STEM OPT 24-month Extension Tutorial
COVID-19 Updates

- USCIS remains open for the OPT/STEM OPT I-765 application processing. Some USCIS locations are closed for in-person services.

- There have been delays in the I-765 processing time due to COVID-19. For more information, see the USCIS Lockbox Updates web alert.


- USCIS has NOT changed application timelines and deadlines due to COVID-19.

- USCIS still requires a handwritten “wet” signature in BLACK ink for the I-765. NO DIGITAL or ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES.
USCIS Updates

• January 8, 2021: USCIS updated the direct mailing address for the I-765. Make sure that you are mailing to the correct address.
• See the Fees and I-765 sections of the tutorial for more information about the form and fee changes.
• Make sure that you are paying the correct fee and using the correct form on the date you are mailing your package to USCIS.
OPT 24-month STEM Extension Tutorial

Please note that this tutorial is for instructional purposes only.

An OPT STEM application to USCIS is your own personal application. You alone are responsible for the timely filing with full documentation, understanding of F-1 rules regarding OPT STEM Extension, and properly maintaining F-1 status.

To help guide you, please review thoroughly and patiently the entire following tutorial and contact us if you have questions at intlwork@lamar.edu
• OPT Eligibility & Allowable Employment
• Application Process Overview
• Step 1: I-983/I-765
• Step 2: I-20 Request Process
• Step 3: Preparing your OPT Request to USCIS
  • Application Deadlines
  • Mailing your Application
• Step 4: Receiving your EAD & USCIS Documents
  • I-797 Receipt Notice
  • While Application is Pending
  • Denials & Requests for Evidence
• Step 5: Maintaining Your F-1 Status & STEM Reporting Requirements
  • Employment Update/Change Form
  • Validation/Participation Reporting
  • Travel during STEM OPT
• Completing STEM OPT & Grace Period
OPT STEM Extension Eligibility

• You must be a recipient of a U.S. Bachelor’s, Master’s or Doctoral degree in a STEM (science, technology, engineering or math) designated degree program. See this list of STEM Majors.

• You are currently authorized for 12-month Post-Completion OPT and have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment.

• Must have attended a SEVP-certified institution on a full-time basis for at least one academic year

• Must not have had 12-months of OPT authorization for the same degree level

• Must not have accrued 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for the same degree level

• You are applying no more than 90 days before your 12-month Post-Completion OPT expires and no longer than the expiration of your 12-month Post-Completion OPT.

***TWO 24-month STEM extensions may be granted per lifetime.***
Types of Allowable Employment

- Volunteer/Unpaid positions and self employment are NOT allowed by the 24-month STEM OPT Extension.
- STEM-eligible employers must have E-Verify & EIN numbers and the student must have a bona fide employer-employee relationship.
- A student must be able to provide evidence acquired from the student’s employer to verify that the student worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.
- Staffing and temporary agencies may employ students under the STEM OPT program, but only if they will be the entity that provides the practical training experience to the student and they have and maintain a bona fide employer-employee relationship with the student.
  - According to prior guidance from the Student and Exchange Visitor Program If a student uses a temporary or staffing agency to place them in a training opportunity, the agency cannot complete and sign the Form I-983, "Training Plan for STEM OPT Students." Only the E-verified employer that provides the actual training relevant to the student's qualifying STEM degree is authorized to sign and complete the Form I-983.


Unemployment During STEM OPT

- Students on OPT have a total of 90 days (including weekends and holidays) of allowed unemployment during their 12-month OPT period that begins on the start date of their OPT (as indicated on their EAD card).
- Students with an authorized 24-month OPT STEM Extension have an additional 60 days, for a total of 150 days of unemployment during their 36-month OPT period.
- If you have submitted a timely filed STEM application to USCIS, you can continue working for up to 180 days after the expiration of your original Post-Completion OPT EAD card while you wait for the STEM OPT approval.
- If you exceed 90 days of unemployment during your original 12-month OPT you are not eligible to apply for the STEM OPT Extension.
OPT Application Process

- Items needed for DSO to recommend STEM OPT and issue I-20:
  - STEM OPT Application: https://www.lamar.edu/forms/international/opt-stem-application.html
Step 1: Complete Form I-983

• The formal training plan must clearly articulate the OPT STEM learning objectives and affirm the employer’s commitment to helping you achieve those objectives. To fulfill this requirement, you and your employer must complete, and sign Form I-983 and then submit pages 1-4 to OISPS.

