effective May 10, 2016**

The STEM Designated Degree Program list is a complete list of fields of study that DHS considers to be science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) fields of study for purposes of the 24-month STEM optional practical training extension described at 8 CFR 214.2(f). Under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(i)(C)(2), a STEM field of study is a field of study “included in the Department of Education’s Classification of Instructional Programs taxonomy within the two-digit series containing engineering, biological sciences, mathematics, and physical sciences, or a related field. In general, related fields will include fields involving research, innovation, or development of new technologies using engineering, mathematics, computer science, or natural sciences (including physical, biological, and agricultural sciences).”

Accordingly, this list designates the following four CIP summary groups/series at the 2-digit CIP code level: Engineering (CIP code 14), Biological and Biomedical Sciences (CIP code 25), Mathematics and Statistics (CIP code 27), and Physical Sciences (CIP code 40). Any new additions to these areas will automatically be included on this STEM Designated Degree Program list. Consistent with the definition of “related field” above, related fields in this list include fields involving research, innovation, or development of new technologies using engineering, mathematics, computer science, or natural sciences. DHS designates these fields at the 6-digit level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIP Code</th>
<th>2010 CIP Code</th>
<th>CIP Code Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.0308</td>
<td>Agronomy and Sustainable Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.0901</td>
<td>Animal Sciences, General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.0902</td>
<td>Agricultural Animal Breeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.0903</td>
<td>Animal Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.0904</td>
<td>Animal Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.0905</td>
<td>Animal Sciences, Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.0906</td>
<td>Animal Sciences, General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.0907</td>
<td>Animal Sciences, General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.0999</td>
<td>Animal Sciences, Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.1001</td>
<td>Food Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.1002</td>
<td>Food Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.1003</td>
<td>Food Science and Technology, Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.1101</td>
<td>Plant Sciences, General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.1102</td>
<td>Agronomy and Crop Science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employment Types on STEM OPT

What is allowable employment during STEM OPT?

● Must be paid employment (at least 20 hrs or more per week)
● No volunteer, unpaid, and self-employment
● Employers must have E-Verify & EIN numbers
● Employer must meet ALL the requirements listed in USCIS Website
  ○ Must establish bona fide relationship between employee and employer
  ○ Strict USCIS guidelines on third party placements/staffing agencies
  ○ F-1 OPT/STEM OPT students should not train another F-1 student with STEM OPT Extension
  ○ Employer should meet all the requirements listed in the ‘STEM OPT Employer Responsibilities section’
● Must have STEM OPT employment at the time of application
STEM OPT
Application Process
STEM OPT Application Timeline

- **90 Days Before EAD Expires**
  - Start preparing I-983 with employer
  - Mail STEM OPT Application to USCIS
  - USCIS Accepts STEM OPT Extension Application (Processing Time: 3-5 months)

- **STEM OPT Extension begins**
  - If timely filed, may continue to work up to 180 days after EAD expires.

**COVID-19 Reminder:** Must be employed by a STEM OPT employer at the time of application.
STEM OPT Application Process

Internal Process
(Before mailing to USCIS)

1. Report your current OPT employment through SEVP OPT Portal
2. Complete I-983 with Employer
3. Submit STEM OPT documents to the ISS office
   a. Drop it off or email at internationalstudents@ucr.edu
4. ISS will issue STEM OPT I-20 and make recommendations on documents
   a. Allow 3-5 business days
5. Receive STEM OPT I-20 from ISS office
   a. In person pick up
      i. **COVID-19**: Campus closed. We will email I-20s at this time
   b. eShipGlobal

External Process
(After mailing to USCIS)

1. Prepare final STEM OPT application and mail materials to USCIS
   a. Include filing fee and passport photos
   b. *IMPORTANT*: USCIS must receive your documents before EAD expires
2. Continue to maintain STEM OPT Employment during application process
   a. STEM OPT applicant may work up to 180 days after EAD card expires
3. STEM OPT EAD card will arrive
4. Maintain STEM OPT Reporting Responsibilities
STEM OPT Application Checklist

STEM OPT Application Checklist

To access checklist, click here
Required STEM OPT Application Documents
STEM OPT Application Checklist

To receive a STEM OPT I-20, please submit the following documents to the ISS office. Once received, the ISS office will review your documents and will issue you a new I-20 recommending you for STEM OPT.

