



STEM OPT extension Q&A

Q: Who is eligible for STEM OPT extension?

A:

- F-1 students with degrees in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) may be eligible
- Only degrees where the CIP code on the student's Form I-20 is also on the [list of STEM codes](#) qualify
- Students may be eligible to have two STEM OPT extensions (after two, different STEM degrees) during their time in the U.S.
- Students currently in a non-STEM degree can be eligible for a STEM OPT extension based on a previous STEM degree obtained in the U.S. from an accredited institution
- The job pursued must be directly related to work in a STEM field

Q: What are the employer responsibilities?

A: The employer must complete sections of a Training Plan form ([Form I-983](#)) and by signing this form agree to all of the conditions. The DHS has stated that they will be performing site visits (announced and un announced) to ensure that employers are providing appropriate training. The training plan must identify the goals for the training opportunity, including specific knowledge, skills, or techniques that will be imparted to the student, and explain how those goals will be achieved through the work-based learning opportunity with the employer; describe a performance evaluation process; and describe methods of oversight and supervision. In addition the employer must attest to the following conditions:

- The STEM OPT student will not replace a full-time or part-time, temporary or permanent U.S. worker
- The duties, hours, and compensation, must be commensurate with terms and conditions applicable to the employer's similarly situated U.S. workers in the area of employment
- The student may not work for less than 20 hours per week, excluding time off taken consistent with leave-related policies
- The employer must report the termination or departure of the STEM OPT student to the OISS, if the termination or departure is prior to the appointment end date
- Such reporting must be made within five business days of the termination or departure
- The employer should consider an student to have departed if the student has not reported to work for a period of five consecutive business days without the consent of the employer
- The employment must comply with all applicable Federal and State requirements relating to employment

Q: How do I begin the STEM OPT application process?

A:

- The student should meet with the PDOS (see [international student staff webpage](#) for contact information) to discuss whether or not the STEM OPT visa option is the best choice (as opposed to J-1 or H-1B)
- The student contacts the international office to discuss STEM OPT eligibility, deadlines, and procedures.
- The student completes his/her sections of Form I-983
- The employer completes their sections of Form I-983
- The student mails the entire STEM OPT application to USCIS
- In most cases the student will have interim employment authorized status while waiting to receive an employment authorization document (EAD.)
- The student completes a new I-9 at OISS

Q: When do I need to be evaluated by my employer?

A: The employer and student are required to complete an initial evaluation within 12 months of the approved starting date on the employment authorization document granted pursuant to the student's 24-month OPT extension application

- All required evaluations must be completed prior to the conclusion of a STEM practical training opportunity, and the student and an appropriate individual in the employer's organization must sign each evaluation to attest to its accuracy.
- The employer and student are required to complete a concluding evaluation at the finish of the STEM OPT