  *Do not submit page 5 of the I-983 at this time. See Annual Evaluation for instructions on when you will submit page 5.

• For detailed tutorial on completing the rest of the I-983 go to:  
  https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/additional-resources/form-i-983-overview

• For written instructions on how to complete the I-983:  
Complete Form I-983

Enter your full name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name) exactly as it appears on your passport.

Tracy Bourgeois
intlwork@lamar.edu
409-880-7635

Always download the current I-983 from the SEVP website.

One day after current EAD ends / 24 months from the STEM start date (i.e. 05/10/2021 - 05/09/2023)

- Check “Yes” if your STEM OPT is based on a previously-obtained U.S. STEM degree, and is not the same degree upon which your current Post-Completion OPT was granted.

- Check “No” if your STEM OPT is based on your most recently obtained degree, and that is the degree upon which your current Post-Completion OPT is based.

Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: STEM Major and 6-digit CIP code as listed on I20 (XX.XXXX)

Level/Type of Qualifying Degree: Level of STEM degree (Bachelor’s/Master’s/Doctorate)

Date Awarded (mm-dd-yyyy): Date the STEM degree was conferred as shown on transcript/diploma

Digit USCIS # as listed on your Post Completion OPT EAD Card

Enter your current email address:

Lamar University

Lamar University OR name of prior degree university

SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT (including 3-digit suffix):

HOU214F00143000

Designated Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information:

Student SEVIS ID No:

STEM OPT Requested Period (mm-dd-yyyy):

From: 

To: 

STEM Major and 6 digit CIP code as listed on I20 (XX.XXXX)
Complete Form I-983

SECTION 2: STUDENT CERTIFICATION
I declare and affirm under penalty of perjury that the statements and information made herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I understand that the law provides severe penalties for knowingly and willfully falsifying or concealing a material fact, or using any false document in the submission of this form.

I certify that:

1. I have reviewed, understand, and will adhere to this Training Plan for STEM OPT Students ("Plan");

2. I will notify the DSO at the earliest available opportunity if I believe that my employer is not providing me with appropriate training as delineated on this Plan;

3. I understand that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) may deny, revoke, or terminate the STEM OPT of students whom DHS determines are not engaging in OPT in compliance with the law, including the STEM OPT of students who are not, or whose employers are not, complying with this Plan;

4. My practical training opportunity is directly related to the STEM degree that qualifies me for the STEM OPT extension; and

5. I will notify the DSO at the earliest available opportunity regarding any material changes to or deviations from this Plan, including but not limited to, any change of Employer Identification Number resulting from a corporate restructuring, any non-trivial reduction in compensation from the amount previously submitted on the Plan that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked, any significant decrease in hours per week that I engage in a STEM training opportunity, and any decrease in hours below the 20-hours-per-week minimum required under this rule.

Signature of Student (Sign in ink): [Signature]

Printed Name of Student: [Print Student Name]
Date (mm-dd-yyyy): [Date of Signature]
Complete Form I-983

YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL ITEMS - DO NOT LEAVE ANY FIELDS BLANK!!

**SECTION 3: EMPLOYER INFORMATION (Completed by Employer)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Employer hiring you</th>
<th>Street Address:</th>
<th>Suite:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer Website URL</td>
<td>City:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer ID Number (EIN):</td>
<td>State:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Full-Time Employees in U.S.:</td>
<td>ZIP Code:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Opt Hours Per Week (must be at least 20 hours/week):**
- **Compensation:**
  - A. Salary Amount and Frequency:
  - B. Other Compensation (Type and Estimated Amount or Value):
    1. 
    2. 
    3. 
    4. 

