

OPT STEM Extension: Application Packet & FAQs

(Revised July 2020)

- Step 1:** Discuss with your employer about your interest to apply for OPT STEM extension (See Page 9). The regulations require participation from the employer during the application process. We recommend that you both review immigration's guidance: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-extension-overview> and <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub>
- Step 2:** Review and collect all application documents (See checklist in this packet)
- Step 3:** Contact your primary International Student Advisor (www.uwb.edu/cie/meet-your-advisor) CIE must receive a completed and signed copy of the I-983 training plan (either in person or by email). This information will be used to issue your updated OPT STEM extension I20.
- Step 4:** Mail your STEM OPT application to USCIS
The application must be received by USCIS before your current OPT expires and within 60 days from the date your OPT STEM extension I-20 is issued; otherwise your application will be automatically denied. If the mailing address on your I-765 form is in Washington State, mail your application to the following address. If it is NOT Washington state, refer to the I-765 instructions packet for a different address <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> .
- Use an express/courier mail service such as FedEx or UPS*
USCIS, Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S., Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034
- Step 5:** Track your OPT application
Within 3-4 weeks, USCIS will send you a notice of receipt document, called Form I-797. The notification will include a receipt number and provide information on how to check the status of your application. If your application is missing information, a "Request for Evidence (RFE)" letter will be mailed to the address provided in your application.
- **If you move while your OPT application is processing, you MUST inform immigration with your new address using the Change of Address Form @ www.uscis.gov/addresschange**
- If your current post-completion OPT authorization expires after an OPT STEM extension application is properly and timely filed, then your employment authorization is considered automatically extended for up to 180 days while the OPT STEM extension application is pending. All work done during this 180-day period is considered OPT STEM extension time that counts towards the 24-month total.
- Step 6:** If your application is approved, you will receive your STEM OPT card in the mail about 3 months from your application receipt date.
- Step 7:** Complete the annual I-983 self-evaluation and 6-month validity reports with immigration; Notify immigration if there is a change in your employment or contact information.
More detailed information about how to do this is provided at www.uwb.edu/cie/alumni/stem-opt

DISCLAIMER

It is the student's responsibility to know, understand and follow all immigration regulations during the STEM OPT application and work authorization period.

The rules and regulations set by the Department of Homeland Security regarding STEM OPT is available at:

- www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/stem-opt
- <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-extension-overview>
- <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub>

The Center for International Education (CIE) provides guidance and resources, but are not attorneys. Students are required to submit to the CIE copies of the I-983 Training Plan(s), and I-983 Evaluations for immigration record-keeping purposes. If you do not submit these with CIE, you could risk losing your OPT STEM extension authorization or negatively impact future immigration applications. General guidance from CIE about requirements while on STEM OPT is provided at www.uwb.edu/cie/alumni/stem-opt.

Students are strongly encouraged to consult an immigration attorney with detailed questions about their job eligibility, if there are issues regarding the application, or questions from their employers about STEM OPT work requirements. Resources to help you get started on finding counsel is available at www.uwb.edu/cie/current-students/legal-services.

APPLICATION : FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Am I eligible to apply for OPT STEM extension?

You are eligible if you meet **all** of the following conditions:

- You are currently on post-completion OPT that hasn't expired.
- You completed a Bachelors, Masters, or Doctoral degree in an eligible STEM Designated Degree, as chosen by the Dept. of Homeland Security (see UWB chart below and <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension>). This is based on your major, not minor.
 - You can apply for STEM OPT through the CIE office using your UW Bothell degree **or** a previous STEM degree that you earned but never did STEM OPT extension.
- You have a job offer from an employer that has an [E-Verify](#) number **AND** an [Employer Identification Number \(EIN\)](#).
- You have a job offer that is paid **AND** at least part-time (20 hours/week or more) **AND** related to your degree.

UW Bothell Degree Programs Eligible for STEM OPT (as of July 2018)	
School of STEM	Computing & Software Engineering, Cyber Security Engineering, Applied Computing, Climate Science & Policy, Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Interactive Media Design, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Bio-Chem, Biology
School of Business	Supply Chain Management (concentration)
School of IAS	Earth System Science, Environmental Studies and Conservation & Restoration Science.

