



# STEM Optional Practical Training Extension (STEM OPT)

**SJSU** | INTERNATIONAL STUDENT  
AND SCHOLAR SERVICES

# Topics Covered in Tutorial

What is STEM OPT?  
Eligibility Requirements  
Application Process Overview  
Application Steps  
Reporting Responsibilities  
Unemployment  
Travel  
End of STEM OPT  
iSpartan Hub

# STEM OPT Extension

“24-month extension of post-completion OPT for a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) degree.”

- You must meet ALL of the following criteria on the next slide to be eligible to apply for STEM OPT Extension.
- *If you do not meet all of them, then you are not eligible to apply for STEM OPT.*
- For more information: [Study in the States STEM OPT HUB](#)

# STEM OPT Eligibility

You must meet **ALL** of the following criteria to be eligible to apply for STEM OPT extension.

- Been granted and currently active on post-completion OPT.
- Have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment on your current post-completion OPT.
- Earned a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics) from a SEVP-certified school. See the list of SJSU eligible STEM majors. You can find your CIP code on page 1 of your I-20.
- Work for an employer that is enrolled in USCIS' E-Verify employment eligibility verification program. Contact your employer for the requisite E-Verify Company ID number. \*Therefore, self employment is not allowed on STEM OPT.
- The employer must guarantee you a minimum of 20 hours of work per week and provide you formal training and learning objectives. You must engage in paid employment that is directly related to your STEM degree.
- Have not previously used STEM OPT more than once. You cannot have more than one STEM OPT extension based on the same degree.
- Be physically present in the U.S. when requesting the STEM OPT I-20 from ISSS and submitting your application to USCIS.

# When to Apply

## STEM OPT Extension

100 days before Post-Completion End Date:

First day to submit STEM OPT I-20 request to ISSS in iSpartan.

90 days before Post-Completion End Date:

First day to submit STEM OPT I-20 request to ISSS in iSpartan.

14 days before Post-Completion End Date:

Final day to submit STEM OPT I-20 request to ISSS in iSpartan

- You may submit the STEM OPT I-20 request to ISSS in iSpartan up to **100 days** BEFORE your Post-Completion OPT ends.
- ISSS is unable to do your STEM OPT recommendation until **90 days** before your Post-Completion OPT ends.
- You need to submit the STEM OPT I-20 request to ISSS in iSpartan no later than **14 days** before your Post-Completion OPT ends.
  - Please be mindful of submitting your STEM OPT I-20 request in iSpartan. We need time to review, get corrections (if needed) and process the I-20, so you do not miss your filing deadline.
- **STEM OPT applications can take up to 3 months (sometimes longer) to get approved by USCIS. Therefore, we recommend that you apply early.**

**You must get a new I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation BEFORE filing your STEM OPT application with USCIS.**

# STEM OPT Process

1. **Update your personal information (telephone number, and/or living address) and current employment information using your [SEVP Portal](#).**
  - a. Your SJSU email address will become inactive one year after you graduate from SJSU, which may affect your access to your SEVP portal. To request a change of your email address to a non-SJSU (personal) email address, you can submit the [SEVP Portal Access Request](#) to request this change.
2. **Pay the one time \$300 administrative STEM OPT fee to ISSS.**
  - a. A payment link is on the ISSS STEM OPT webpage.
3. **Complete the [Form I-983](#), Training Plan for STEM OPT Students.**
  - a. Review [SEVP's Form I-983 instructions](#).
  - b. Review [ISSS I-983 Completion Guide](#).
  - c. Work with your employer to complete this form.
4. **Student requests a STEM OPT I-20 from ISSS. *\*You will need this I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation from ISSS to file your STEM OPT application with USCIS.\****
  - a. Submit the [STEM OPT I-20 Request](#) in iSpartan.
    - i. If you are having problems accessing, go [here](#). You may have to log-in using limited services.
  - b. Complete the e-form. Uploading proof of payment of ISSS STEM OPT fee, I-983 training plan, post-completion OPT EAD card (front and back), and I-94 record of arrival.