**SECTION 4: EMPLOYER CERTIFICATION**

I declare and affirm under penalty of perjury that the statements and information made herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I understand that the law provides severe penalties for knowingly and willfully falsifying or concealing a material fact, or using any false document in the submission of this form.

- **Employer Address (Headquarters):**
  - Street Address:
  - Suite:
  - City:
  - State:
  - ZIP Code:

- The Employer Identification Number (EIN) is a 9 digit number assigned to businesses by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).
- The EIN is formatted ##-#######
- **DO NOT ENTER THE E-VERIFY NUMBER.**

Enter the date after the current Post Completion OPT EAD end date. This date should match the “from” date on page 1 of this form.

- The Employer Identification Number (EIN) is a 9 digit number assigned to businesses by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).
- The EIN is formatted ##-#######
- **DO NOT ENTER THE E-VERIFY NUMBER.**

Enter the date after the current Post Completion OPT EAD end date. This date should match the “from” date on page 1 of this form.
Complete Form I-983

SECTION 4: EMPLOYER CERTIFICATION

I declare and affirm under penalty of perjury that the statements and information made herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I understand that the law provides severe penalties for knowingly and willfully falsifying or concealing a material fact, or using any false document in the execution of this form.

I certify on behalf of the employer that this Training Plan for STEM OPT Students ("Plan") is approved and that:

1. I have reviewed and understand this Plan, and I will ensure that the supervising Official follows this Plan;

2. I will notify the DSO at the earliest available opportunity regarding any material changes to this Plan, including not limited to, any change of employer identification number resulting from a corporate restructuring, any reduction in compensation from the amount previously submitted on the Plan 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 under this rule;

3. Within five business days of the termination or departure of the student during the authorized period of OPT, I will report such termination or departure to the DSO (Note: business days do not include federal holidays or weekends, and an employer shall consider a student to have departed when the employer knows the student has left the practical training opportunity, or when the student has not reported for practical training for a period of five consecutive business days without the consent of the employer); and

4. I will adhere to all applicable regulatory provisions that govern this program (see 8 CFR Part 214), which include, but are not limited to, the following:
   a. The student’s practical training opportunity is directly related to the STEM degree that qualifies the student for the STEM OPT extension, and the position offered to the student achieves the objectives of his or her participation in this training program;
   b. The student will receive on-site supervision and training, consistent with this Plan, by an experienced and knowledgeable staff;
   c. The employer has sufficient resources and personnel to provide the specified training program set forth in this Plan, and the employer is prepared to implement that program, including at the location(s) identified in this Plan;
   d. The student on a STEM OPT extension will not replace a full- or part-time, temporary or permanent U.S. worker. The terms and conditions of the STEM practical training opportunity—including duties, hours, and compensation—are commensurate with the terms and conditions applicable to the employer’s similarly situated U.S. workers or, if the employer does not employ and has not recently employed more than two similarly situated U.S. workers in the area of employment, the terms and conditions of other similarly situated U.S. workers in the area of employment; and
   e. The training conducted pursuant to this Plan complies with all applicable Federal and State requirements relating to employment.

Note: DHS may, at its discretion, conduct a site visit of the employer to ensure that program requirements are being met, including that the employer possesses and maintains the ability and resources to provide structured and guided work-based learning experiences consistent with this Plan.