When should I apply? Is there a deadline?

You can apply up to 120 days before your current authorization expires. USCIS **must** receive your STEM OPT application before your current OPT expires, otherwise they will deny the application.

When does my OPT STEM extension work authorization start?

The extension is a continuation from your 12-month OPT. For example, if your 12-month OPT end date is September 1, 2018 then your 24-month OPT STEM extension authorization would start (if approved) from September 2, 2018.

What if my OPT expires before my STEM OPT application is approved?

Don't worry. If your OPT authorization expires **and** your STEM OPT application has been properly and timely filed, then your employment authorization is considered automatically extended for up to 180 days while the STEM OPT application is pending. All work done during this 180-day period is considered STEM OPT extension time that counts towards the 24-month total.

What are the job requirements during the STEM OPT extension?

- Your employer must have an [E-Verify](#) number **AND** an [Employer Identification Number \(EIN\)](#).
- At least part-time employment (20 hours per week)
- Paid job (volunteering is not allowed).
- Job is related to your degree, which is used as part of your STEM OPT application.

What jobs CAN'T I do while on STEM OPT extension?

- Volunteer/unpaid positions
- Self-employment
- Employment through a third party, such as a staff or temp agency, is still a gray area. The employer that signs the Form I-983 must be the same entity that provides the practical training experience to the student. Thus, we advise to be cautious when accepting this employment during STEM OPT period.

How many days of unemployment am I allowed during STEM OPT?

You are allowed a total of 60 days of unemployment during your OPT STEM extension. This is in addition to the 90 days of unemployment that you are allowed during your initial 12-months of OPT work authorization.

What are the requirements that I must complete during STEM OPT?

More detailed information is at <https://www.uwb.edu/cie/alumni/stem-opt>. Immigration requires that you keep checking in with them to confirm your current employment information and contact information. Failure to complete can jeopardize your SEVIS record. Immigration requires you to complete the following:

- **Self-Evaluation Reports:** On the last page of the I-983 Training Plan, you will find the 1st year and final year evaluation reports that you and your employer must complete, and then submit to CIE for filing with immigration.
- **6-month Validity Reports:** You must confirm your current contact and employment information by using CIE's online STEM OPT Validity Report at www.uwb.edu/cie/forms . Once received, CIE will confirm the information to immigration on your behalf.
- **Change in Employment? Submit a new I-983 Training Plan:** The new I-983 must be submitted to CIE and then CIE office will update your employment information to immigration. A new I20 can be provided to you.

Can I study while on STEM OPT?

Yes, but you may only take recreational courses. If you begin a new degree program, your current OPT authorization is automatically terminated when the I-20 is updated and/or transferred to the new school.

When can I travel outside the U.S.?

Do not travel outside the U.S. if your OPT expired and your STEM OPT application is still pending. A list of required documents is provided at www.uwb.edu/cie/alumni/travel

What happens after my STEM OPT extension expires?

You have a 60-day grace period, visit www.uwb.edu/cie/alumni/after-opt about your options. Also, we have resources about H1B visa, Green Card, and legal services at www.uwb.edu/cie/current-students/legal-services .

