




OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

HANDBOOK

2022-2023

Global Engagement Office – West Chester University

F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) Application Guide



**Everything you need to know to
prepare your application materials
for submission to
United States Citizenship and
Immigration Services (USCIS)**

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What is *OPT? Am I eligible?

- OPT stands for “Optional Practical Training” and is a benefit for F-1 students.
- **Optional Practical Training (OPT)** is a period during which undergraduate and graduate students with valid F-1 status who have completed or have been pursuing their degrees for more than nine months are permitted by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to work for at most one year on a student visa.
- A period of 12 months, most commonly used after a student’s program is complete, for job training in the United States.
- To be eligible, you must:
 - Have completed all course work and be eligible to graduate in the semester you apply
 - Have been in valid F-1 status for 1 full academic year (2 semesters)
 - Be physically present in the United States
 - Be otherwise maintaining F-1 status
 - Intend to find training in the major field of study (academic program)
- F-1 students can have 1 period of 12 months of OPT per degree level. You can receive OPT after completing each degree. Certificate and language training programs do not qualify.
- While the DSO recommends OPT in SEVIS, it is the student who must apply for the work permit with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). If the OPT is approved, USCIS will issue an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). The student must not begin working before the start date on the EAD.

FAQ- What if I end up failing a course and am not finished with courses as I thought I would be?

- If this happens, please contact the GEO. A DSO will make a notation on your OPT that you will be doing part time OPT only as you complete your last course. When your course is complete, you can resume full time OPT.

FAQ- Can I have OPT if I complete a second BA?

- No, you can only have 12 months of OPT per degree level, not just degree. One period of OPT for BA/BS, one for MA/MS etc.

*Reference: 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)

When can I apply?

- Earliest – 90 days BEFORE your program ends
- Latest – 60 days AFTER your program ends, when your grace period is over.



NOTE: When counting your days, make sure you count the DAYS, not the months. USCIS is very specific in saying that a student may apply 90 days prior to the end date.

But when does my program end?

- You can find your program end date on your Form I-20. However, your program end date will be adjusted to the semester when you will complete your program.

How do I choose my start date for OPT?

- YOU are responsible for choosing your own start date.
- The start date must fall between the day after your program ends and the end of your grace period 60 days later.
- Keep in mind that it will take up to 90 days to receive your EAD card and to work: You must have your EAD card **AND** your start date has arrived.

FAQ: But, what date would be best?

- It is really up to you. If you have opportunities to work, you might want to choose a date right away. If you want more time to look or to have a break before working, you might want to choose a later start date. If you are applying close to your Program End Date you should probably choose a later start date to allow for the 90-day processing time of your EAD.

****YOU CANNOT TRAVEL WHILE OPT IS PENDING OR USCIS WILL CANCEL YOUR APPLICATION****

Application Process – all documents are to be uploaded in D2L

1. Attend a workshop!
2. Submit the Optional Practical Training Request Form
3. Complete the OPT application
 - a. Form I-765
 - i. This form can be found on the USCIS website
 - ii. Use the most current version of this form
 - b. Copies of all previously issued I-20's previously
 - c. Copy of Visa
 - i. Copy must show both the photo and expiration date
 - d. Copy of Passport
 - i. Copy must show both the photo and expiration date
 - e. I-94 Form
 - f. 2 Passport Photos
 - i. Print your name and I-94 number in pencil on the back of each photo
 - ii. The photos must be no more than 30 days old when an application is filed
 - iii. All photos must be of the applicant only and must be identical
 - g. Check or money order in the amount of \$410 made payable to: **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**. Print your SEVIS ID number on the memo line. (Fees are subject to change; please visit <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> to verify filing fee)
4. Drop off your completed packet with your receipt at the GEO.
5. Your materials will be reviewed within 10 business days. Make sure all your materials are uploaded in D2L. An incomplete packet may cause delays in processing.
6. A DSO will create a new I-20 for you, recommending OPT (find the notation on page 2 of your I-20).
7. A new form I-20 will be sent to you via email. **MAIL WITHIN 30 DAYS of the new I-20 issue date! If you mail after 30 days, USCIS will YOU APPLICATION OPT.**
8. Please keep copies of all documents! Always keep detailed records of your immigration paperwork and your employment history on OPT.
9. Mail to USCIS or file online
10. Watch for the receipt in the mail.
11. Use your EAC number to track your application at USCIS.gov.
12.wait! It can take up to 90 days before you receive your EAD card in the mail.