# STEM OPT Process

## 5. ISSS Receives STEM OPT I-20 Request

- a. Once submitted to ISSS, processing time is 7-10 business days.
- b. ISSS Advisor (DSO) will review your eligibility for STEM OPT as well as your I-983 for completeness.
  - i. They will email you directly if they have further questions or need additional information, when reviewing your request.
- c. ISSS Advisor (DSO) will recommend STEM OPT in your SEVIS record and issue you a new I-20 with the STEM OPT recommendation on page 2.
  - i. DSO will email you the I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation.
  - ii. **You will need this new I-20 to file your STEM OPT application with USCIS.**

# STEM OPT Process

## 6. Student files Form I-765 and supporting documents with USCIS.

- a. **Do not file your application with USCIS until you have the I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation from ISSS.**
- b. USCIS must receive your STEM OPT application *within 60 days of the date your STEM OPT was recommended by ISSS or by your Post-Completion OPT end date (whichever is first), or your STEM OPT application will be denied.*
  - i. DSO will tell you when your STEM OPT recommendation was done, when they email you the I-20.
- c. Review documents that USCIS requires you to submit to file your application.



# Filing I-765 (STEM OPT) with USCIS

You must have a new I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation from ISSS to file I-765 (STEM OPT) with USCIS.

USCIS offers 2 different ways to file an I-765 (STEM OPT) application with USCIS. You must choose one option. You cannot choose both options. ISSS recommends you file online.

1. Online filing of [I-765](#).
2. Mail application to [USCIS lockbox](#).

**See next slide for Comparison**

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\*Go to ISSS [STEM OPT webpage](#) for the following tutorials:

1. Online filing of I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT
2. Mailing I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT

*Only if you are unable to file online, then you can mail your application and supporting documents to USCIS. Review ISSS Mailing I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT tutorial . (BEFORE mailing your application, we highly recommend [meeting with an Advisor](#) from ISSS to find out why you are unable to file online).*

# Online Filing vs. Mailing Application

ISSS recommends that you file online. **\*You must choose one option. You cannot choose both options. \*Do not file with USCIS until you have the I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation from ISSS.**

## Online Filing

- Save all required documents for STEM OPT application on your computer.
- Create online account with USCIS.
- File I-765 for STEM OPT.
- Upload supporting documents in online application.
- Receive same day notification, receipt number, that application has been filed with USCIS.

*\*Review slides 11-14\**

## Mailing Application to USCIS

- Gather all required documents for STEM OPT application.
- Complete I-765.
- Make a copy of your complete application, prior to mailing.
- Mail application to USCIS.
- If application is rejected, it will be returned to you. **\*\*If your application is returned back to you, contact ISSS. You may need to get a new I-20, since you might be outside of the filing period.**

*\*Review slides 15-16\**

# Required Documentation (Evidence) if Filing Online

## For filing the online I-765 STEM OPT Application to USCIS

- **2 x 2 Photo of You**
    - You will need to get a new passport style color photograph taken.
    - Review the [Department of State photo guidelines](#).
  - **Form I-94**
    - Retrieve I-94 at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>
    - If you have a paper I-94, include a copy both sides of the card.
    - If you changed your status to F-1 and have not left the US since getting F-1 status, you will need to submit a copy of your I-797A approval notice.
  - **Employment Authorization Document (EAD)**
    - Copy of post-completion OPT EAD (front and back sides).
  - **Form I-20**
    - I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation from ISSS.
  - **College degree**
    - Official transcript from SJSU or diploma showing degree completion.
- 
- **Institutional accreditation**
    - This is not required. This is ONLY required if your STEM is based on a degree that was completed prior to your SJSU STEM degree.

***\*Filing code is (c) (3) (C) for STEM OPT Extension***

# Additional Information if Filing Online

## For filing the online I-765 STEM OPT Application to USCIS

### **Additional Information**

Complete this section to give additional useful information that you would like USCIS to know.

*\*You are required to indicate any current or previous employment authorizations that have been authorized in your SEVIS record (CPT, OPT, STEM OPT from SJSU and/or other schools) (See next slide for details).*

### **Additional information may also include:**

\*Passport information: Only if your I-94 information or F-1 visa has your old passport number on it, then enter the expired passport information here.

\*SEVIS ID number: If you have had a different SEVIS ID number, other than the number listed on your current I-20.

# Additional Information if Filing Online

For filing the online I-765 STEM OPT Application to USCIS

## **Additional Information Continued**

Give the details of your currently authorized post-completion OPT

Also, If you had previous CPT authorization:

Section: Select “Evidence”

Question: “Previously authorized CPT or OPT”

Additional Information: Enter the type of employment authorization, indicate if part-time or full-time, degree level, authorization dates, and any receipt numbers (IOE or YSC) associated with the authorization.