Signature of Employer Official with Signatory Authority (Sign in Ink):

Printed Name and Title of Employer Official with Signatory Authority:

Date (mm-dd-yyyy):

Printed Name of Employing Organization:

• Signature required. DO NOT USE A DIGITAL SIGNATURE
• It is important to make sure the Employer Official prints both their Name AND Title in the space provided.
• This signature may or may not be the same as the official at your employer site in section 5.
**Complete Form I-983**

***Pages 3-4 (Section 5-6) contain the details of the required Training Plan to be determined by you and your employer.***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION 5: TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS (Completed by Student and Employer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Name</strong>: [Last name] [Middle Initial] [First Name] [Given Name]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employer Name</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site Name</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site Address (Street, City, State, Zip)</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name of Official</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Official’s Title</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Official’s Email</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Official’s Phone Number</strong>:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Describe the specific tasks and assignments that the student will perform during employment and how it relates to the student’s STEM degree. The plan should cover a specific span of time with detailed specific goals and objectives.**

**Goals and Objectives**: Describe how the assignment(s) will help the student achieve his or her specific objectives for work-based learning related to his or her STEM degree. The description must both specify the student’s goals regarding specific knowledge, skills, or techniques as well as the means by which they will be achieved.

**Employee Oversight**: Explain how the employer provides oversight and supervision of the student’s job duties and assign a mentor to the student. The employer must ensure that the student is receiving proper training and guidance.

**Explain how the employer measures and confirms whether the student is acquiring new knowledge and skills.**

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**Name of the site/end client where student will be working (do not use your home address if working remotely from home)**

May or may not be the same as Employer Name

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**• Signature required. DO NOT USE A DIGITAL SIGNATURE**

**• It is important to make sure the Employer Official prints both their Name AND Title in the space provided.**

YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL ITEMS - DO NOT LEAVE ANY FIELDS BLANK!!
I-765

Renewal for STEM OPT

*OISPS strongly recommends that you type this form to avoid any misspelling of information. If you choose to handwrite, use BLACK ink only.

Name MUST match your passport! Please make sure you enter your “last” and “first” name accordingly.

Check edition date to ensure you have the most current form.

Check to ensure you have the current I-765 form.

Leave blank if you have no other names.
Enter the U.S. address you are physically staying at.

If applying for Post-OPT, leave blank.

If applying for STEM, this is your 9 digit USCIS # on your EAD Card.

Please make sure that you read #10 - #15 carefully and answer accordingly.

Please read and complete #16-#17 if applicable.

Write down country of citizenship in 18a. Leave 18b blank unless you have duo citizenship.
Eligibility code: (c)(3)(C) for STEM OPT Extension

Degree level and major i.e. Masters Chem Eng

NOTE: #28c is your employer E-Verify # (this is different from the EIN #)

Please read and complete all applicable information contained in Part 2 #19-#26.
Part 2. Information About You (continued)

If you answered “Yes” to Item Number 38, provide the following information:

38.a. Date you presented yourself to DHS

38.b. Location where you presented yourself to DHS

38.c. Country of claimed persecution

38.d. Provide an explanation for why you did not enter the United States lawfully through a U.S. port of entry. If you need extra space to complete this item, use the space provided in Part 6. Additional Information.

Part 3. Applicant’s Statement, Contact Information, Declaration, Certification, and Signature

NOTE: Read the Penalties section of the Form I-765 Instructions before completing this section. You must file Form I-765 while in the United States.

Applicant’s Statement

NOTE: Select the box for either Item Number 1.a. or 1.b. If applicable, select the box for Item Number 2.

1.a. ☐ I can read and understand English, and I have read and understood every question and instruction on this application and my answer to every question.

1.b. ☐ The interpreter named in Part 4, read to me every question and instruction on this application and my answer to every question in a language in which I am fluent, and I understood everything.

2. ☐ At my request, the preparer named in Part 5, prepared this application for me based only upon information I provided or authorized.

Applicant’s Contact Information

3. Applicant’s Daytime Telephone Number

4. Applicant’s Mobile Telephone Number (if any)

5. Applicant’s Email Address (if any)

Applicant’s Declaration and Certification

Copies of all documents I have submitted are exact photocopies of original documents, and I understand that USCIS may require that I submit original documents to USCIS at a later date. Furthermore, I authorize the release of my information from any and all of my records that USCIS may need to determine my eligibility for the immigration benefits that I seek.