FAQ: I have a job offer but my EAD card has not arrived yet. Can I speed up the process?

- No. There is no option to expedite the OPT application. You should plan to wait 90 days and plan your application accordingly.

FAQ: But what if I work for free until it comes and then work for pay? My job wants me to start right away!

- No. You cannot be training in any way outside your authorized OPT dates.

What Counts as OPT?

- The “training” of “Optional Practical Training” does not only mean a paid job. You can do many things, as long as you are engaging in training for 20 hours or more per week in your field of study.
- Volunteer in your field – “volunteering” can mean different things. In order for a volunteer position to count as OPT to avoid unemployment time, it **MUST BE IN YOUR FIELD OF STUDY**.
- Intern – paid or unpaid
- Contract work
- Get a job part time or full time in your field of study

FAQ: How do I know if the job is OK for OPT?

- You must make the call that a job is appropriate or not appropriate. Some things are obvious, working at a fast-food restaurant or a grocery store for example wouldn’t be appropriate. However, there are some degrees that are ambiguous and have a wide range of jobs that might make use of those skills. You should keep job descriptions of any job you take to prove your degree was required and that you are using the skills from your major field of study for the job should you be asked by USCIS.

FAQ: Who is going to care or know what job I am doing?

- You must report all of your jobs/training to the GEO for entry into the SEVIS system using the employment update form on our website. Also, if you were to apply for a new visa after OPT, you might be asked to prove what you were doing on OPT and how it was in compliance with regulations.

FAQ: But maybe I am working at a restaurant as a manager and I was a business major. That counts right?

- You have to make the call but if it is hard to convince yourself that it meets the minimum requirement of being in your field of study then it probably is not a good idea. A good measurement is that it should require a degree and a job like a restaurant manager, may not.

Unemployment on OPT

- During the 12 months of OPT, you **must not exceed 90 days of unemployment** total.
- It is important that you report your training and employment to the GEO to record that you are not unemployed. If you do not report your job and you are actually employed, no one will know that you are not accruing unemployment time.
- If you cannot find a paying job, there are other ways to be considered “employed” and avoid accruing unemployment time. Look into setting up an internship instead.
- If you cannot find anything in your field that would be considered training after 90 days, you can:
 - Begin a new degree program
 - Depart the United States
 - Change to a new visa category if the opportunity is available

FAQ: What happens if I use my 90 days but don't leave? Maybe I will find a job after 4 months or after 6 months.

- Staying in the US on your OPT after the 90 days unemployment has passed will cause you to be in violation and out of status. This will put you at risk for being denied a future visa or visa benefit such as H1-B applications. It is important to follow the regulation to protect your future opportunities. If you stay in the US for more than 120 days while out of status, you could be barred from entering the US later on.

Responsibilities During OPT

- While on OPT, you are still an F-1 student and still under the responsibility of West Chester University of PA. You need to always report the following to the GEO:
- Submit a copy of your EAD card to the GEO.
- Change of address within 10 days of your move.
- A new or change of job or training site within 10 days of the start date. If you are doing two part time jobs or contract work at the same time, report all positions.
- If you decide to leave the U.S. and not complete your OPT, the DSO will complete your SEVIS record so you have a clean end to your status and will not encounter problems the next time you apply for a visa.

FAQ- I lost my EAD card/ My EAD card was stolen. What do I do?

- You will need to replace your card. To replace your card you should contact the GEO. You will be required to complete a new I-765 form and pay the \$410 fee once more. Your application for replacement will include the same materials as your initial OPT application plus any police reports of a theft if applicable. It is important that you report your card lost or stolen and get a replacement so that someone does not use your card fraudulently.