Documents for ISS office

- Form I-983 Training Plan (ISS office keeps this form)
- Form I-765 Application for Employment Authorization
- Form G-1145 (for email updates)
- Copy of current EAD card (front & back)
- (Recommended) Employee Offer Letter
  - Company Letterhead
  - Job Position
  - Job Responsibilities/Description

Submit your documents at the ISS office or by email: internationalstudents@ucr.edu
**STEM OPT Application Checklist**

**Purpose:** The Form I-983 Training Plan must clearly articulate the STEM OPT student’s learning objectives and affirm the employer’s commitment to helping the student achieve those objectives.

The Form I-983 Training Plan must be completed by student and employer and submitted to the ISS office. For the application process, complete pages 1-4 only. *The ISS office will keep this form and does not go to USCIS.* Page 5 will be completed only during the evaluation period.
Form I-983 (pg. 1 of 5)

Section 1-2
Completed by Student

*Required for ISS office only
*Not for USCIS

DSO Contact Information
- Heidi Nam
- heidi.nam@ucr.edu
- (951)827-6148

Name of School Recommending STEM OPT
University of California Riverside

Name of School Where STEM Degree was Earned
- If most recent degree is STEM, University of California Riverside
- If STEM degree was earned elsewhere, enter name of U.S. school of STEM degree

Email Address
Enter your preferred email. USCIS will use this to send updates

SEVIS School Code
(Can be found on your Form I-20)
LOS214F00177000

STEM OPT Requested Period
Start Date: Day after EAD card expires
End Date: Two years from start date

SEVIS ID No:
Add number that starts with “N00-”
Can be found on pg 1 of the I-20

Qualifying Major CIP Code
Add CIP Code from STEM I-20
Can be found on pg 1 of the I-20

Employment Authorization Number
Enter the EAD card number listed on your current EAD card
Form I-983 (pg. 1 of 5)

Section 2
Completed by Student

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, information and belief. I understand that the law provides severe penalties for knowingly and willfully falsifying or concealing a material fact, or using any false document in the submission of this form.

I certify that:

1. I have reviewed, understand, and will adhere to this Training Plan for STEM OPT Students (“Plan”);
2. I will notify the DSO at the earliest available opportunity if I believe that my employer is not providing me with appropriate training as delineated on this Plan;
3. I understand that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) may deny, revoke, or terminate the STEM OPT of students whom DHS determines are not engaging in OPT in compliance with the law, including the STEM OPT of students who are not, or whose employers are not, complying with this Plan;
4. My practical training opportunity is directly related to the STEM degree that qualifies me for the STEM OPT extension; and
5. I will notify the DSO at the earliest available opportunity regarding any material changes to or deviations from this Plan, including but not limited to, any change of Employer Identification Number resulting from a corporate restructuring, any non-trivial reduction in compensation from the amount previously submitted on the Plan that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked, any significant decrease in hours per week that I engage in a STEM training opportunity, and any decrease in hours below the 20-hours-per-week minimum required under this rule.

Signature of Student (Sign in ink):

Student Signature (handwritten)

Name of Student

Date of Signature

COVID-19 Update: As this document stays with UCR, we can accept digital signatures during COVID-19.
### Section 3: Employer Information (Completed by Employer)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer Name: Employer/Company Name</th>
<th>Street Address: Company Address</th>
<th>Suite:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer Website URL: Company Website</td>
<td>City:</td>
<td>State:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer ID Number (EIN): EIN Number (9 digits)</td>
<td>Number of Full-Time Employees in U.S.:</td>
<td>North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Code:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPT Hours Per Week (must be at least 20 hours/week): Working hrs/week</td>
<td>Compensation:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Date of Employment (mm-dd-yyyy): STEM OPT Start Date</td>
<td>A. Salary Amount and Frequency:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Other Compensation (Type and Estimated Amount or Value): 1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Employer Information**
- **Employer Name:** Employer or Company Name
- **Street Address:** Employer or Company’s physical location
- **Employer ID Number (EIN):** Unique nine-digit number, also referred to as the Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) or Federal Tax Identification Number
- **Start Date of Employment:** Start date of STEM OPT
Form I-983 (pg. 2 of 5)

Section 4
Completed by Employer

Note: DHS may, at its discretion, conduct a site visit of the employer to ensure that program requirements are being met, including that the employer possesses and maintains the ability and resources to provide structured and guided work-based learning experiences consistent with this Plan.