Example for CPT: CPT; Full-time; Master’s; Authorized (05/31/2020 - 08/15/2020).

Example for OPT: Post-Completion OPT; Full-time; Master’s; Authorized (01/21/2021 - 01/20/2022); IOE123456789.

# Review and Submit Online to USCIS

## For filing the online I-765 STEM OPT Application to USCIS

- **Review your application**
  - This is where you can check your application before you submit.
  - Check to make sure that you have spelled things correctly as well as entered any dates in the US format of MM/DD/YYYY.
- **Your application summary**
  - This is a summary of all the information that you provided in your application.
- **Your statement**
  - You must read and agree to the statements that are listed in this section.
- **Your signature**
  - Type in your full legal name, for the digital signature.
- **Pay and submit**
  - The final step to submit the Form I-765 is to pay the required application fee.
  - The filing fee is non-refundable and subject to change. Please go to <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> for the current filing fee.

# Required Documentation if Mailing

## For mailing the I-765 STEM OPT Application to USCIS

**Assemble your documents using the suggested order below; held together by a paper clip or binder clip. Do not staple your documents together.**

1. Application/filing fee. Fees are subject to change, so please refer to [uscis.gov/i-765](https://uscis.gov/i-765) for the current filing fee amount.
  - a. You will need to use a personal check, cashier's check or money order [from a U.S. bank account] payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security". If needed, search online about how to write a check.
2. 2 recent passport-style color photographs
  - a. You will need to get new passport style color photographs taken.
  - b. Review the [Department of State photo guideline](#) for size dimensions.
3. Form [G-1145](#), E-notification of Application/Petition Acceptance
4. Form [I-765 Application for Employment Authorization](#). (All pages, completed, and signed).
  - a. Read the [USCIS Instructions for Form I-765](#).
  - b. Review slides 7-27 of ISSS [Mailing I-765 for OPT/STEM OPT](#) for I-765 Completion Guide.
5. Photocopy of I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation.
6. Photocopy of valid passport biographical page.
  - a. \*If your passport will be expiring within 6 months, you will need to write a letter acknowledging your passport expiration date and that you plan on renewing your passport before it expires.
  - b. \*If your I-94 has your old passport number on it, then you will need to submit a copy of your current and your previous passport.
7. Photocopy of F-1 visa stamp, if applicable.
8. Form I-94 record of arrival.
  - a. Retrieve I-94 at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>
  - b. If you have a paper I-94, include a copy both sides of the card
  - c. If you changed your status to F-1 and have not left the US since getting F-1 status, you will need to submit a copy of your I-797A approval notice
9. Photocopy of any Employment Authorization Document (EAD), from SJSU and/or other schools.
  - a. Copy of post-completion OPT EAD (front and back sides)
10. Photocopies of all previous CPT, OPT or STEM OPT I-20's, from SJSU and/or other schools.
11. Photocopy of diploma or official transcript showing STEM OPT degree has been conferred.

# Review and Mail to USCIS

## For mailing the I-765 STEM OPT Application to USCIS

- **Review your application prior to mailing to USCIS.**
  - Review the [Form I-765](#) for the correct edition date and that you have signed the appropriate page.
    - USCIS will not accept a digital signature on the Form I-765.
  - We recommend that you make a copy of your entire application packet before mailing to USCIS.
- **Mail your entire application to the [USCIS lockbox](#).**
  - You will mail to the lockbox location for Foreign students.
  - You will have to select the correct address based on how you are mailing your application.
  - We recommend using Fed Ex or UPS.
  - If you mail via USPS, then use tracking.



# STEM OPT Process

## 7. USCIS processes STEM OPT application.

- a. Within 2-3 weeks of USCIS receiving your STEM OPT application, a paper receipt (Form I-797c) will be mailed to the mailing address that you provided as your mailing address in your application (form I-765).
  - i. If you filed online, then you will receive notification that your application was received on the day that you filed the application with USCIS.
  - ii. Review the receipt for any errors in your name or date of birth. If there are errors, please contact ISSS.
  - iii. As long as your application was received within a timely manner by USCIS, your employment authorization is automatically extended for up to 180 days while your STEM OPT application is pending.
- b. Processing of your STEM OPT application can take 2-3 months, sometimes longer.
  - i. If your application is returned back to you (if you mailed it) or if you receive a RFE 'Request for Evidence' or RFI 'Request for Information' from USCIS, please contact ISSS.
  - ii. USCIS offers premium processing.