****Please be advised that any new information regarding immigration regulations that could affect you while on OPT will be sent to your WCU email address. It will be your responsibility to check this email address for these updates.****

Reporting Requirements

- You must provide a copy of your EAD card to the GEO.
- You must report any changes to your employment, address, and/or name within 10 days to the GEO.
- Complete and submit all changes to employment using the Employment Update Form on our website.

Employment Requirements

- All F-1 students participating on OPT must work a minimum of 20 hours per week in a position related to your field of study.
- You cannot exceed more than 90 days of unemployment while on OPT. Days of unemployment prior to your EAD start date do not count towards the 90 days. It is your responsibility to keep records of your employment and any periods of unemployment

Travel on OPT

To return to the U.S. while on OPT you must present:

- A valid passport
- A valid F-1 visa stamp
- OPT I-20 with travel signature (valid for 6 months)
- EAD card
- Proof of a job or other training opportunity
- While OPT is pending (you do not yet have your EAD card): Do NOT travel. To return you will need your EAD card. EAD cards will not be mailed outside of the United States. Travel at your own risk!

FAQ – I want to travel. I have my EAD card but no job. What do I do?

- It is recommended that you secure some kind of training before leaving the US for traveling. Keep in mind that you can secure an unpaid internship rather than a paid job and it is just as good. Make sure you get a letter to take with you.

FAQ – My visa is expired. What do I do?

- If you travel while your visa is expired, you will need to reapply for a new visa stamp before returning to the U.S. to do this, you should be in your home country and refer to your local consulate for all the required documents. You will need to show your EAD card and proof of a job/training.

Travel Documents for Re-entry

Documents	Before Completing Program & Before <u>EAD</u> issuance	After Completing Program & Before EAD issuance	After Completing Program & After EAD issuance
Valid passport	✓	✓	✓
Valid F-1 visa stamp (if applicable)	✓	✓	✓
OPT I-20 with a valid travel endorsement signed by the DSO	✓	✓	✓
Evidence of continued enrollment (e.g. Enrollment Verification)	✓		
Evidence of financial support	Strongly recommended	Strongly recommended	Strongly recommended
OPT receipt: I-797 Notice of Action		✓	
Job offer letter from employer		Strongly recommended	✓
EAD (Employment Authorization Document)			✓

Your admission to the U.S. is always at the discretion of the Customs and Border Protection Agents. To avoid problems, you must have the required documents outlined above.

24 month STEM OPT – Science, Technology, Engineering and Math

If your major is a STEM qualifying major, you can apply for an extension of your OPT for 24 months, giving you a total of 36 months of OPT.

If you qualify, contact the GEO in your 8th month of OPT to complete the STEM application. You will file for a new I-765, pay a new fee and get a new EAD card. Your employer must be an E-Verify employer.

The basic 24-month STEM OPT extension process:

1. A student with a STEM-qualifying bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree from an accredited, SEVIS-certified U.S. educational institution, who is in a valid period of standard post-completion OPT, has an offer of paid employment for at least 20 hours per week from an employer enrolled in E-Verify.
2. The student consults his or her DSO on STEM OPT extension eligibility and procedures.
3. The student and the employer complete a Form I-983 Training Plan, and the student submits the completed plan to the DSO.
4. The DSO reviews the Form I-983 submitted by the student, and determines that it is "complete, signed, and addresses all program requirements."
5. The DSO determines that the degree program that will serve as the basis of the STEM OPT extension is on the DHS STEM Designated Degree Program List.
6. The DSO updates the student's SEVIS record with a recommendation for a 24-month STEM OPT extension, and issues a new Form I-20 that reflects the STEM OPT extension recommendation.
7. Within 60 days of the DSO's recommendation in SEVIS, and before the expiration of the student's post-completion OPT, the student files with USCIS: Form I-765, the Form I-765 filing fee, the STEM OPT Form I-20, and documentation of the STEM degree.
8. The 24-month STEM OPT extension period begins on the day following the expiration of the student's standard post-completion OPT. If the Form I-765 is still pending as of that date, the student is authorized to continue employment for up to 180 days after the expiration of the student's post-completion OPT.
9. USCIS will issue an EAD reflecting the approved STEM OPT extension.
10. Throughout the STEM OPT extension period, the student, employer(s), and school comply with all reporting, training, supervision, evaluation, wage, documentation, and other obligations specified in the regulations and on Form I-983.