Signature of Employer Official with Signatory Authority (Sign in ink): __________________________

Signature of Employer Official (handwritten)

Printed Name and Title of Employer Official with Signatory Authority: __________________________

Employer Official’s Name and Position Title

Date (mm-dd-yyyy): _____________ Printed Name of Employing Organization: ______________________

Date of Signature

Employer/Company Name

Signature of Employer Official

- Signature must be handwritten
- Should be employee with signatory authority for employer
- Should be familiar with student’s goals and performance
- Must be able to attest to the terms & conditions of STEM practical training

COVID-19 Update: As this document stays with UCR, we can accept digital signatures during COVID-19.
Section 5
Completed by Student and Employer

Training Plan

- Must complete Section 5 with your employer
- Employer’s information should be your direct supervisor or whoever will be providing you with the training
Form I-983 (pg. 3 of 5)

Section 5
Completed by Student and Employer

### SECTION 5: TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS (Completed by Student and Employer)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):</td>
<td>LAST NAME, FIRST NAME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Name:</td>
<td>COMPANY NAME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Name:</td>
<td>SITE NAME (If different from Employer Name, enter name of site)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address where you will be physically working</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Official:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Direct Supervisor (First and Last Name)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official's Title:</td>
<td>Title of Direct Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official's Email:</td>
<td>Email of Direct Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official's Phone Number:</td>
<td>Phone Number of Direct Supervisor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** For the remaining fields in this section, employers who already have an internal/pre-existing training plan in place may fill in the details based on that plan.
Section 5 (Continued)
Student’s Role

Student Role: Describe the student’s role with the employer and how that role is directly related to enhancing the student’s knowledge obtained through his or her qualifying STEM degree.

Describe what tasks and assignments the student will carry out during the training and how they relate the student’s STEM degree at UCR. The plan must cover a specific span of time, detail specific goals, and objectives.

Tips:
- Have your offer letter
- Be detailed and descriptive
- Include your position title and your job responsibilities
- Include your STEM Degree name
- Must explain how your job position is going to enhance your knowledge related to your STEM degree
Goals and Objectives

Describe the specific skills, knowledge, and techniques the student will learn or apply; how the student will achieve the goals set out for his or her training; and the training curriculum including the timeline.

Tips:
- Think of around 3-4 goals and objectives at this position during your STEM period
- Describe how each goal will include learning objectives enhancing your STEM degree
- Each goal should have S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, achievable, and time-bound) elements
Section 5 (Continued)
Employer Oversight

Employer Oversight: Explain how the employer provides oversight and supervision of individuals filling positions such as that being filled by the named F-1 student. If the employer has a training program or related policy in place that controls such oversight and supervision, please describe.

Explain how the employer provides oversight and supervision of individuals filling positions such as that being filled by the named F-1 student. If the employer has a training program or related policy in place that controls such oversight and supervision, a description of this program or policy may suffice to answer this question.

Tips:
● Describe the methods of how the employer will be providing oversight and supervision
● Be descriptive when explaining each method
Section 5 (Continued)
Measures and Assessments

Tips:
- Describe how your employer will be measuring and assessing your knowledge and skills in your position
- Be as descriptive as you can
### Form I-983 (pg. 4 of 5)

**Section 6 Completed by Employer**

- Must be handwritten
- Employer must sign this section
- Should review above information and affirm by signature
- Does not need to be same official who signed Section 4

**Employer Official**

- **Signature of Employer Official**
- **Name and Position Title of Employer Official**
- **Date of Signature**

**Employer 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, information and belief. I understand that the law provides severe penalties for knowingly and willfully falsifying or concealing a material fact, or using any false document in the submission of this form.

- I certify that:
  1. I have reviewed, understand, and will follow this Training Plan for STEM OPT Students (Plan);
  2. I will conduct the required periodic evaluations of the student;* 
  3. I will adhere to all applicable regulatory provisions that govern this program (see 8 CFR Part 214.2(b)(10)(ii)); and
  4. I will notify the DSO regarding any material changes to or material deviations from this Plan at the earliest available opportunity, including if I believe the student is not receiving appropriate training as delineated in this Plan.