**\*You will need to provide a copy of your STEM OPT filing receipt to your employer for them to extend your employment authorization.**

\*You can learn more about premium processing in our [FAQ](#) section on our [STEM OPT webpage](#). ISSS does not recommend the premium processing option.

As long as your application was received within a timely manner by USCIS, within 60 days of ISSS STEM OPT recommendation or by your Post-Completion OPT end date (whichever is first), your employment authorization is automatically extended for up to 180 days while your STEM OPT application is pending.

# While I-765 is Pending

## What you can do while your application is pending with USCIS.

1. Continue to work.
  - a. Processing time with USCIS Potomac Service Center is 2-3 months, sometimes longer.
  - b. If you file Form I-765, in a timely manner\*, your employment authorization is automatically extended for up to 180 days while your STEM OPT application is pending.
2. Check processing time online.
  - a. Click [here](#) to check I-765 application processing times at Potomac Service Center.
    - i. Under <Forms> select 'I-765', for <Service Center> select 'Potomac Service Center', click the 'Get Processing Time' button.
3. Use [USCIS Case Status Online](#) to check the status of your application.
4. Give employer copy of I-797c filing receipt for STEM OPT, so they can extend your employment authorization.
5. If you receive an RFE 'Request for Evidence' or RFI 'Request for Information', please contact ISSS.

# Employment Authorization

## EAD work permit

- Report EAD typographic error(s) to ISSS.
- Only work based on given dates printed on card.
- Paid employment over 20 hours per week for e-verified employer, must be directly related to your major field of study.

## 8. Student receives EAD card.

- Once your STEM OPT application has been approved, USCIS will mail you 2 documents, separately:
  - Form I-797 approval notice;
  - EAD (Employment Authorization Document).
- Once your STEM OPT starts, you will get an additional 60 days of unemployment for a total of 150 days.
  - 90 days during the initial period of Post-Completion OPT plus the additional 60 days during the STEM extension period.



# Maintaining Status on STEM OPT

- Report employment and any changes in employment within 10 days of the change directly to ISSS, via iSpartan at the [STEM OPT Employment Update Report](#).
  - This includes material changes on your I-983 which can be salary, employer address, Supervisor/Manager.
  - Do not use your SEVP portal for making changes to your employment. You are required to report directly to ISSS via the e-form which is linked above.
- All employment must be for an e-verified employer, related to your major field of study, paid, and more than 20 hours per week.
- Reporting requirements at the following times: 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, 24 months.
  - We recommend that you create a reminder on your calendar one month before your reporting is due.
- Do not exceed 150 days of unemployment, applied to the entire period of standard Post-completion and STEM OPT.
- Maintain a valid travel signature (endorsement) on your I-20.
  - Validity of 6 months, when on STEM OPT.

# Reporting Changes in Employment

Must be reported directly to ISSS, [since we have to review a new I-983.](#)

1. Report employment and any changes in employment within 10 days of the change directly to ISSS, via iSpartan at the [STEM OPT Employment Report Form](#).
  - a. Do not use your SEVP portal for making changes to your employment. You are required to report directly to ISSS via the e-form which is linked above.
2. All employment must be for an e-verified employer, related to your major field of study, paid, and at least 20 hours per week.
3. Changes in employment, include the following:
  - a. Change in employer.
    - i. You cannot work for a non e-verified employer on STEM OPT.
  - b. Any material change on the I-983. This may include: salary, employer address, manager (page 3), etc.
    - i. Per SEVP [Form I-983 instructions](#), "Material changes in the plan can include (but are not limited to) the following: any change of EIN resulting from a corporate restructuring; any reduction in compensation from the amount previously listed on the Form I-983 that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked; any significant decrease in hours per week that a student engages in a STEM training opportunity; and any decrease in hours below the 20-hours-per-week minimum required for STEM OPT.

Use the following e-form to report any change in employment while on STEM OPT to ISSS: [STEM OPT Employment Report Form](#)

# Required Reporting Responsibilities

Throughout the duration of your STEM OPT period, you are required to confirm your continued participation in STEM OPT, every 6 months.

Mandatory reporting requirements at the following times (calculate from your STEM OPT start date):

- ❖ **6 months** - Provide a validation report (confirming name, address, employment information, even if there are no changes in your employment.
- ❖ **12 months** - Provide a validation report (confirming name, address, employment information AND Annual evaluation on student progress (the top part of page 5 of the I-983).
- ❖ **18 months** - Provide a validation report (confirming name, address, employment information, even if there are no changes in your employment.
- ❖ **24 months** - Provide a validation report (confirming name, address, employment information AND Final evaluation on student progress (the bottom part of page 5 of the I-983).