A student who has timely filed an application for a 24-month STEM OPT extension with USCIS can continue working while the STEM extension application is pending, for up to 180 days beyond the expiration of his or her prior post-completion OPT EAD. Time spent during the 180-day period while the application is pending counts towards the 24-month extension. If the STEM OPT application is still pending with USCIS beyond the 180 days, the student must stop working until USCIS approves the STEM OPT application.

What Happens After OPT?

When your OPT is over you can:

- Ask your employer to sponsor an H1-B employment visa
- Begin another degree program as an F-1 Student
- Change to a new visa status if available
- Depart the United States

You have a 60 day grace period after OPT ends to change status, start a new program or to depart the U.S.

FAQ – My OPT is ending in February and I am going to start a new program in August. Can I stay until my new program?

- NO! You must begin the new program within 60 days after OPT ends. You will need to depart the U.S. and return for your new program on a new SEVIS record and new F-1 visa within 30 days of the new program beginning.

H-1 B and the Cap Gap

- H1-B is an employment based visa, applied for by your employer.
- Your employer should apply at the April 1st start date of the application. They run out fast!
- If your employer sponsors an H-1B for you, you might run into the Cap-Gap, the time between your OPT end date and the H1-B start date on October 1.
- If this is the case, contact the GEO for a Cap-Gap I-20 so that you can continue to work. You must provide the GEO with a receipt from the application for an H1-B being filed with USCIS.
- Some employers, such as non-profits and institutes of higher education are exempt from the cap and can apply for an H1B at any time of the year.

APPENDIX

OPT Request FORM

90 Day Employment

Form I-765

Passport Photo Requirements

Required Documents

Form G-1145 (optional)

Mailing Address

EAD card (sample)

OPT Employment Update FORM

STEM Extension Request FORM

STEM EXTENSION CHECKLIST



OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

REQUEST FORM

- If you are graduating and plan on applying for Optional Practical Training, please complete this form and submit with your OPT application packet
- USCIS must receive your complete OPT application within 30 days of the new OPT I-20 being issued.

Family Name: _____ **First Name:** _____

WCUID: _____ **SEVIS ID:** _____

Have you been authorized for OPT in the past? _____ **NO** _____ **YES** from: _____ to: _____

If you have been authorized for OPT in the past, on which degree level was it based?

_____ Bachelor’s _____ Master’s _____ Ph.D.

When do you expect to graduate?

Fall Semester: _____ Spring Semester: _____ Summer (August) _____ Year: _____

Requested OPT Authorization *Date: _____

**Start date must be within 60 days of your program end date*

“I understand the responsibilities required for maintaining F-1 status during my period of OPT authorization as stated in the OPT Application Guide”

Signature of Student: _____

Date: _____

90 Days of Employment

Immigration regulations for Optional Practical Training (OPT) state that if a student is not employed 90 days after the start date of the EAD card, the student is considered out of status. Unemployment is described as time spent without a qualifying job during OPT and each day that the student is not employed is counted toward the limit on unemployment time. The limit is 90 days for students on post-completion OPT.

If a student is not able to secure a paid job and is coming to the 90 days of unemployment he/she may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, where this does not violate any labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week for students on post-completion OPT and students must be able to provide evidence from the employer that they worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of unpaid employment.

If a student exceeds the 90 day period of unemployment then he/she has technically violated his/her status. Therefore the student is required to either:

- 1. Apply to continue his/her education by a change of level or transfer to another SEVP certified school;**
- 2. Take action to otherwise maintain legal status by applying for another immigration status OR**
- 3. Depart the United States**

Although schools are not required to alert the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) if a student has exceeded the 90 days of unemployment, the student should be aware that he/she may be denied future immigration benefits that rely on valid F-1 status if DHS determines that the student exceeded the limitations on unemployment. Additionally, SEVP may examine SEVIS data for an individual, a selected group, or all students on post-completion OPT and terminate a student's record if it fails to show the student maintained the proper period of employment. In such cases, the student will be given an opportunity to show that he/she complied with all OPT requirements, including maintaining employment

Reporting OPT Employment to the GEO

To report any OPT employer information, changes to employment, or any periods of unemployment, please email international@wcupa.edu The GEO recommends that any employer updates be made immediately after any changes to employment.