**Signature of Employer Official with Signatory Authority: Sign in ink**

**Printed Name and Title of Employer Official with Signatory Authority:**

**Date (mm-dd-yyyy):**
### Form I-983 (pg. 5 of 5)

#### Section 6
**Completed by Student & Employer**

**ATTENTION:**
You do not need to submit until evaluations are due.

#### Evaluation
- Must be completed by student
- Evaluation must be signed off by the student AND the employer
- Mark your calendars for annual evaluation deadlines

**Submit your documents in person at the ISS office or by email:**
[internationalstudents@ucr.edu](mailto:internationalstudents@ucr.edu)
Important Update (09/29/20):

On Sept 29, 2020, a nationwide court order was issued to put the new fee increase and the new form version on hold until further notice.

Please make sure to get the most updated form directly from the USCIS website.

- Form I-765

Purpose: The Form I-765 is the application form for the EAD card.

The Form I-765 Application for Employment Authorization must be submitted to USCIS. Please submit all 7 pages.

Tips:
- Typed, not handwritten
- Hand-sign signature (in black ink)
- Always get the most updated version from USCIS website
  - Form I-765
- To access the I-765 Template, please visit the ISS website
Part 1. Reason for Applying

I am applying for (select only one box):

1.a. [X] Initial permission to accept employment.
1.b. Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document, or correction of my employment authorization document NOT DUE to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) error.
   NOTE: Replacement (correction) of an employment authorization document due to USCIS error does not require a new Form I-765 and filing fee. Refer to Replacement for Card Error in the What is the Filing Fee section of the Form I-765 Instructions for further details.
1.c. Renewal of my permission to accept employment. (Attach a copy of your previous employment authorization document.)

Part 2. Information About You

Your Full Legal Name

1.a. Family Name (Last Name)
1.b. Given Name (First Name)
1.c. Middle Name

Other Names Used

Provide all other names you have ever used, including aliases, maiden name, and nicknames. If you need extra space to complete this section, use the space provided in Part 6 Additional Information.

2.a. Family Name (Last Name)
2.b. Given Name (First Name)
2.c. Middle Name

3.a. Family Name (Last Name)
3.b. Given Name (First Name)
3.c. Middle Name

4.a. Family Name (Last Name)
4.b. Given Name (First Name)
4.c. Middle Name

Part 1. Items #1a~1c

Select one of the following:

- #1a. If this is your first time applying for STEM OPT
- #1b. If you are replacing your lost, stolen, or damaged EAD card
- #1c. If this is not your first time applying for STEM OPT

Part 2. Items #1a~4c

Enter your full legal name and other names you use
Part 2. U.S. Address

Items #5a~5e: U.S. Mailing Address

- EAD will be sent to this address
- Select an address that will be valid for more than 4-5 months
- If friend, relative or employer’s address, write FULL name under “In Care of Name (if any)"

If you change your address,
- The U.S. Postal Service will not forward any government mail to new addresses
- Must submit an Official Change of Address (click on link) to USCIS through the USCIS website
Part 2. Eligibility Category

Item #27
Enter STEM code (c)(3)(C)

Item #28
a) Enter Degree level & STEM Major
   i.e. "Master's in Biology"
   *If you cannot fit your major name, please complete pg 7, Additional Information, section.

b) Employer’s name as listed in E-Verify

c) Confirm the E-Verify number with employer

Skip rest of page from Item #29.
Part 3. Applicant’s Statement, Contact Information, Declaration, Certification, and Signature

Applicant’s Statement (Items #1a~2)
Select Item #1a (if you are preparing the STEM OPT application yourself)

Applicant’s Contact Information
Complete Items #3~6
Form I-765

Part 3. Applicant’s Statement, Contact Information, Declaration, Certification, and Signature (Continued)

COVID-19 REMINDER: This document goes to USCIS so, signatures must be handwritten.

Applicant’s Signature & Date

IMPORTANT: Remember to sign before mailing STEM OPT packet!
Signature should be handwritten and in black ink.

If you selected Item #1a in Applicant’s Statement, skip Part 4 and jump to page 7.
Part 6. Additional Information

Complete this section if you need to provide additional information. If the following pertain to you, please complete this section:

- Previous OPT Approval
- Explaining STEM Major
- Different SEVIS ID in the past
- Change of Visa Status
- Not enough room for name
Form I-765

08/25/20 Edition
Form I-765 (pg 7 of 7)

Part 6. Additional Information

If you need to explain **OPT approval**, we suggest this format:

- Title: Previous OPT Authorizations
- Enter EAD card Start date – End date
- Enter OPT Degree level: (Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Doctorate); Post-Completion OPT or STEM OPT
- Enter EAD Card Number
- Enter text “Please see attached for copy of EAD card”

3.a. Page Number 3.b. Part Number 3.c. Item Number

3.d. Previous OPT Authorization:

OPT Type (Post-Completion OPT or STEM OPT); Degree Level

OPT Start Date - End Date; EAD Card Number

Please see attached for copy of EAD card.

