



Updated: Feb 2022

## OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

### 24-Month STEM OPT

(Students on F-1 Visa)

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On May 10, 2016 the Department of Homeland Security started issuing 24-month long STEM OPT extensions. The following application explains who can apply for this extension and how. Please note that the new rules allow up to 2 STEM extensions, at different degree levels, as well as use of a previous STEM degree as long as it was awarded within the previous 10 years.

#### Who Can Apply:

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**You are eligible to apply for the 24-month STEM extension if:**

1. You are an F-1 student currently on your 12-month initial OPT who has maintained your F-1 status,
2. You have a STEM degree designated by the [STEM Designed Degree Program List](#), your CIP code can be found on your I-20 next to your major. The code configuration looks like XX.XXXX -OR - you have a STEM degree issued within the last 10 years that you have not yet used to apply for the STEM OPT with and you are currently working in a field relevant to that degree
3. You are working for an E-verified employer (please check with your company's human resources offices to confirm... E-Verify and EIN tax numbers are NOT the same thing)
4. You have not applied for more than 1 previous STEM extension

**In Order to maintain F-1 status you must:**

1. Keep your passport valid at all times,
2. Refrain from unauthorized employment
3. Not exceed more than 90 days of unemployment during your original 12 months of OPT

#### When to Apply:

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The application for post-completion OPT can be submitted up to 90 days prior to the completion of your current 12 months of OPT. While your application is pending you can keep working while you wait for the new STEM extension—even if your current 12-month OPT has expired—for up to 180 days. It is best to apply for OPT early to receive your EAD work permit in a timely manner. You cannot apply for STEM OPT after your current 12 months of OPT is completed.



Updated: Feb 2022

## How to Apply:

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Make sure to follow these step-by-step instructions.

1. Complete the WPI STEM OPT Application (this form) for STEM OPT recommendation
2. Complete form [I-765 application form](#). Note: Question 27 is (C)(3)(C) to indicate STEM OPT
3. Complete the [I-983 Form](#), *signatures from employers on pages 2 and 4 are required prior to STEM OPT appointment, without the signatures we cannot issue the I-20.*
4. Upload to the [OPT Electronic Submission Form](#) *prior to your STEM OPT appointment*—this is for IH review only, and needs to be done so we can internally review your forms. Please submit even if you still have questions.
5. Special note on US mailing address:
  - **The local US Postal Service will not deliver US government mail if they are not completely certain that the individual lives at the address.**
  - The address you supply must be a valid address that you will have for at least four months and your name must be on the mailbox.
  - The local US Postal Service will not forward US government mail. It is your responsibility to notify the USCIS in the event of an address change.
  - **If you are unsure of your future address or think you will be moving, please use the International House address at 28 Trowbridge Road, Worcester MA 01609, most students do this**

### CHECKLIST FOR YOUR OPT PACKET:

**\* PLEASE NOTE: There are now two methods for applying for OPT, 1) electronically or 2) on paper.**  
You only need to submit one application.

#### 1) Electronic application:

For more information on how to submit the application through USCIS's online system, please find instructions through this WPI video link ([tinyurl.com/WPIOPTonline](https://tinyurl.com/WPIOPTonline)).

\*Please note, the USCIS online system is different from the WPI online submission form. The WPI online submission form and OPT meeting with IH advisor needs to happen **before** you submit your application to USCIS.

- ✓ Passport style photo (electronic or scanned copy of a physical photo. Check here for [additional details on what qualifies for passport pictures](#))
- ✓ \$410.00 fee, paid by debit or credit card online through the USCIS system
- ✓ Completed I-765 Form → this will be in a survey format through the online portal, you will not upload a PDF of the I-765, but IH still keeps a copy of the PDF for our records
- ✓ Most recent I-20 (**issued during your OPT appointment with OPT recommendation on page 2**)
- ✓ Scanned copies of all previously issued I-20's – photocopies should be sent in the application (always keep original forms)
- ✓ Passport – only the photo ID page is needed
- ✓ I-94 (downloaded from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>)
- ✓ Scan of the EAD card(s) from previous OPT time period(s)
- ✓ Scan of Diploma or transcript—diploma recommended



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**2) Paper application** (what to put in the envelope that you physically mail to USCIS):

- ✓ Two (2) full-frontal passport/visa photos (2-inch by 2-inch square, white background) Click here for [additional details on what qualifies for passport pictures](#)
- ✓ \$410.00 fee, check or money order payable to the **Department of Homeland Security**. They will **NOT** accept cash
- ✓ Completed I-765 Form, signed with a blue pen (I-983 is **NOT** included in the mailing envelope)
- ✓ Most recent I-20 (issued during your appointment with STEM OPT recommendation on page 2)
- ✓ All previously issued I-20's – photocopies should be sent in the application (always keep originals)
- ✓ Photocopy of Passport – only the photo ID page is needed
- ✓ Photocopy I-94 (downloaded from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>)
- ✓ Photocopy of the EAD card(s) from previous OPT time period(s)
- ✓ Photocopy of Diploma or transcript—diploma recommended