Students are also required to send the GEO a copy of their EAD upon receipt of the card. This is to help ensure that your OPT is valid as the GEO will check on the status of your SEVIS record. Please scan and email a copy of the EAD card to international@wcupa.edu or mail a copy of the EAD to the address below:

**Global Engagement Office
Mitchell Hall, 3rd floor
675 S. Church Street
West Chester University of PA
West Chester, PA 19383
Attention: EAD Copy**

Form I-765 – sample of Page 1



Application For Employment Authorization

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USCIS
Form I-765
OMB No. 1615-0040
Expires 07/31/2022

For USCIS Use Only	<input type="checkbox"/> Authorization/Extension Valid From	Fee Stamp	Action Block
	<input type="checkbox"/> Authorization/Extension Valid Through		
	Alien Registration Number A-		
	Remarks		

To be completed by an attorney or Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA)-accredited representative (if any).	<input type="checkbox"/> Select this box if Form G-28 is attached.	Attorney or Accredited Representative USCIS Online Account Number (if any) <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px;"></div>
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▶ **START HERE - Type or print in black ink.** Answer all questions fully and accurately. If a question does not apply to you (for example, if you have never been married and the question asks, "Provide the name of your current spouse"), type or print "N/A" unless otherwise directed. If your answer to a question which requires a numeric response is zero or none (for example, "How many children do you have" or "How many times have you departed the United States"), type or print "None" unless otherwise directed.

Part 1. Reason for Applying

I am applying for (select only one box):

- 1.a. 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



Passport Photo Requirements

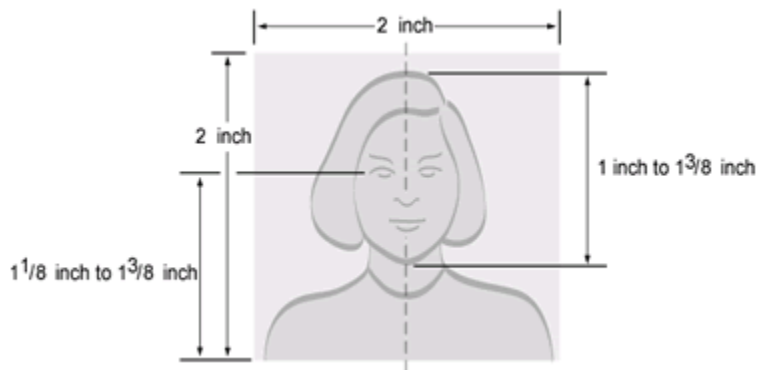
The photos required to use for the OPT application must meet the specifications of U.S. style passport photos. To see a full description of these specifications, go to the [U.S. Department of State](https://www.ee.dhs.gov/passport-photos) web site.

- Passport photos must be 2"x2" and taken within the past 30 days.
- Write your name and I-94 number lightly on the back of each photo.

Professional Photography

USCIS has been examining passport photos more strictly. GEO recommends students have their photos taken professionally. Recently, students have been visiting the following locations to obtain their photos.

- Sykes Students Union
- Walgreens Photo




Required Documents

- 2 U.S. Passport Photos
- Check or Money Order for \$410 made payable to: *U.S. Department of Homeland Security*. (Fees subject to change; please visit www.uscis.gov to verify filing fee)
- Original form I-765. <http://www.uscis.gov>
- I-20 that was issued by the GEO within the past 30 days. Don't forget to sign it!
- Photocopy of passport biographical page (photo and expiration date must be included)
- Form I 94 (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>)
- Photocopies of all previously issued I-20's
- Photocopy of previous EAD card, if applicable
- Optional: Form G-114 to confirm receipt and obtain case number in advance of paper notification

Form G-1145

- This is an optional form. Use this form to request text and email notification(s) regarding your application.
- Download the form at: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf>
- Attach to the top of the OPT application packet



e-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance
 Department of Homeland Security
 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

**USCIS
 Form G-1145**

What Is the Purpose of This Form?