NOTE: THIS IS A SAMPLE FORMAT
Part 6. Additional Information

If you need to explain **STEM Major degree**, we suggest this format:

- **Title**: STEM Degree Major
- **Enter** STEM major name (as on your I-20)
- **Enter** School Name
- **Enter** major CIP code (as on your I-20)
- **Enter** text “Please see attached for copy of STEM I-20 and STEM diploma or transcript”
Form G-1145

- Optional but, strongly recommended
- Typed, not written
- To receive email notifications on your packet

Download the most updated version through the USCIS website - Form G-1145
Passport and Visa

Provide a copy of your passport and most recent visa. The photocopies should not be too large or too small.

**Passport**
- Copy should not be enlarged or minimized

**Visa**
- Copy of most recent visa
- Does NOT have to be valid
- Copy should not be enlarged or minimized
Recent Form I-94

Provide a copy of your most recent Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record

You can access your Form I-94 through: I-94 Website (click on link)

- I-94 Admission Number will indicate most recent entry
- Class of Admission should say “F1”
- ‘Admit Until Date’ should say Duration of Status (D/S)
$410 USCIS Application Filing Fee

*Update (9/28/20): Fee increase to $550 has been put on hold until further notice.

Payable to:
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Acceptable payment methods:
- Personal Check
- Money Order
- Cashier’s Check
- Credit Card (Form G-1450)

Recommended

For updated USCIS Fee information, please check
- I-765 Website
- USCIS Fee Calculator (for the day you will be mailing)

Personal Check - Must be from a U.S. Bank

Money Orders can be purchased at:
- Banks
- Post-offices
- Local markets (i.e. Albertsons)
- Local pharmacies (i.e. CVS)
U.S. Passport-Style Photos

- Prepare 2 passport-style photos
- Must meet specifications on U.S. Department of State website
- Must be a recent photo (taken within 30 days)
- Clip the photo and application fee to top of application packet

Where can you take passport photos?

- Costco (affordable option)
- U.S. Postal Service
- Local drugstores (i.e. Walgreens, CVS, Rite Aid)

Correct Passport Size and Position:
- 2 x 2 inches (51 x 51 mm)
- The head centered and sized between 1” and 1.4” (25 and 35 mm)

Background:
- Plain and white or off-white
- No shadows

Shadows and Lighting:
- Clear and in color
- No shadows
- Not digitally altered

Accessories:
- No glasses
- No hats or head coverings (unless for religious or medical purposes)

(On the back of photos)

Gently write your name and I-94 number
Please provide a copy of your STEM Diploma OR Transcript

Your copy should include:
- Your Name
- STEM Major & Degree Level
- Date Degree Received or Completed

The Office of the Registrar will assist in obtaining your diploma or your transcript

- To request a UCR Transcript, [click here](#)
- To learn how to receive your UCR Diploma, [click here](#)
After review of OPT documents, ISS will issue:

STEM OPT I-20

OPT Materials Checklist

STEM OPT Checklist

COVID-19 Reminder: SEVP recently announced that sending digital I-20s to students at this time is acceptable. You will receive a digital copy of I-20 from ISS office.
After reviewing your documents, a DSO will issue you a new I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation. ISS will contact when the I-20 is ready for pick up.

You can choose to:
- Pick up your I-20 from the ISS office
- Ship it to your location (E-Ship Global)

When preparing to send it to USCIS,
- Sign the bottom of page 1 (blue ink)
- Make sure the STEM OPT requested dates are on page 2
- Make sure there is a travel signature on page 2 from DSO
- Make a photocopy of the STEM OPT I-20 (not the original copy)
- Mail your STEM OPT application within 60 days of I-20 issue date

IMPORTANT NOTE: Please review and confirm the accuracy of all information in your documents before mailing your documents. Student is responsible to ensure that all information is correct.
Mailing your STEM OPT Application
Mailing your OPT Application

Once you have picked up your STEM OPT I-20, you will need to assemble your STEM OPT application packet for USCIS. Please gather the following documents in order as listed below.