Applications should be mailed to the Chicago Lockbox. The address can be found here:

<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses>

**USCIS Chicago Lockbox**

**U.S. Postal Service (USPS)**

Attn: I-765 C03  
P.O. Box 805373  
Chicago, IL 60680-5374

**FedEx or UPS:**

USCIS  
Attn: I-765 C03 (Box 805373)  
131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor  
Chicago, IL 60603-5517

**The Office of International Student Life will review your application, issue a SEVIS I-20 Form with the OPT recommendation, and advise students on how to mail application to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services.** You will receive a Receipt Notice, an Approval Notice, and an EAD (OPT) card from USCIS, these will be mailed to the address you put on the I-765 form (see mailing address note above)

\*If you receive the STEM OPT EAD at your home address, please scan and email a copy to [IH@wpi.edu](mailto:IH@wpi.edu)



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## 24 Month STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) Request Form

### PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE

FIRST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ LAST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

WPI ID #: \_\_\_\_\_ Major/Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Degree being used for OPT: BS  MS  PHD  Is this your most recent degree?: \_\_\_\_\_

If no, what date was your degree awarded? \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Which University? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you applied for STEM before? If yes, start date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ end date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Non-WPI

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Job title AND describe hoe your degree is related to your current job:

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### Employment must be directly related to your major area of study

OPT beginning date: \_\_\_\_\_ (MM/DD/YYYY) OPT end date: \_\_\_\_\_ (MM/DD/YYYY)

OPT Employer/Company name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company EIN (Employer ID Number for Federal Tax): \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor name, email, and telephone #:

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Company Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please be aware that it is *YOUR RESPONSIBILITY* to inform the International House of *ANY CHANGES* in your employment situation you can do this through the [OPT Update Form](#). You must also submit your 6 month check-ins and 12 and 24 month evaluations, see next page for information and sign page 4 for acknowledgment.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (MM/DD/YYYY)



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## OPT: Information for WPI Students on 24 Month STEM OPT

While on Optional Practical Training (OPT) you remain in F-1 non-immigrant status and you must have a valid I-20 form and a valid I-94 card with the D/S notation.

**If traveling while on OPT** you must have: 1) valid passport, 2) valid F-1 visa for your return, 3) I-20 form signed within the last calendar year, 4) your Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card), and 5) proof of employment/offer letter/paystubs in order for you to re-enter the US in your F-1 STEM OPT status.

If your visa has expired, you can apply for a new F-1 visa from a US Consulate abroad with the same documentation as mentioned above.

### Reporting Requirements

While on your 24-months STEM Extension you are required to report the following information to the International House:

**Regular changes**—Please report through the [OPT Update Form](#) on the IH forms page:

- Any change of your US address
- Any change in your employment such as starting a new job, leaving a job, change of company address, change in supervisor, change in compensation, change in job title, etc.
- On STEM OPT you must also submit a new [I-983 training plan](#) when these changes occur, you can do this through the OPT Update form link above

**STEM OPT Check-Ins (every 6 months)**— STEM OPT requires that you also “check in” with the IH every 6 months *even if no changes occur*. To manage your 6-month check-in dates please input your OPT EAD dates into the [date calculator](#) on the IH forms page. There is a 60 day window to submit your check-in which should be reported through the [STEM OPT Check-In Form](#) on the IH page.

- [A brief video](#) on the IH forms page is available to remind you of the Check-In process.
- At **6 and 18 months** you will have to confirm that your home address and employer information are still the same
- At **12 and 24 months** you will have to confirm your home address and employer info AND fill out the evaluation from page 5 of the I-983 form.
  - \*The 24 month evaluation also serves as the “final evaluation” which you must fill out if you are leaving a job (then you will have to fill a new I-983 form for the new position), or to close out your OPT period if your status is switching to H-1B.

### Limited Periods of Unemployment to Maintain Status

- During STEM OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment.
- Any of the 90 days that were unused during the 12-month OPT will rollover into the STEM OPT time period, and an additional 60 days will be granted on top of the rolled over time. If unemployment time exceeds this number of unemployment days allowed, student will fail to maintain status.

**By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read the above information, including your reporting requirements to the International House. Please keep a copy of this for your files and to serve as a reminder.**

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Student Signature

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Date (MM/DD/YYYY)