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- Form G-1145: E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance** (at www.uscis.gov)
Attach this to the top of your application. You will receive text/emails on the status of your application.
- Application Fee (\$410; non-refundable).**
Payment must be made by credit card, check or money order and payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”. For credit card payments, you must complete **and sign** the G-1450 Form, at www.uscis.gov.
- Two passport size photographs: U.S. standard size 2”x 2” and taken within the last 6 months**
 - Write your name and I-94 record number on the back of each photo.
 - Photo cannot be the same photo used for your passport or visa
 - Photos can be made at many places, such as Bartell Drugs, Walgreens, CVS, Rite Aid, Costco, Target, etc.
- Official Transcript and Copy of your STEM Degree proving your STEM degree:**
 - Extension based on UWB Degree:** Official transcripts are ordered in person or online from the Registrars Office, at <https://www.uwb.edu/registration/transcript>. If you don’t have your diploma available, you can get an official copy through UW’s CeDiploma, see <https://registrar.washington.edu/cediploma/>.
 - Extension based on non-UWB Degree:** You are allowed two STEM OPT extensions during your lifetime. You will need to provide an official transcript from the school where you earned your STEM degree.
- Form I-765: Application for Employment Authorization** (at www.uscis.gov)
 - Type in your answers and print out the form.** Handwritten answers have led to card mistakes/delays.
 - Part 1: Choose “Renewal of my permission to accept employment”
 - Part 2, #1: Provide your name as shown in your passport.
 - Part 2, #2-4: If you have had other official names, then you would include them here – Do not put nicknames.
 - Part 2, #5: Provide your mailing address. You will receive the OPT card after 3 months at this address. If you move while your OPT card is processing, you must inform immigration with your new address using the Change of Address Form @ <https://www.uscis.gov/addresschange>
 - Part 2, #6: If “Yes”, skip to item #8. If “No”, then you need to answer item #7.
 - Part 2, #7: Provide the U.S. address where you are currently living (if different than info in item #6)
 - Part 2, #8: This is the A# (or USCIS#) provided on your current OPT card.
 - Part 2, #9: Leave blank, unless you know if you have a USCIS online account number.
 - Part 2, #12: Select “Yes” because you have applied for OPT before.
 - Part 2, #13-17: If you have a SSN, answer #13a & b, and then skip to #18. If you want to apply for SSN, answer “No” and then answer the remaining questions #13-17.
 - Part 2, #21-23: This information is from your current I-94 record, available at www.cbp.gov/I94. The place of entry is the city you entered in the U.S., such as “Seattle”. Contact CBP-Seattle if you have I-94 problems: (206) 553-0667 ; I94.correction.seattle@cbp.dhs.gov
 - Part 2, #24: Provide “F1 Student”, unless you entered the U.S. the last time using a different visa, such as H4.
 - Part 2, #25: Provide “F1 Student”.
 - Part 2, #26: This is a 11-digit number is at the top of your UWB I-20, which starts with “N00....”
 - Part 2, #27: Enter (c)(3)(C) since you are applying for STEM OPT extension.
 - Part 2, #28a: Provide your educational level and field of study, such as “Masters in Computer Science”.
 - Part 2, #28b & c: Ask your employer for their E-Verify number and company name in the E-Verify system. Make sure it is the e-verify number **not** the EIN number, these are two different numbers.
 - Part 2, Items #29-31: Leave blank.
 - Part 3, #1: Select “I can read and understand English...”
 - Part 3, #2-5: Provide your contact information.
 - Part 3, #7: Read the Declaration & Certification information and sign and date the form. You must provide an original signature using pen – do not type your name or use a computer to put your signature as your application will be denied.