✅ $410 USCIS Application Filing Fee
*Update (09/28/20): Fee increase to $550 has been put on hold until further notice.
✅ 2 recent Passport-Style (2x2 inches) Photos
✅ Form G-1145 (for eNotification updates on application)
✅ Form I-765 Application for Employment Authorization
✅ Copy of STEM OPT I-20 (issued by ISS office)
✅ Copy of current EAD card (front & back)
✅ Copy of Transcripts with STEM or STEM Diploma
  - If based on previous STEM diploma, please provide STEM I-20 as well.
✅ Copy of Form I-94
✅ Copy of valid passport
✅ Copy of recent visa
✅ Copy of current Post-Completion OPT I-20

COVID-19 Update:
● USCIS requires OPT application to be mailed from within the U.S.
● Must mail physical copies

Your STEM OPT application must arrive at USCIS within 60 days of the I-20 issue date. Documents should not be stapled together. Remember to hand-sign all of the required documents! All photocopies should be black & white. Make sure to keep a copy of entire packet for your records.
Before Mailing your STEM OPT Documents

OPT Application and Fee Changes

**Update (Sept 29, 2020):** Per the [Sept 29, 2020 court order](#), new fee increase and updated form requirement are now on hold until further notice.

Using the chart below, please make sure that you are using the correct version of Form I-765 and the I-765 Fee amount before mailing your OPT documents to USCIS. For more info, please visit [I-765 page](#).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Postmark Date</th>
<th>Form I-765 Version used</th>
<th>I-765 Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before August 25, 2020</td>
<td>Must use 12/26/19 edition</td>
<td>$410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On or after August 25, 2020 but before October 2, 2020</td>
<td>Must use 08/25/20 edition</td>
<td>$410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On or after October 2, 2020</td>
<td>Check the I-765 site and use the most current form</td>
<td>*$410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mailing your Application to USCIS

We recommend choosing the a mailing courier that offers a tracking number. USCIS must receipt your packet no later than your EAD expiration date.

**NOTE:** Address may change from time to time. Check [USCIS Website (click here)](https://www.uscis.gov) for updated address.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you live in...</th>
<th>Mail your application to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Guam, or the Northern Mariana Islands</td>
<td>USCIS Phoenix Lockbox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P.O. Box 21281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attn: NFB AOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1820 E. Skyharbor Circle 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suite 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, or West Virginia</td>
<td>USCIS Dallas Lockbox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P.O. Box 660867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dallas, TX 75266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attn: NFB AOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suite 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lewisville, TX 75067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COVID-19 Update:**

- USCIS requires OPT application to be mailed from within the U.S.
- Must mail physical copies

Once USCIS receives your application, your filing fee will be cashed and USCIS will send you a receipt notice with your case number within 1-2 weeks.
While STEM OPT Application is pending
Track your Application

**USCIS Case Status Online**
- Track your application by entering the receipt number
- Link for [USCIS Case Status Online](#)

**USCIS Email Updates**
- USCIS will send you email notifications through the email on [Form G-1145](#)

**USCIS Processing Time**
- Check the latest processing time for your type of application
- Link for [Case Processing Time](#)
  - If you will be mailing to the Phoenix Lockbox, your case is being handled by 'Potomac Service Center.'

**Change of address**
- You must update your address by filing [Form AR-11](#) (click here) directly with USCIS
While STEM OPT Application is Pending...

- **You have a change of address**
  - You must update your address by filing Form AR-11 (click here) directly with USCIS.

- **You can continue Employment After Filing**
  - If USCIS received your STEM OPT application in a timely manner, you may continue working up to 180 days after your EAD card expires.

- **You change your employer**
  - Risky but, possible
  - You must report your change of employment as soon as possible.
  - You must submit a final evaluation of the Form I-983 for your previous job.
  - You must submit a new Form I-983 for your new job.

- **You receive a Request For Evidence (RFE)**
  - USCIS will send an RFE if additional information or evidence is required.
  - Contact the UCR ISS office to speak with an International Student Advisor.
International Travel and OPT

Not recommended while STEM OPT is pending
- Higher risk associated with re-entry while STEM OPT is pending (especially after EAD card expires)
- Strongly recommended to wait until STEM OPT EAD card arrives

Required Travel Documents for Pending STEM OPT
- Valid Passport (within 6 months)
- Valid F-1 Visa stamp
- STEM OPT I-20 w/ travel signature (within 6 months)
- I-797 Receipt Notice

Required Travel Documents for Approved STEM OPT
- Valid Passport (within 6 months)
- Valid F-1 Visa stamp
- STEM OPT I-20 w/ travel signature (within 6 months)
- Valid STEM OPT EAD Card
- Employee offer Letter or letter of employment verification
Requesting for a Travel Signature from ISS

If you are planning on traveling abroad, you can request for an updated travel signature on your STEM OPT I-20. Travel signatures for STEM OPT are only valid for 6 months. Please plan ahead as you may have to consider shipping time if you are living in a different area.

