WESTERN NEW ENGLAND
UNIVERSITY WNE
24-month STEM Extension of Optional Practical Training

Summary: The 12-month limit on OPT can be extended by 24 months, for certain STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) degree holders ONLY. Visit http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm to determine if your field and CIP Code are included in the list.

Eligibility Requirements for F-1 Students:

- Be on a period of standard Post-Completion OPT
- Hold a degree in a field of study (indicated on the I-20) which qualifies as STEM eligible according to the official STEM Designated Degree Program List [PDF]
- Have a PAID job from an employer enrolled in E-Verify
- Demonstrate the job is directly related to a STEM field
- Prepare and sign the Training Plan (Form I-983)
- Apply at least 30 DAYS before your current Post-Completion period of OPT expires. **YOU CANNOT APPLY ONCE YOUR 12 MONTH OPT EXPIRES.**

Requirements for F-1 Student Employers:

- Be enrolled in E-Verify
- Have a Federal Employer Identification Number
- Agree to a the terms of STEM OPT by completing their sections of the Training Plan (Form I-983), assisting with the annual evaluation, and reporting to ISSS your employment termination within 5 days.

When to Apply:
Apply up to 90 days before your current EAD expires and NO LATER than 30 days **prior to the end of your current Post-Completion OPT**. You must submit your new STEM OPT I-20 to USCIS within 60 days of creation by ISSS.

If you timely file your STEM OPT extension application, you will be able to continue employment while your application is pending, until a final decision is made by USCIS or for 180 days beyond the expiration of your Post-Completion OPT, whichever comes first. It normally takes up to 90 days for USCIS to process STEM OPT extension applications.

Travel during a PENDING STEM OPT application
It is possible to travel during a Pending STEM OPT application, however it could be risky as it is up to the discretion of the border officer to permit your reentry. If you applied for STEM OPT in a timely manner, your 12-month OPT EAD card is automatically extended. If you need to travel while STEM OPT is pending, consult with ISSS first.

Gather the following items for your application:

To ISSS:

____ Completed and signed STEM OPT Request Form at end of packet (do NOT mail this to USCIS)

____ Completed Training Plan I-983 form (do NOT mail this to USCIS)

(For "Hints for Completing your I-983," see below).

The purpose of the Form I-983, is to ensure that students continue a rigorous training program that builds on the skills obtained as a full time student. The student and their supervisor must agree on the components of the plan as follows: the role of the student in the work place, the goals and objectives of the proposed training, how the employer will provide oversight of the plan, and what set of measures and assessments will be used. Both student and supervisor must sign this form and send it to ISSS for review.

Note: Section 2 of the I-983 asks for your start date of employment. Put the **STEM OPT start date. DO NOT put the date you started at your employer.**

For instructions on how to complete the I-983, please go here: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview

To USCIS:

____ Check or money order payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security." Do not abbreviate this. Write your name and I-94 number on the check or money order. Be sure to sign your check/money order and write the date: Month, date, year (mm/dd/yyyy). Current Fees found here. To pay by credit card, submit Form G-1450. Be sure this form is on the top of the packet.

____ Completed G-1145 form to receive case notifications.

____ Completed and signed Form I-765 (see "Hints" below)

____ 2 color, U.S. passport-style, photographs taken within the last 30 days – write name and SEVIS Number or I-94 number on back. Do not cut to size or staple. Put photos in an envelope or Ziploc bag to protect them. **Photos should be taken within the last 30 days** and can be taken at CVS, Walgreens, etc. See I-765 instructions for more info on the photo requirement.

____ Copy of the front and back of your current 12-month OPT EAD card

____ SIGNED Copy of new I-20 from ISSS with recommendation for STEM OPT extension

____ Copy of the diploma that shows your degree level and program of study OR Transcript that indicates the date your STEM degree was awarded

____ Copy of your current I-94 printout

____ Copy of your passport identity page

____ Copy of your current visa

Hints for Completing your I-983

Section 1:

Name of School Recommending STEM OPT: Western New England University
SEVIS School Code: BOS214F00461000 (Students at the New England Center for Children location in Southborough should put BOS214F00461001 for your school code)
Designated School Official and Contact Info: Katie Ahlman, 413.796.2389, isss@wne.edu, 1215 Wilbraham Rd, Springfield, MA 01119
Student SEVIS ID: See your I-20. The ID starts "N00xxxxxxxx" and is in the upper left corner.
Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: Enter your STEM major that qualifies you for the STEM OPT extension, as well as the degree's (CIP) code. You may find this on your I-20 or here:
http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/default.aspx?y=55 or at http://www.ice.gov/sevis.
Level/Type of Qualifying Degree: Enter the academic level upon which you are basing STEM OPT. (For example, enter Bachelor's, Master's, or Ph.D.)
Date Awarded: Enter the date when the degree, upon which STEM OPT will be based, was awarded.
Based on Prior Degree? Check "No" if your STEM OPT participation is based on your most recently obtained degree, and that is the degree upon which your current post- completion OPT is based. Check "Yes" if your STEM OPT participation is based on a previously-obtained STEM degree, and is not the same degree upon which your current post-completion OPT was granted.
Employment Authorization Number: Enter your "A" number, (which may be found on the Employment Authorization Document).

Section 3:

Employer ID Number (EIN): Enter the Employer Identification Number (EIN)
North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Code: ask your employer or NAICS codes are accessible at https://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/
Start Date: This is the ==**start date of your STEM OPT**== not when you started at your employer.

For more assistance, please go here:
https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/i983Instructions.pdf

Hints for filling out Form I-765

COMPLETE THE FORM ONLINE AND THEN PRINT (do not hand write the form with pen; if your handwriting is unreadable, errors and delays will happen)

Click in the box: Permission to Renew Employment

Hints for filling out Form I-765
Complete the I-765 ON THE COMPUTER then print, sign, and mail. Do NOT hand write the information below:

Item 1	If your name does not fit in this section, please use Part 6. Additional Information.
Item 2	Put NA in ONE box if you have not used any other names
Item 5	If you may move while this application is being processed, use a stable address such as ISSS. Mail from USCIS is **not** forwarded by the Postal Service. You may use the university's address if you wish: In Care of: ISSS Street Number: 1215 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA 01119
Item 6	If you are using ISSS' address, select 'No' and put your mailing address in item #7.
Item 8-9	It is unlikely you have one of these, put NA.
Item 13	If you would like to apply for an SSN, do so here by putting 'yes.' If you have an SSN already, click 'no' and then add it in the boxes (note: many have had to handwrite in this portion)
Item 15-17	Complete these if you would like to apply for an Social Security Number
Item 21a	This is the 11-digit number on your most recent I-94
Item 21c	It is unlikely a student would have one of these. Put NA.
Item 24-25	USCIS wants to know what your status was the last time you entered the U.S. For <u>most</u> students applying for OPT, it is "F-1 Student."
Item 26	See top left corner of your I-20. Starts with 'N.'
Item 27	(C)(3)(C)
Item 28	Include all information related to your degree and e-verify information for your employer

<u>**Part 3**</u>	
Item 1-2	Click this box certifying you can read and write English. Leave rest blank.
Items 3-6	Include your contact information
Item 7	Sign in **BLACK INK**

<u>**Part 4 & 5**</u>	Leave blank but include in your application packet.
<u>**Part 6**</u>	Everyone must complete this Part and mail it to USCIS, even if all that is included is your name. If you had any of the situations apply, follow the instructions below:
	You Changed Your Name:
	Page Number = 3; Part Number = 2; Item Number = 1
	1.a. Family Name = previous family name
	1.b. Given Name = previous given name
	You Received a NEW Passport since you last entered the U.S.
	Page Number = 3; Part Number = 2; Item Number = 21
	New Passport Information; Passport Number: XXXXXXX
	Country of Issuance: Country; Expiration Date: XXXXXX
	You had CPT (include ALL instances of CPT):
	Page Number = 3; Part Number = 2; Item Number = 27
	SEVIS Number, Part (or full)-time CPT, Dates of CPT, Degree (i.e. Bachelor)
	You previously had OPT (include ALL instances of OPT)

Western New England University | 1215 Wilbraham Road | Springfield, MA 01119-2684 | Tel: 1-413-796-2389 | Fax: 1-413-782-1312 | isss@wne.edu
ISSS Website

Updated 4/22/2019 KA

Page Number = 3; Part Number = 2; Item Number = 12
SEVIS Number, Post-Completion OPT, Dates of OPT, Degree (i.e. Bachelor)
Other SEVIS Numbers:
Page Number = 3; Part Number = 2; Item Number = 27
List all previous SEVIS Numbers

Submit OPT Application to USCIS:
Keep a copy of the above documents for your records. If you pay by credit card, the G-1450 must be on top of the application with your photographs, then put the G-1145, followed by your application materials. **Mail the application by registered or express mail**. Keep the tracking number for your record.