Use this form to request an electronic notification (e-Notification) when U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services accepts your immigration application. This service is available for applications filed at a USCIS Lockbox facility.

General Information

Complete the information below and clip this form to the first page of your application package. You will receive one e-mail and/or text message for each form you are filing.

We will send the e-Notification within 24 hours after we accept your application. Domestic customers will receive an e-mail and/or text message; overseas customers will only receive an e-mail. Undeliverable e-Notifications cannot be resent.

The e-mail or text message will display your receipt number and tell you how to get updated case status information. It will not include any personal information. The e-Notification does not grant any type of status or benefit; rather it is provided as a convenience to customers.

USCIS will also mail you a receipt notice (I-797C), which you will receive within 10 days after your application has been accepted; use this notice as proof of your pending application or petition.

USCIS Privacy Act Statement

AUTHORITIES: The information requested on this form is collected pursuant to section 103(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended INA section 101, et seq.

PURPOSE: The primary purpose for providing the information on this form is to request an electronic notification when USCIS accepts immigration form. The information you provide will be used to send you a text and/or email message.

DISCLOSURE: The information you provide is voluntary. However, failure to provide the requested information may prevent USCIS from providing you a text and/or email message receipting your immigration form.

ROUTINE USES: The information provided on this form will be used by and disclosed to DHS personnel and contractors in accordance with approved routine uses, as described in the associated published system of records notices [**DHS/USCIS-007 - Benefits Information System and DHS/USCIS-001 - Alien File (A-File) and Central Index System (CIS)**], which can be found at www.dhs.gov/privacy. The information may also be made available, as appropriate for law enforcement purposes or in the interest of national security.

Complete this form and clip it on top of the first page of your immigration form(s).

Applicant/Petitioner Full Last Name	Applicant/Petitioner Full First Name	Applicant/Petitioner Full Middle Name
Email Address	Mobile Phone Number (Text Message)	

Form G-1145 09/26/14 Y

Page 1 of 1

Where to send your application if your file by mail

<p>F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (c)(3)(A), Pre-completion OPT • (c)(3)(B), Post-completion OPT • (c)(3)(C), 24-month extension for an F-1 student who has received a degree in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) that appears on the STEM designated Degree Program 	<p>USCIS Chicago Lockbox</p> <p>U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Attn: I-765 C03 P.O. Box 805373 Chicago, IL 60680-5374</p> <p>FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:</p> <p>USCIS Attn: I-765 C03 (Box 805373) 131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor Chicago, IL 60603-5517</p>
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Request for STEM OPT Extension I-20

Family/Last Name	First Name	Middle Name	WCUID
Field of Study	Email Address	Telephone Number	Date of Birth

Local Address:

--

Company Name

Dates of Employment Start: _____ End: _____	Company Address
--	-----------------

Job title	Employer EIN	_____ Full time (more than 20 hours per week) _____ Part time (less than 20 hours per week)
-----------	--------------	--

Name of Supervisor	Supervisor's Email:	Phone:
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Explain how employment is related to student's course of study
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DOCUMENTS TO SUBMIT FOR OPT EXTENSION I-20:

- _____ PHOTOCOPY of most current I-20, pages 1 and 2
- _____ PHOTOCOPY of most current Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card
- _____ Statement of Understanding (See page 2 of this application)
- _____ Copy of Form I-765
- _____ Copy of Form I-983

Request for STEM OPT Extension I-20

GEO Processing Timeline

It will take the GEO approximately (5) business days to process your application. Please send all requested items together in ONE package as sending items separately or individually over fax may delay your application.

OPT Extension Period

The employment authorization period for the extension begins on the day after the expiration of the initial post-completion OPT employment authorization. Mail this form and requested photocopies to:

Global Engagement Office Mailing Address
Global Engagement Office
675 S. Church Street, Mitchell Hall
West Chester University of PA
West Chester, PA 19383
ATTN: OPT Extension

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING: To be signed by the STEM degree holder who is currently on a 12-month OPT period and applying for an OPT Extension.