To request for a Travel Signature, please submit:

- **Document Request Form**
  - You can pick up a form at the ISS office or email internationalstudents@ucr.edu
- **STEM OPT I-20 (Original Copy)**
  - If you are unable to send it to us, you can request a new I-20.

Retrieving your I-20:

- Allow 3-5 business days for travel signature to be issued
- ISS office will notify you when it is ready for pick up
- Office pick up or eShip Global options are available

COVID-19 Update: Since digital I-20s are acceptable during this time, ISS will be emailing you the I-20 with travel signature.
Beware of Employment Scams

Check out UCR Career Center’s page on how to Avoid Employment Scams and Fraud

Common Scams Themes:

- Sending you a check before you begin your job
- Asking you for payment for equipment, certification, training materials, etc.
- Overpayment scams
- Pyramid Schemes

Be Careful:

- If posting does not indicate company information or it is difficult to find information on company
  - Do your research on companies before committing
- If company sends you an unexpected check and asks you to cash it in
- If company asks you to transfer money from one account to another
- Offers you an offer without interacting/interview with you
USCIS Decision
OPT Approvals- EAD Card

● **New EAD Card**
  ○ You will receive a new EAD Card with new dates printed on your card
  ○ If you see any errors on the card, contact the ISS office for assistance
  ○ Send ISS Office a copy of your new EAD Card
  ○ Present your new EAD card to your employer

● Email copy to internationalstudents@ucr.edu

● **Automatic Extension of your F-1 status & employment**
Request for Evidence (RFEs)

If USCIS needs more information/evidence, they will send an RFE.

- Contact ISS office and work with an International Student Advisor
- Remember! RFEs must be answered by deadline date on letter

Please contact ISS office to review required RFE documents
Rejection/Denial

- USCIS will send you a denial notice
- Please contact ISS office for assistance

Common Reasons for Denials:

- USCIS receives OPT application too early or too late (EAD card expired)
- E-Signatures
- Payment problems
- RFE was not received by deadline date
- OPT I-20 was already past 60 days of recommended date

Please contact ISS office immediately to discuss F-1 options
Function of **SEVP OPT Portal** *(click here)* during STEM OPT authorization will be **LIMITED**.

Through the SEVP OPT Portal, you can:

- **Update Personal Information**
  - Name
  - Address
  - Phone Number

- **Review/Verify Employer Information**
  - Cannot be updated through OPT Portal
  - Changes in employer information must be done through ISS office

- **Receive alerts of STEM OPT Reports due**

- **Must update within 10 days of change**
# STEM Reporting Roadmap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>1 Month</th>
<th>6 Months</th>
<th>12 Months</th>
<th>18 Months</th>
<th>24 Months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Validation Report Due</strong></td>
<td>• STEM OPT Reporting Form</td>
<td>• STEM OPT Reporting Form</td>
<td>• STEM OPT Reporting Form</td>
<td>• STEM OPT Reporting Form</td>
<td>• STEM OPT Reporting Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Evaluation Report Due</strong></td>
<td>• I-983 Training Plan w/ Self-Evaluation (Pg 1~5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Validation Report Due</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I-983 Training Plan w/ Final Self-Evaluation (Pg 1~5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Self-Evaluation Due</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I-983 Training Plan w/ Final Self-Evaluation (Pg 1~5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## NOTE
- SEVP OPT Portal will remind you with alerts
- Recommended to add schedule alerts on your calendar
- Useful Tool for Due Dates: [https://www.timeanddate.com/date/dateadd.html](https://www.timeanddate.com/date/dateadd.html)
## STEM OPT Reporting Requirements