**We recommend creating a reminder on your calendar, one month before your 6 month reporting is due, so you will be reminded to complete this.**

Use the following form to complete your required reporting every 6 months while on STEM OPT to ISSS:  
[STEM OPT Employment Report Form](#)

# Unemployment on STEM OPT

## Important

If you accrue more than 150 days of unemployment or you forget to complete the required reporting to ISSS every 6 months, then you are considered not to be maintaining status. A SEVP official may terminate your SEVIS record.

## STEM OPT

- With the approval of your STEM OPT, once your STEM OPT goes into effect, you will get an additional 60 days of unemployment, for a total of 150 days.
  - 90 days during the initial period of post-completion OPT plus the additional 60 days during the extension period.
- Unemployment is cumulative.
- **It is your responsibility to keep track of number of unemployment days, so you do not exceed 150 days.**

## SEVIS employment counter

- Change of employment must be reported to ISSS via iSpartan: [STEM OPT Employment Update Form](#)
  - Do not use your SEVP portal to report changes in employment on STEM OPT.
- Report information to ISSS via iSpartan within 10 days of the change.
- This includes any change that is on the I-983 (salary, manager, employer name, employer address, etc.)

# Travel While on STEM OPT

## Approved STEM OPT

You will need the following documents to re-enter the US and should present these to the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer when entering the US:

1. I-20 with valid travel signature on page 2. Travel signatures are valid for 6 months, when on STEM OPT.
2. Valid passport.
3. Valid F-1 visa.

We recommend that you have the following documents in your carry-on, in case you need to access them at the Port of Entry:

1. EAD card.
2. Employment Letter.

**Can travel with a PENDING STEM OPT application, as well as renew your F-1 visa during this time (if it has already expired). Please keep in mind the following before you decide to travel if your STEM OPT application is pending:**

**\*If your application is denied and your post-completion OPT has ended, then you do not have an option to re-enter the U.S. and reapply for STEM OPT.**

**\*Before leaving the U.S. while your STEM OPT application is pending, make sure that you have a I-797c filing receipt confirming your STEM OPT application has been received by USCIS.**

***Inform ISSS if you are leaving the U.S. prior to your OPT end date with no plans to return and resume OPT. Ending My F-1 Status***



# Requesting an Updated I-20

We recommend that you request an updated I-20, once the following has occurred:

1. STEM OPT has been approved.

[Replacement/Updated I-20](#)

2. After ISSS has confirmed reported employment or changes in employment have been updated in your SEVIS record.

[Replacement/Updated I-20](#)

Traveling overseas?

- Request a travel signature I-20.
  - Travel signatures on page 2 of the form I-20 are valid for 6 months when on STEM OPT.

[Travel Signature/I-20 Request](#)

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Unable to access iSpartan to submit e-form? Please go [here](#) for further instructions.

# End of STEM OPT

At the end of your STEM OPT, you have a 60 day grace period after your STEM OPT ends to do one of the following:

1. Get a new I-20 from SJSU to pursue a new degree program;
2. Transfer I-20 to another U.S. school to pursue a new degree program;
3. Leave the U.S.

If you have any questions about these options, please [schedule an appointment](#) with an ISSS Advisor.

# iSpartan (ISSS Student Portal)

iSpartan - You will use this portal to submit requests to ISSS. *(Recommend using Google Chrome or Firefox as your web browser).*

## SEVP Portal Access Form

- Submit this form, if you want to change your SEVP portal account email to a non-SJSU email address.

## STEM OPT I-20 Request

- Need this I-20 from SJSU with STEM OPT recommendation, **before** you can file your STEM OPT application with USCIS.

## STEM OPT Employment Update Report

- Use the e-form to report the following:
  - Required employment reporting every 6 months;
  - Any changes to STEM employment. This includes changes to the I-983, salary, work location, supervisor, etc.

## Replacement/Updated I-20 Request

- To request an updated I-20 after your STEM OPT has been approved.

## Travel Signature/I-20 Request

- To request an updated travel signature from ISSS.

**Unable to access iSpartan to submit e-form? Please go [here](#) for further instructions.**

# THANK YOU!

Email: [international-office@sjsu.edu](mailto:international-office@sjsu.edu)

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