



*International Student Services*  
*F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)*  
*STEM Extension*

### What is a STEM OPT Extension?

A student with a qualifying Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM) bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree, who is in a valid period of standard post-completion OPT, may be eligible to apply for an additional 24-month extension of OPT. To apply for the extension:

- You must have an offer of paid employment for at least 20 hours per week with an employer enrolled in DHS's [E-Verify](#) program.
- The code for your major field of study listed on your Form I-20 must be on the Department of Homeland Security's [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#).
  - If the degree that your standard period of OPT is based on is not in a STEM field, but you have a prior STEM degree from Marymount or another school, you may also be able to base your extension on that degree. Discuss this with an International Student Services (ISS) advisor.
- You and your employer must complete and sign a [Form I-983 Training Plan](#), and you must submit that plan to the ISS office.
- The ISS office must recommend the STEM OPT extension in SEVIS, and issue you an updated Form I-20.
- Within 60 days of the recommendation in SEVIS, and before the expiration of your standard post-completion OPT, you must file [Form I-765](#), the [Form I-765 filing fee](#), and the [updated STEM OPT Form I-20 with USCIS](#).

### When should you apply for STEM OPT Extension?

If qualified, you can submit your STEM OPT extension application to USCIS up to 90 days before your current OPT end date. It is important to note however that the STEM application must be received by USCIS within 60 days of the date on which the ISS office made the recommendation for STEM OPT in your SEVIS record, and before your current OPT expires.

### What is required while on STEM OPT?

Throughout the STEM OPT extension period, the student and employer must comply with the reporting, training, supervision, evaluation, wage, documentation, and other obligations specified in the regulations and on Form I-983.

- **Validation report every 6 months.** Make a validation report to the ISS office **every six months** starting from the date the extension begins. The validation should confirm the accuracy of your name; your physical and mailing addresses; your employer's name and address; and the status of your employment. This six-month validation report is due to ISS within 10 business days of each reporting date.
- **Annual self-evaluation of training.** You must complete the "Evaluation of Student Progress" portion of the Form I-983 within 12 months of the listed STEM OPT start date. At the end of the STEM OPT extension, you must conduct a second, final self-assessment. Once the evaluations are complete, the student must collect signatures from their employer and return the form to the DSO, who will keep it in the student's physical record.
- **Maintain your employment.** You may not accrue more than 150 days of unemployment during your entire 36-month (12 months standard OPT and 24 months STEM OPT) OPT period.
- **Revised Form I-983 if there are material changes.** Report to ISS any material changes to or material deviations from your Form I-983 Training Plan by providing ISS with a revised Form I-983 within 5 days of the change.
- **Change or addition of employers.** If you wish to change employers, the new employer must be enrolled in E-Verify and employ you for at least 20 hours per week, and the job must directly relate to your STEM degree. The same goes

for adding an additional employer. In either case, you must submit a new Form I-983 to ISS within 10 days of starting the new job. If you begin a new job with a new employer less than 10 days after leaving your prior employer, you simply submit a new Form I-983 to ISS. If the period of time between employers is longer than 10 days, you must first report the loss of employment to ISS within 10 days of stopping work, and later submit a new Form I-983 within 10 days of starting your new employment.

- **Report termination of employment.** Both you and your employer have a separate obligation to notify ISS of any termination of your employment. Your employer must notify us within 5 business days of the termination, and you must notify us within 10 days of the termination.
- **Report changes to your name and address.** You must notify ISS within 10 days of any change to your legal name or your mailing or physical addresses.
- **Copy of your EAD.** Make sure ISS has on file a photocopy of the front and back of your Employment Authorization Document (EAD card).

Report changes and submit validation reports and self-evaluations to ISS via email to [iss@marymount.edu](mailto:iss@marymount.edu).

### ***APPLYING FOR STEM EXTENSION***

#### **Application Procedure:**

Make an appointment with an ISS advisor. Your ISS advisor will help explain all OPT procedures and how they apply to your individual case.

#### **Bring the following documents:**

- Completed [Form I-983 Training Plan](#), prepared and signed by you and your employer.
- Completed [Form I-765](#) Application for Employment Authorization. Some helpful notes on completing the I-765:
  - Check the box that indicates you are applying for “Renewal of my permission to accept employment.”
  - Item 1: Full Name. Use your full name as it appears on your Form I-20. The “Surname/Primary Name” should be placed under Family Name and spelled out in all capital letters. The Given Name should be placed under the appropriate First Name and Middle Name fields on the I-765.
  - Item 10: A-Number or I-94 number. The I-94 number can be found on your I-94 card or I-94 printout. Please include all 11 digits.
  - Item 11: Prior employment authorization from USCIS. Check the Yes box and complete the remainder of the Yes field, since your standard post-completion OPT constitutes prior employment authorization from USCIS.
  - Items 12 & 13: Please see your I-94 card or [electronic I-94 printout](#) for this information.
  - Item 16: Input the code for the 24-month extension for STEM students: (c) (3) (C)
  - Item 17: Complete with Degree information, name of employer and company E-Verify Identification number. “Degree” should be your level, the CIP code, and a short name for your degree, e.g., “MS, Computer Sci, CIP 11.0701.” Obtain your employer’s E-Verify ID number from your employer.
- 2 passport photos. Please see the attached example. Lightly print your name and birth date on the back of each photo with pencil.
- Copy of Diploma or copy of Official Academic Transcript (showing degree awarded and major)
- Photocopy of current OPT/EAD card (front and back)
- Photocopy of Passport IS page
- Photocopy of current Visa (if applicable)
- Photocopy of I-94 card (front and back) or [electronically](#)
- Photocopy of all I-20s, even if for a previous F-1 status (We may not send them all, but need for application.)
- Form [G-1145](#) (Not required, but recommended. If you submit it, USCIS will email or text you with your receipt number.)
- Check or money order for the amount of \$380 made payable to: **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**
- After review the above and updating SEVIS, **ISS will issue you a new Form I-20** that includes the recommendation for a STEM OPT extension. You must sign the new I-20 and include it with the above documents (except the Form I-983) in your application package to USCIS.