Use the **Phoenix Lockbox address** if you indicated your address on FORM I-765 in 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 Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

USCIS PO Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036	For Express mail (Fed Ex, UPS): USCIS Attn: AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034

Use the **Dallas Lockbox address** if you indicated your address on FORM I-765 in Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, <mark>Massachusetts</mark>, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, U.S. Virgin Islands, Vermont, Virginia, or West Virginia.

USCIS PO Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266	For Express Mail: USCIS Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy 121, Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067

YOU are responsible for mailing your OPT application to USCIS. Be sure to get a tracking number.

Wait for EAD card to be mailed to you from USCIS.
- A few days after your application arrives, you should receive a text or email from USCIS with your case number. Then, several weeks late, you should receive a receipt notice (Form I-797) in the mail

from USCIS. This is proof that USCIS has received your application. Make sure to check the spelling of your name. If you notice an error, contact ISSS. The receipt will also have your case number printed on it, with which you can track the progress of your application on the USCIS website.

- It takes approximately three months for USCIS to process your request and mail your EAD card to the address on Form I-765.
- **Request for Further Evidence**. Occasionally, a student will receive a Request for Further Evidence (RFE) from USCIS. These requests are typically because the application is missing a document or new photographs are required. If you receive such a request, tell ISSS **IMMEDIATELY** to help with your reply to USCIS and submitting the requested documents. Be sure to make copies of your RFE materials before you mail them, and send the reply by courier mail with tracking.
- **EAD Delays:** Students should contact the USCIS Contact Center at 800-375-5283 if it has been more than 75 days since your application was receipted (the date listed on your I-797 receipt or date email received).
- If you have applied to USCIS for your 24-month STEM extension and you have not received your new EAD by the end of your Post-Completion OPT, **you may continue to work for up to 180 days after the end of your Post-Completion OPT.** You should receive your new EAD before you reach 180 days.
- Upon receipt of the EAD, scan and email isss@wne.edu.

Requirements while on the STEM OPT Extension:

- Employment must be paid.
- Employment must be a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- Employment must be directly related to your course of study.
- Students are required to validate their employment every 6 months
- Students are required to complete an ANNUAL review and FINAL review at the end of the STEM period
- Students are required to complete a FINAL review and a new I-983 when they change employers
- Unemployment Caution: STEM OPT students get a total of 150 days of unemployment for **THEIR ENTIRE 36 MONTHS ON OPT**. SEVIS records may automatically terminate for students who have no employment reported for 150 days. Be sure that you have made alternate plans and communicated them to ISSS before your record is terminated.

Reporting Requirements

Students are required to report to ISSS **within 10 days**, any change in the following:

- Legal Name
- Residential address
- Employer name and address
- Change in status of current employment, including loss of employment, change of status to H-1B, transfer to another F-1 program, or change employers. **If you change employers, you and your employer will need to complete a new I-983 and submit to ISSS**. You will also need to complete a FINAL evaluation from your previous employer.

- Notify ISSS if you decide to permanently depart the U.S. during your OPT.
- Notify ISSS if you change your visa status during your OPT.

Students are required to report to ISSS **every 6 months** - regardless if there is a change or not - the following:

- Legal name
- Residential address
- Employer name and address
- Status of current employment

Failure to report the above changes may result in the termination of your F-1 status.

Keep Records of your Employment
Keep records of your employment history for your personal file, to present as evidence of maintaining lawful status should you apply for future immigration benefits.

Examples of records to keep:
- offer letters
- contracts
- payroll stubs
- letters describing volunteer activity and hours

Travel during APPROVED STEM OPT
Under normal circumstances, a student who has both (1) an EAD for post-completion OPT or receipt notice [Form I-797] and (2) a job or job offer should not experience difficulty reentering the US. If either of these two conditions is missing, then the student is assuming risk.

Travel signatures on page 2 of the I-20 are only valid for 6 months from the date of the most recent signature. If your travel signature has expired, come to ISSS during to request a renewal.