During your 24-months STEM OPT Extension, you are required to report the below information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Every 6 months</th>
<th>Validation Report is due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Submit completed STEM OPT Reporting Form</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12-Month of STEM OPT</th>
<th>Evaluation on Student Progress is due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Submit first portion of page 5 of I-983 Training Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Signed by student and employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Submit completed STEM OPT Reporting Form</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>24-Month of STEM OPT</th>
<th>Final Evaluation on Student Progress is due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Submit second portion of page 5 of I-983 Training Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Signed by student and employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Submit completed STEM OPT Reporting Form</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in Personal Information</th>
<th>Update through SEVP OPT Portal or STEM OPT Reporting Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Update within 10 days of change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in Employer (new employer, new position title, end of job, etc.)</th>
<th>Submit completed STEM OPT Reporting Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit Final Evaluation of I-983 Training Plan of previous employer (pg 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit new I-983 Training for new employer (pg 1–4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Update within 10 days of change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please complete complete the documents to ISS office or email at internationalstudents@ucr.edu
Please complete this form for:
● Validation Report
● Change in Employer
● 12-Month Evaluation
● 24-Month Final Evaluation

This form is available at the ISS office or you can email at internationalstudents@ucr.edu
Updating your Personal Information

- Changes to your personal information include:
  - Name
  - Address
  - Phone Number

- Changes must be updated within 10 days

- Please update information through:
  - SEVP OPT Portal (click here)
  - STEM OPT Reporting Form
Updating your Employment Information

● Updates/Changes in employment must be done through the ISS office

● Must submit a new Form I-983 Training Plan if you get a:
  ○ New position/job title
  ○ New employer
  ○ New job description

● If you end your employment, you will need to submit a Final Evaluation (last page of Form I-983) for your old position.

● Changes must be updated within 10 days

● Allowed an additional 60 days of unemployment (including Post-Completion OPT it will be a total of 150 days)
If you change STEM OPT employers,

Please submit the following:

1. STEM OPT Reporting Form

2. Final Evaluation of I-983 with previous employer (last section of page 5)

3. I-983 Training Plan for your new employer (pages 1~4)
Unemployment Time

- You will have an additional 60 days of unemployment time on top of 90 days during Post-Completion OPT
- In total, you will have 150 days of unemployment time
  - 90 days (Post-Completion OPT) + 60 days (STEM OPT) = 150 days

Diagram:

- **Post-Completion OPT**: Start with 90 unemployment days
- **STEM OPT Extension**: Extra 60 unemployment days
  - Rolls over if unused
After STEM OPT Extension Ends
**After your STEM OPT Extension Ends**

When your 24-Month STEM OPT extension ends, F-1 students will have a 60-day grace period to decide on their steps. During the 60-day grace period, students may decide on the following options:

- Start a new program at UC Riverside
- Transfer to another institution
- Apply for a change of visa status
- Return to home country

**COVID-19 Reminder:**
- If you are unable to apply changes by the end of 60-day grace period, please contact the ISS office.
Helpful UCR Resources

UCR ISS - Employment & Taxes Webpage

Forms/Handouts from ISS Office
- STEM OPT Website
- STEM OPT Application Checklist
- STEM OPT Reporting Form

Government Forms
- Form I-983
  - Instructions for I-983
- Form I-765
- Form G-1145

Government Resources
- Study in the States - STEM OPT
- Study in the States - I-983 Overview
- USCIS - STEM OPT
- USCIS - Practical Training

For more UCR F-1 Workshops
UCR ISS Events Calendar

COVID-19 Resources
- UCR COVID-19 Updates
- SEVP Frequently Asked Questions
- Study in the States - COVID-19
COVID-19 Job Tips/Resources

Job Searching Tips for Int’l Student during COVID-19
● Informational Interviews & Virtual Interviews
● Help Small Businesses
● Don’t stop the search
● Consider all Scenarios

LinkedIn Learning Classes
● Finding a Job during Challenging Economic Times
● New to Working Remotely?

Job Search Sites
● UCR Handshake
● Indeed, COVID-19

UCR Career Center
● Career Center Homepage
  ○ Virtual & Phone Appointments available
  ○ Email - careercounseling@ucr.edu
● UCR Handshake
  ○ Job search & make virtual appointments
Who can help you?

UCR International Students and Scholars (ISS) office

Email: internationalstudents@ucr.edu
Office Phone: 951-827-4113
Emergency Phone: 951-206-8810
Office Hours: 10:00AM - 12:00PM, 1:00PM - 4:00PM

COVID-19 Update: Campus is currently closed
We are available through:
- Email
- Phone
- Zoom