**Mail your application to USCIS**, so that USCIS **receives** it within 60 days of the recommendation in SEVIS, and before the expiration of your standard post-completion OPT. Make sure to include all of the above items in the package, *except* the Form I-983 Training Plan, which does not need to be submitted to USCIS.

**Write on the bottom right hand corner of envelope “Form I-765.”**

If you live in:	Mail your application to:
<p>If you are living in the DMV when you file your application for STEM OPT extension:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Virginia</li> <li>▪ Maryland</li> <li>▪ District of Columbia</li> </ul> <p>... or in one of the following other states: Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, U.S. Virgin Islands, or West Virginia</p>	<p><b>USCIS Dallas Lockbox</b></p> <p>For U.S. Postal Service deliveries:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">USCIS PO Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266</p> <p>For Express mail and courier deliveries:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">USCIS Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067</p>
<p>If you live in one of these states:</p> <p>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 Northern Mariana Islands.</p>	<p><b>USCIS Phoenix Lockbox</b></p> <p>For U.S. Postal Service deliveries:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">USCIS PO Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036</p> <p>For Express mail and courier deliveries:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">USCIS Attn: AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034</p>

If you timely file a non-frivolous application for the 24-month STEM OPT extension, you will be able to continue employment while the extension application is pending, until a final decision on the I-765 or for 180 days, whichever comes first.

You can check the status of your application and find out about standard processing times on the [USCIS website](#). In most instances, OPT applications take around three months to be approved. However, a student’s work authorization is automatically extended for up to 180 days while the STEM extension application is pending.



## **Acknowledgement of Receipt of Information of Legal Obligations while on 24 Month STEM OPT as required by the Department of Homeland Security**

Qualified students can apply for the 24 month STEM OPT extension up to 90 days prior to the end of their original 12 month OPT, and their application must be received and receipted by USCIS prior to the end of their original 12 month OPT. If a student timely files their 24 month STEM OPT application, their work authorization will automatically be extended for 180 days while their application is adjudicated. **Please note that your 24 month STEM OPT application must be received by USCIS within 60 days of the I-20 issue date.**

During this term, Marymount University will still be maintaining your F-1 status. You are therefore obligated by the Department of Homeland Security to:

- Engage only in employment connected to the degree your STEM extension is based on.
- Adhere to I-983 training plan and report any material changes to the training plan.
- Report to ISS your current address and subsequent changes to your address within 10 days of it changing.
- Report to ISS any name change within 10 days of its change.
- Report to ISS your employer's name, address and your employment start and end dates and subsequent changes within 10 days of the change, including the company's E-verify number and a new I-983 training plan.
- Report to ISS any periods of unemployment.
- Report to ISS the number of hours worked per week.
- Provide to ISS a brief written description of how your employment relates to your major.

### **Mandatory STEM OPT Employment Reporting**

- Submit the Evaluation of Student Progress portion of the I-983 within 12 months (\_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_) and 24 months (\_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_) of the listed STEM OPT start date.
- Report OPT Participation within 6 months (\_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_), 12 months (\_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_) and 18 months (\_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_) of the listed STEM OPT start date.

**IMPORTANT!** There are limits on unemployment. Students may have up to **150 days of unemployment**, during post completion OPT. If this is exceeded, the student is considered to have violated their immigration status. The only exception is that periods of up to 10 days between the end of one job and the beginning of the next job will not be included in the calculation for the time spent unemployed.

### **Types of work that is valid as employment while on STEM OPT**

- Regular paid employment for at least 20 hours per week.
- Engage only in employment connected to the degree your STEM extension is based on.
- The job must be in the context of a bona-fide employer-employee relationship. Employment through sole proprietorships, "temp" agencies, and consulting firm arrangements that provide labor for hire do not consist of a bona-fide relationship.
- Employer must complete an I-983 training plan and have a valid E-verify number.

### **You can report this information to ISS by:**

1. Sending an email to [iss@marymount.edu](mailto:iss@marymount.edu) with "STEM OPT requested information" in the subject field
2. Faxing information to ISS: 703-284-5799
3. Mailing information to:

International Student Services  
Marymount University  
2807 North Glebe Road  
Arlington, VA 22207

My signature below acknowledges receipt and understanding of the above information.

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please feel free to call ISS with ANY questions at 703-526-6922.**