I furthermore authorize release of information contained in this application, in supporting documents, and in my USCIS records, to other entities and persons where necessary for the administration and enforcement of U.S. immigration law.
Please read page 5 and complete any information that is applicable.

Please sign in **BLACK ink and date**
Part 5 is not applicable if you completed the form yourself. Part 6 is to add any “previous OPT/STEM OPT Authorizations” with start & end dates.
Step 2 – I-20 Request Process

- Log on to [lamar.edu/international](https://lamar.edu/international) website

- Click on International Student Programs & Services
I-20 Request Process

Click on “Guide and Forms”

Then click on “STEM OPT Extension” under Employment forms to complete application.
Step 3: Preparing your STEM OPT Request to USCIS
STEM OPT Application Checklist

- Mail complete application to USCIS – See checklist below:
  - Original I-765 – signature in **BLACK** ink
  - Copy of I-20 with the OPT STEM extension recommendation – signed by DSO and Student
  - Copies of all prior I-20s
  - $410 (**Current as of 3/2021**) filling fee in the form of a check or money order payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”. ***Write your SEVIS ID on the front.***
  - **2 Passport style photos** taken within 30 days of filling the Form I-765. ***Write SEVIS ID and name on the back each photo in pencil***
  - Official transcript
  - Copy of your diploma
  - Copies of all previous and current EAD cards
  - Copy of **I-94**
  - Copy of passport and visa
  - Optional: [G-1145 Form](#) (to request text/email communication from USCIS)
USCIS Filing Fee

- USCIS is subject to change, please check the USCIS filing fee page for current amount to submit.
- For **Credit Card payment**, submit form G-1450, authorized payment for the correct fee amount. You may only use a credit card account with a U.S. billing address—no foreign billing address is allowed. You can use cards with Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover. See [Pay Your USCIS Fees With a Credit Card](#)
U.S. Style Passport Photo

- Frame subject with full face, front view, eyes open
- Photo must present full head from top of hair to bottom of chin; height of head should measure 1 inch to 1-3/8 inches (25mm to 35mm)
- Eye height must be between 1-1/8 inches to 1-3/8 inches (28mm to 35mm)
- No shadows on the face or in the background of photo
- White background only
- Hair must be pulled back (forehead, eyes and ears must be fully visible)
- Neutral expression only
- Center the head within the frame
- Write your name and SEVIS ID number on back of the photos.
Application Deadline

• OPT Applicants may apply for STEM OPT Extension as early as 90 days before your OPT EAD card end date.

• The recommended deadline to submit an OPT application to OISPS is at least 3 months before a student’s requested OPT start date.

• Important Notes/Deadlines:
  
  • USCIS must receive your application within 30 days of the DSO’s recommendation of STEM OPT in SEVIS
  
  • USCIS processing ranges from 3-5 months, with an observed average of 90-120 days. See current USCIS processing times for Form“I-765” here: https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/
Mailing Your Application

• Mail your application and additional needed documents to the USCIS Lockbox Facility. The Lockbox will then forward the application to the proper USCIS Service Center for adjudication.

Click “Foreign Students” to reveal correct mailing addresses
Step 4: Receiving your EAD & USCIS Documents

- Applicants will typically receive a **I-797 Notice of Action** receipt from USCIS approximately 3-4 weeks from the date the STEM OPT application was received by USCIS. The status of a STEM OPT application can be viewed online with a **Receipt Number**: [https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do](https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do)

- Applicants may receive their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card approximately 3 months from the date the STEM OPT application was received by USCIS

- If you used OISPS mailing address, once OISPS receives an approval notice to be followed by the EAD card, OISPS will email you instructions on how to get your documents.

***verify all biographical information is correct as soon as you receive your I-797 notice and notify USCIS if there is any incorrect information shown.***
While OPT Application is Pending

• Student may NOT begin employment until they have received their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card and the start date as indicated on the EAD card has been reached.

• Student may not continue working beyond the end date of the EAD card.

