

How to Apply for the STEM OPT Extension

Please review the information below to learn how to apply for the STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) Extension. You may submit your request for the STEM OPT Extension I-20 to International Student Enrollment up to 90 days before your current OPT end date. The final deadline to apply to USCIS is your EAD end date so please request the I-20 at least 30 days before that date.

Application Process

Step 1: Submit a request to International Student Enrollment for an I-20 recommending you for STEM OPT by completing the 'F-1 STEM OPT Extension Request' e-form at <https://internationalforms.hofstra.edu/>. You will be required to upload your fully completed I-983 signed by you and your employer and copies of the front and back of your current EAD card when you fill in the e-form.

Form I-983 – Training Plan for STEM OPT Students

- Download the form at: <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983.pdf>
- I-983 Instructions: <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983Instructions.pdf>
- See page 3 of this document for more advice on how to fill in the I-983.

After you submit your request, a DSO will review it and contact you for any additional information. **Do not submit your application to USCIS until you receive the STEM OPT recommendation I-20 and instructions from our office.** Please allow up to 10 business days for us to review and process your STEM OPT request.

Step 2: If your STEM OPT Extension request is approved, we will email your electronic OPT recommendation I-20 to your Hofstra email address with additional instructions.

Step 3: Prepare your remaining documents for the STEM OPT application using the checklist on the next page. For more guidance on how to fill in the I-765 and prepare your materials, you may attend our OPT workshops or use the guide available on our website at hofstra.edu/international-student: go to 'Resources', select 'Student Resources', then on the Student Resources page, under 'Immigration Resources', click 'Forms'.

Step 4: Mail your OPT application using FedEx/UPS to USCIS, **OR** file your I-765 application online using your USCIS Account (https://myaccount.uscis.gov/users/sign_up). We currently recommend the online filing method because it is easy, quick, and less affected by mailing errors.

Things You Need to Know for STEM OPT:

- Type of Employment – The Department of Homeland Security clarifies that students cannot qualify for STEM OPT extensions unless they are bona fide employees of the employer signing the Training Plan, and the employer that signs the Training Plan must be the same entity that employs the student and provides the practical training experience. The Department of Homeland Security has determined that a student seeking a STEM OPT extension is not allowed to use a volunteer opportunity, contract work, or staffing agency as a basis for a STEM OPT extension.
- E-Verify – Employer must enroll in E-Verify <https://www.e-verify.gov/> for a student to file STEM OPT extension.
- Working Hours – must be a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- Unemployment – The regulations state a 90-day maximum period of unemployment during the initial period of post-completion OPT but allows an additional 60 days (for a total of 150 days) for a student who obtains a 24-month STEM OPT extension.
- Expiration of current OPT – If a student's post-completion OPT expires while their timely filed STEM OPT application is pending in USCIS, the student will receive an automatic extension of employment authorization of up to 180 days upon the expiration of his or her current employment authorization.
- Travel – If your current EAD has expired, don't travel while your STEM OPT extension is pending. You will not be able to return in F-1 status to resume employment.

STEM OPT Checklist

Below is a checklist of all the materials you should gather to prepare your STEM OPT application. Incomplete or incorrect applications can cause processing delays so go over the checklist carefully and make sure you have included everything. *This resource is meant to provide you with best practices in preparing a STEM OPT extension application. Please note that this is not legal advice. You may choose to hire an immigration attorney to assist you with this process at any time.*

- STEM OPT Recommendation I-20: You will receive the OPT recommendation I-20 signed by an immigration advisor at the bottom of the first page. If the I-20 is not signed by an advisor, please contact us. Print out and sign your signature by hand at the bottom of the first page of the OPT I-20 and then make a copy. Include the copy with both the advisor's and your signature with your application.
- I-765 Form: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> *If mailing a physical application, be sure to download the correct edition of the form from the USCIS website. If you use an outdated form, your OPT application will be denied.*
- Copy of your valid passport and your F-1 visa
- I-94: you can print out the most recent I-94 from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/>
- Copy of all previous EAD cards (front and back)
- Copy of all previous Form I-20s (including all schools you have ever attended)
- Copy of your diploma
- Official transcript
- U.S. style passport photo taken within 3 months – size must be 2" x 2" (if mailing physical application, include 2 photos and lightly write your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo)
- I-765 filing fee (payable online; or if mailing a physical application, submit as a check or money order from a U.S. bank or U.S. Postal Service and make payable to: U.S. Department of Homeland Security):