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- Photocopy of your:**
 - Current OPT card** (front and back)
 - Passport ID page** (including extension page, if applicable)
 - Current I-94 Arrival / Departure Record** (access your I-94 record at www.cbp.gov/I94)
 - Most recent F-1 visa** (even if it is expired).
 - If you did a Change of Status to F1 status and never got a F1 visa stamp in your passport that is OK – you will only need to provide the Change of Status approval notice called I-797.)
 - All UW Bothell I-20s** (include page 1 & the travel signature page). If you are applying for STEM based on a degree from another school, then you only need to provide copies of I20s from that school.
- Form I-983 Training Plan** (<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview>)
 - This form must be completed and signed by you and your employer.
 - Submit all pages of the I-983 Training Plan, including Evaluation section (page 5) that will be blank (This is something that you will complete after your 1st and then 2nd year of STEM OPT extension.).
 - Section 1:**
 - Name of School Recommending STEM OPT:** Provide “University of Washington Bothell”
 - Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned:** If you are applying for OPT STEM extension based from a degree earned at UWB, then write “University of Washington Bothell”.
 - SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT:** If you are applying for OPT STEM extension based from a degree earned at UWB, then write **SEA214F00005000**. Make sure that you double check this number – are you 4 “0” after the letter “F”, and 3 “0” after the number 5.
 - DSO Name and Contact Information:** You can write the name, phone number and UW email address of your Primary International Student Advisor (www.uwb.edu/cie/meet-your-advisor).
 - Student SEVIS ID No:** An 11-digit number located at the top of your I-20. Starts with “N0.....”
 - STEM OPT Requested Period:** The start date is the day after your current OPT ends ; the end date is two years after the STEM OPT start date. For example:
 - Current 12-month OPT is: July 15 2018 through July 14 2019
 - STEM OPT would be: July 15 2019 through July 14 2021
 - Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code:** The CIP code is listed on your I20, such as “00.0000”. Include the name of your degree as written on your I20.
 - Date Awarded:** This can be found on your official UW Bothell transcript.
 - Based on Prior Degree?** Select “No” if your application is based on your UW Bothell degree.
 - Employment Authorization Number:** This is the USCIS# listed on your current OPT card.
 - Section 2:** This section must be completed when you submit the I-983 form to CIE for processing.
 - Section 3-6:** This is to be completed by your employer. These sections must be completed when you submit the I-983 form to CIE for processing
 - Evaluation on Student Progress Section:** Leave blank. You will complete these after your 1st and 2nd year of STEM OPT work authorization.

After you and your employer have completed and signed the I-983 Training Plan, you should provide a copy to your primary International Student Advisor (www.uwb.edu/cie/meet-your-advisor.com). We will use information from your I-983 Training Plan to issue your updated I-20 (#8 below).

8. Photocopy of your updated I-20 with OPT STEM extension endorsement

- CIE will provide this for by using information from your completed and signed I-983 Training Plan.
- The I20 will automatically come with a new travel signature.
- CIE will keep a copy of the I-983 Training Plan will be kept in your immigration file, as required by USCIS

Dear Employer,

We appreciate your interest in hiring our alum to your team! The student is entering the job market with their distinguished University of Washington Bothell degree paired with their initiative, flexibility and experience to adapt to new situations. A student who has studied and lived abroad, as you may know, offers employers a wide range of skills and abilities to your team, such as their ability to see multiple perspectives, comfortable with ambiguous situations, and great self-reliance.

The following is helpful information that we have put together regarding the current STEM OPT extension procedures, including what is necessary from you as the employer. You will find the acronym “DSO” in many materials and we want to clarify what this is. “DSO” stands for Designated School Official, and the student’s DSO is the staff members in our office – UW Bothell’s Center for International Education. In other words, if you are instructed to contact the student’s DSO, you should contact our office and we will help you.

A few highlights that employers should be aware of are:

- Employer must have an [E-Verify](#) number **AND** an [Employer Identification Number \(EIN\)](#).
- The employee and their employer must work together to complete the Mentor and Training Plan–Form I-983 prior to the employee applying for the STEM OPT extension.
- The employer must review the student’s self-evaluations and sign it to attest to its accuracy.
- The employer must notify UW Bothell Center for International Education at the earliest available opportunity regarding any material changes to Form I-983, including if they believe the student is not receiving appropriate training as delineated in the Form I-983.
- A new provision of the STEM OPT extension rules allow the Department of Homeland Security to perform a site visit to the employer location, if needed.

Official resources for employers about STEM OPT extension:

STEM OPT Hub	Official information from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.	https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub
Form I-983: Mentoring & Training Plan	The form and a step-by-step guide on how to complete the training plan.	https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/employers-and-the-form-i-983
Reporting Requirements	Details regarding what employers must report during the STEM OPT period.	https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/employers-stem-opt-reporting-requirements
Understanding E-Verify	E-Verify is a fast, free, and easy to use system that provides a way for employers to ensure a legal workforce.	https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/understanding-e-verify
Frequently Asked Questions	Questions related to STEM OPT extension are addressed.	https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-frequently-asked-questions
STEM Eligible Degrees for STEM OPT Applications	Information about which degrees are eligible for STEM OPT applications	https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension https://www.uwb.edu/cie/alumni/stem-opt

Sincerely,
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