1. I have not previously received a STEM OPT extension after earning a STEM degree and my degree that is the basis for my current period of OPT is a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in one of the degree programs on the current STEM Designated Degree Program List, published on the SEVP website at www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm
2. My employer is registered in the E-Verify program, as evidenced by either a valid E-Verify company identification number or, if my employer is using a designated agent to perform the E-Verify queries, a valid E-Verify client company identification number. The employer is a participant in good standing in the E-Verify program.
3. My employer agrees to report the termination or departure of my OPT to the DSO at WCU or through any other means or process identified by DHS if the termination or departure is prior to the end of the authorized period of OPT. Such reporting must be made within 48 hours of the event. My employer shall consider a worker to have departed when the employer knows that I have left the employment or if I have not reported for work for a period of 5 consecutive business days without the consent of the employer, whichever occurs earlier.
4. I understand that the *duration of status* while on post-completion OPT is defined as the period beginning when my OPT Extension application was properly filed and pending approval, including the authorized period of post-completion OPT, and ending 60 days after the OPT employment authorization expires (allowing me to prepare for departure, change educational levels at the same school, or transfer to another institution).
5. I understand that during post-completion OPT my F-1 status is dependent upon employment. I may not accrue a total of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial post-completion OPT authorization. If I am granted an STEM OPT extension, I may not accrue a total of more than 120 days of unemployment during the total OPT period comprising any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial post-completion OPT authorization and the subsequent extension period.

Student's Signature

Print Name

EAD Card #

Date

USCIS STEM OPT Extension Application Checklist

Items to be submitted to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

The Global Engagement Office has updated your I-20 reflecting our support of your petition to file for STEM OPT Extension. It is your responsibility to complete the required application and submit it in a timely manner to USCIS. Your application must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the date that appears on item 10 on page 1 of the STEM OPT Extension I-20.

USCIS APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Assemble application materials in the order indicated below. Please paperclip check and passport photos on top.

- Form G-1145:** Typed, not handwritten
- Original, signed Form I-765:** Typed, not handwritten
 - Item 27: Eligibility category is (c) (3) (C) (small c, number 3, capital C)
 - Item 28: Degree is listed on page 1 of the I-20
- Form I-983** – Training Plan for STEM OPT Students
- Photocopy** of STEM OPT Extension I-20 with your signature and date
- Printout** of I-94 Arrival/Departure form (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>)
- Photocopy** of passport page with photo, passport number and expiration date (must be valid for at least 6 months prior to application date)
- Photocopy** of all previously issued EAD cards and OPT I-20's
- \$410 check payable to:** U.S. Department of Homeland Security (Fees subject to change; please visit www.uscis.gov or call USCIS National Customer Service at 1-800-375-5283 to verify filing fee)
- Two (2) U.S. style passport photos:** Write your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo
 - Passport photos must be 2" x 2" with proper facial dimensions of U.S. style passport photos taken within 30 days
- Verification of graduation from WCU:** Provide an official or unofficial WCU transcript; or a copy of a WCU diploma showing degree earned and program of study

USCIS STEM OPT Extension Application Checklist

Items to be submitted to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

MAILING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Make copies of the entire application for your records and mail by certified U.S. mail. Application must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the date that appears on page (reflected on the signature line of your I-20).
2. Mail application to the USCIS:

USCIS Chicago Lockbox

U.S. Postal Service (USPS)

Attn: I-765 C03

P.O. Box 805373

Chicago, IL 60680-5374

FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:

USCIS

Attn: I-765 C03 (Box 805373)

131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor

Chicago, IL 60603-5517

REPORT REQUIREMENTS WHILE ON OPT STEM EXTENSION

All students on OPT are required to report to the GEO within 10 days of any change of:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legal name• Residential or mailing address• Employer name• Employer address	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of employment• Any interruption of employment• Change in degree level• Transfer to another school
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Students who file the STEM extension application in a timely manner will be able to continue employment until a final decision is made by USCIS or for 180 days, whichever is earlier.
- The GEO advises students not to travel until STEM Extension application is approved and a new EAD card has been received.