<i>I-765 Filing Fees</i>	<i>Fees as of April 1, 2024</i>
Online filing	\$470
Physical application (by mail)	\$520

Online Filing

You can file the I-765 online by creating a USCIS account at <https://myaccount.uscis.gov/>. More information about filing online is available at <https://uscis.gov/file-online>. When filling in the online form and uploading documents, please note:

- Be sure to select the correct eligibility category. For STEM Extension, choose (c)(3)(C).
- The following file formats are accepted: JPG, JPEG, PNG, PDF, TIF, TIFF. The following file formats are NOT allowed: DOC, BMP, XLSX
- Maximum file size is 6 MB per file.
- Foreign and special characters are not allowed. The only characters allowed in document file names are: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, parentheses.
- Foreign language documents must have an English translation.
- The system allows you to submit your application without all required evidence, which can lead to requests for evidence and delays if you forget to upload documents. Please be careful to ensure that all evidence is correctly uploaded before submitting the online application.
- For digital passport photos, you may use this website: <https://tsg.phototool.state.gov/photo>
- Review your entries carefully before you pay the filing fee. Once you submit payment, you cannot make corrections to your responses.
- When you review your form before submission, print or download a draft snapshot for your records.
- To pay the filing fee you will be directed to Pay.gov, a secure government portal where you can pay by ACH withdrawal from a U.S. bank account, or a U.S. debit card, or accepted credit cards as listed on Pay.gov.
- After you pay the fee, your form will be submitted to USCIS. You will receive confirmation the form was submitted. Click on “Go to my cases” to see your case card and receipt notice. All notices will be mailed to the mailing address you provided in the I-765 form and posted to your account, including any requests for evidence (RFE) and the decision letter.

Mailing a Physical Application

If you plan to mail a physical application to USCIS, be sure to include the original check/money order, original photos and original I-765 and G-1145. Everything else should be a copy. Do not mail the I-983 to USCIS. Print all materials single sided and type information into forms if possible. Keep a scan/copy of your complete application for your records.

How to Fill in the I-983: Training Plan for STEM OPT Students

See the I-983 Instructions for a full guide about this form: <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983Instructions.pdf>

Page 1, Section 1: Student Information

- Name of School Recommending STEM OPT: Enter ‘Hofstra University’
- SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT: Enter Hofstra’s school code as listed on the 1st page of your I-20 in the ‘School Information’ section.
- Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information: Enter all the contact information below. If your computer does not allow you to type it all in, then you may neatly hand write it into the box in black ink.
Michelle Cheung
110 Weller Hall, Hempstead, NY 11549
international@hofstra.edu; (516) 463-6796
- STEM OPT Requested Period: For start date, enter the day after your current EAD end date. For end date, enter 24 months after the start date.
- Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: Enter the major and the CIP code listed on the 1st page of your I-20 in the ‘Program of Study’ section.
- Based on Prior Degree?: Check “No” if your STEM OPT participation is based on your most recently obtained STEM degree from Hofstra (the degree upon which your current post-completion OPT is based).
Only check “Yes” if your STEM OPT participation is based on a previously-obtained STEM degree, not the same Hofstra degree upon which your current post-completion OPT was granted. If you are not sure about your situation, please contact our office to consult with an advisor.

Pages 2 - 4

Work with your employer to fill in these pages. Consult your supervisor and Human Resources department about who would be most appropriate to complete these sections. Whoever completes and signs sections 3 - 6 should be whoever is most suited to attest regarding the content in those sections. It could be the same person, or a different people, depending on the structure of your company and who is filling in the form. For example, the person who signs Section 4 must be familiar with the student’s goals and performance.

Page 5

- Please leave the last page (page 5) blank. This evaluation page will be completed during your STEM OPT time.

For more information on STEM OPT, please visit:
<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/stem-opt-extension-overview>