Cap Gap Extension
The H-1B "cap-gap" occurs when an F-1 student's status and OPT work authorization expires after April 1, and before the student can start approved H-1B employment during the next fiscal year that begins on October 1. For example, a student currently on OPT on April 1 who timely-filed an H-1B petition that requests an employment start date of October 1 of the following fiscal year will have their duration of status and OPT employment authorization extended to October 1. This is what is called the "cap-gap."

However, if you need an I-20 for any other reason to prove you are in cap-gap status, contact **ISSS**. You should send an e-mail to ISSS with end date on EAD card, current mailing address, current employer name and address including the start date of that employment, and employer name and address during Cap-gap dates.

WESTERN NEW ENGLAND
UNIVERSITY **WNE** STEM OPT Request Form

Section 1: Student Information

Student Name: _____ Student ID #:_____

Home Address: _____

Email address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Section 2: OPT Dates:

I am requesting 24 months of post-completion OPT, starting on the following date, and I understand that these dates cannot be change once I have submitted my OPT application to USCIS.

Current EAD dates: from _____ to _____ 24-month extension dates: from _____ to_____

How you would like to receive the new I-20?

_____ Pick-up at ISSS   _____ Mail to US Address (indicate address below):

_____

Section 3: Employer Information:

*You are required to have a **PAID** job offer to apply for the STEM OPT Extension.*

Describe how your employment relates to your degree:

Will a staffing agency assist to find job placements for you on STEM OPT?   YES   NO

Note: your I-983 must be completed by your **WORK SITE** as they supervise, train, and oversee your training plan. Each time you change work sites, a **NEW I-983 IS REQUIRED, even if you remain employed with the same staffing agency**.

Hours per Week: _____ Job title: _____ Employer EIN: _____

Employer Name: _____

Employer Address: _____

Will you work remotely and travel to the company's office when needed?   YES   NO

Supervisor Name: _____

Supervisor Email: _____ Supervisor Phone Number: _____

STUDENT STATEMENT: I have read the attached cover pages regarding optional practical training and fully understand the implications of the authorization. The information I have provided is true and accurate.

Section 5: STEM OPT Extension Agreement:

I agree to all of the following:

1. I understand the F-1 regulations regarding STEM OPT and that I need to abide by all the regulations in order to maintain my status.

2. I understand it is my responsibility to report changes to any or all of the following information to the ISSS office, **within 10 days of the change**:

   a. Legal name changes
   b. Change in residential or mailing address
   c. New employment or changes in employment:
      i. Provide: employer name, address, start date, EIN (recommended), a statement detailing how your employment relates to your degree and a new I-983.
   d. Changes in immigration status—including the filing of an H-1B petition, application for adjustment of status, or any other change in immigration status.
   e. Early departure from the U.S. – if I decide not to use my STEM OPT or depart the U.S. before the end date of my STEM OPT with no intention of returning.

3. I understand that my employer agrees to notify ISSS within 5 days in the event of the **termination of your employment or your departure from the job.**

4. I understand that my I-983 must be completed by my **WORK SITE** as they supervise, train, and oversee my training plan. Each time I change work sites, a **NEW I-983 IS REQUIRED, even if I remain employed with the same staffing agency**.

5. You and your employer agree to **submit an I-983 form to update your employment information** as soon as a material change occurs and within 10 days of each 12-month evaluation.

6. You and your employer agree to submit a FINAL evaluation once you leave their employment.

7. I understand that I must report to ISSS the following information **every six months** starting from the date the extension begins by emailing isss@wne.edu to verify:

   a. Name
   b. Address including city, state, and zip code
   c. Employer's name
   d. Employer's address including city, state, and zip code
   e. Start date of employment

8. I understand that during STEM OPT, F-1 status is dependent on employment and I could be considered out of status if I am unemployed for more than a total of no more than 150 days, applied to the entire 36-month period of OPT. I understand it is my responsibility to keep track of my days of unemployment.

9. I understand that any length of unemployment will be tracked in SEVIS and failure to maintain status by being unemployed may result in automatic termination of my SEVIS record.

10. I understand that my STEM OPT will end immediately if I accrue 150 days of unemployment or transfer to a new school/degree program.

Student Signature: _____Date: _____