

 **24-Month OPT STEM Extension**

 **When and How to Apply**

Apply up to 90 days before your current 12-month Optional Practical Training (OPT) expires. United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) must receive your application before your Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) expires. Review eligibility rules for the 24-month OPT extension.

**Step 1**

To receive the new **STEM Extension,** I-20 you must submit the signed I-765 application form and a signed I-983 training plan to OIP together in the same email. Make sure you are within 90 days of your 12 month OPT expiring; do not submit them earlier. If typing the forms and all necessary information does not fit please hand write the information in black ink.

* **I-765 application guide**
* **I-983 training plan guide** (do not complete page 5, OIP) will notify you when this page is required)

Be sure to verify all information on both forms for accuracy. OIPS will then generate the STEM extension I-20 and email you a scanned copy along with a detailed email regarding the application process and important STEM extension requirements

**Step 2**

Gather these STEM extension documents to mail to USCIS. We are happy to review your I-765 packet before you mail it; send a copy of all documents to international@lincoln.edu or tjoseph@lincoln.edu  if you would like it reviewed.

* [I-765 application form](https://www.uscis.gov/i-765)
* Section 28. C. on the I-765 must be the companies E-verify number NOT the companies EIN number. Yes, there is a difference. The E-verify number is 5 - 7 digits while EIN is 9 digits. You must send all 7 pages of the I-765 form even if the pages are blank.
* Check or money order in the amount of $540(confirm cost), payable to "US Department of Homeland Security." Be sure to sign your money order, as failing to do so will cause your OPT packet to be returned.
* Two passport-style color photos, two inches by two inches, taken within 30 days of filing **(write your name and I-94 number in pencil on the back of the photo)**
* Copy of the front and back of your current EAD card and the paper the EAD card was attached to
* Copy of **new OPT STEM extension I-20**from OIP (keep the original I-20)
* Copy of all previous I-20s
* [Official or unofficial transcript](https://www.banweb.mtu.edu/pls/owa/twbkwbis.P_WWWLogin) **and** copy of the diploma that shows your degree level and program of study
* Copy of your current I-94 printout
* Copy of your passport identity page (and any renewal pages)
* Copy of F-1 visa page
* Offer letter from your employer
* Copy of Form I-797C (receipt notice from the initial 12-month OPT)
* [**Form G-1145**](http://www.uscis.gov/g-1145), E-Notification of Application, authorizing USCIS to text or email you when they receive the application at the processing center

Do NOT submit a copy of the I-983 training plan with your STEM Extension application to USCIS. OIP staff will.

**Step 3**

USCIS must receive the OPT packet within 30 days of the new I-20 generation date. Be sure to double-check the following before mailing out your packet:

* All forms are signed by you, including your OPT STEM I-20 and any other I-20s.
* Make a copy of the entire packet for your records, making sure to send the original signed I-765 application. If USCIS receives an application with a photocopy of your signature your packet will be returned.
* Mail to the correct [**USCIS filing address**](https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses).

**\*Please make sure that everything is completed and filed in a timely fashion. You are responsible for the information submitted**

**STEM OPT Requirements**

To qualify for a STEM Optional Practical Training extension, you must be a verified employee of the employer who signs your Training Plan. The employer who signs the plan must be the same employer who provides the practical training experience. [STEM-eligible employers](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students-determining-stem-opt-extension-eligibility) must have [E-Verify](https://www.uscis.gov/e-verify) and Employer Identification Numbers (EIN).

**Work that is Not Allowed**

* Jobs through employment agencies may not be allowed if a bona fide employer employee relationship is not maintained as described by USCIS.
* Volunteer/unpaid jobs
* Self-employment
* Any other work relationship that does not constitute a bona fide employer-employee relationship

You must maintain F-1 status while on STEM OPT. The requirements:

* Do not be unemployed for more than 150 days (includes unemployment during your initial 12-month OPT).
* Report any change of residential address OIP within **10 days** of the change.
* Submit the Employment Update Form every **six months**, even if nothing has changed, as well **as** within 10 days of every change in employment. For loss of employment, submit the Unemployment Update Form.
* Complete and turn in to tjoseph@lincoln.edu the Evaluation on Student Progress [**Form I-983 Mentoring and Training Plan**](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview) twice during the course of your STEM OPT period:
* The first assessment is due within 12 months of the STEM OPT start date.
* The second, final assessment recaps all your training and knowledge acquired during the completed training period. Submit it at the end of your STEM OPT.

**Additional Things You Need to Know**

* USCIS sends a Receipt Notice, Form I-797C, two to four weeks after the application is filed.
* OPT STEM Extension processing time is 90 days or longer. You are eligible to continue working up to 180 days while the STEM Extension is pending.
* Once the new EAD card arrives it is recommended that you scanned copy of the EAD card to the OIP.
* Report termination or departure from your job to OIP within ten days.
* Find comprehensive information on STEM OPT Extension rules and requirements on the [USCIS website](https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/stem-opt).

**If You Change Employers While On STEM OPT**

You must do all of the following before a new I-20 will be issued:

1. Submit page 5 of the I-983 form for your previous employer and submit a new I-983 form for your new employer to international@lincoln.edu or tjoseph@lincoln.edu  in the same email.
2. Fill out the **employment update form**.

**Updated Form I-983 Mentoring and Training Plan**

A new [Form I-983 Mentoring and Training Plan](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview) must be submitted to OIP within 10 days of:

* beginning a new practical training opportunity with a new employer during the 24-month extension
* any time there is a "material change" in the terms and conditions of the original I-983

Form I-983 must be signed by the student and your immediate supervisor, and then submitted to tjoseph@lincoln.edu or international@lincoln.edu .

**Travel During OPT STEM Extension**

Your status is still F-1. So, if you travel outside of the United States you must have this documentation to re-enter:

* Valid EAD card
* I-20 with travel signature (no more than six months old) with current employer information listed on page two of your I-20
* Valid F-1 visa stamp, unless you are able to use Automatic Visa Revalidation. It is possible to renew your F-1 visa during STEM OPT.
* Current passport, valid at least six months after the date of last entry
* We strongly recommend that you also carry your job offer letter from a current or future employer. Days abroad do not count toward unemployment if the time is excused by the company or it is travel for business.

**International travel is not recommended while a STEM extension OPT application is pending**.

**After OPT STEM Extension**

You have a 60-day grace period after your STEM Extension. You can use this time to prepare for your departure, transfer to another US school, or change to another status. You may be eligible for the Cap-Gap if you are changing to an H-1B visa with an October 1 start date.