• Student may NOT continue to work on campus after graduation or degree completion

• If the STEM OPT application was submitted timely, student may legally remain in the U.S. while the application is pending and will have an automatic extension of 180 days of work authorization.
Application Problems: RFE or Rejection/Denial

• **RFE:** If there is a problem with your application, USCIS may send you a notice by mail called a “Request for Evidence (RFE).” An RFE does not mean that your application has been rejected, it simply means you need additional documents before your EAD can be issued.

• **Rejection/Denial:** In some cases, if too many items are missing from your application, USCIS will return the entire application to you. If this happens, you must make the corrections and send the application before the end date of your 60-day grace period.

• **To avoid delays, review your application materials for completeness and sign all forms before mailing them to USCIS.**
Step 5: Maintain Your F-1 Status & STEM Reporting Requirements
Reporting Requirements While On OPT

- Reporting Requirements
  - Submit updates through our online forms on our website.
  - You must report any changes to your employment, address, name, email, and/or telephone number within 10 days.
  - Complete your 6-month validation with OISPS.
  - Report material changes to your I-983 to OISPS within 10 days.
  - Submit your 12-month and 24-month annual Evaluation of Student Progress

See [STEM Reporting Requirements](#) for instructions on how to submit updates, validations, and evaluations to your I-983.
How To Report OPT Employment?

- Employment Updates/Changes
  - [https://www.lamar.edu/international-education/international-students-and-scholars/index.html](https://www.lamar.edu/international-education/international-students-and-scholars/index.html)

Click “Guide and Forms”
# How To Report OPT Employment?

**Click on “Employment Update/Change Form”**

## Info and Applications for F-1 Students

Choose the section and form that best suits your needs/concerns. Clicking on the name will bring you to a form or webpage with further guidance.

### Academic Needs and Concerns

- Change of Major - Undergraduate (PDF)
- Change of Major - Graduate (PDF)
- Concurrent Enrollment (PDF)
  - This form is for students currently attending Lamar University.
- Leave of Absence or Withdrawal
- Program Extension
- Reduced Course Load (RCL)
  - RCL Approval Form (PDF)
  - This completed PDF must be submitted with the RCL Application.
- Special Request
  - Change of Status
  - Estimate of Expense (Letter list estimated expenses at LU for one year)
  - SEVIS Form I-20
  - Reinstatement of F-1 status (Learn more here)
  - Unlisted / Other category

### Employment forms

- Optional Practical Training (OPT)
  - OPT Application Packet
  - OPT Preparation Instructions
  - Standard OPT I-765 (PDF)
  - I-765 SAMPLE (PDF)
  - OPT Participation/Validation Report (Post-OPT 12 Month or STEM OPT 6, 12, 18, 24 Month Reporting)
  - STEM OPT Extension
  - STEM OPT Preparation Instructions
  - Additional STEM OPT Information
  - G-1145 - E-Notification of Application Status (PDF)
  - Employment Update/Change Form Application
  - Employment and Reporting Requirements Information

### Cap-Gap Extension

- Severe Economic Hardship
  - Economic Hardship Application
  - Economic Hardship Address Notification Form
  - Economic Hardship Student Letter for Petition

### Social Security Letter Request


How To Report OPT Employment?

Please read and complete all applicable information and click “submit” when completed.
6-Month Validation

- STEM OPT students must submit a validation report to OISPS every six months starting from the date the 24-month STEM OPT extension begins and ending when the student’s F-1 status ends.
- 4 validation in total over 24-month STEM OPT Extension time.
- Your F-1 record may be terminated if you fail to report each 6 months.
- Be sure to keep your email address updated in SEVIS in order to receive reminder notifications from SEVIS as well as our office.
- Click on the “OPT Participation – Validation Report” link in our Guide and Forms
Annual Student Evaluation

- You must submit Form I-983 page 5 “Evaluation of Student Progress” to OISPS each 12 months and/or any time you leave an employer.
- Your employer must review and sign the self-evaluation to attest to the accuracy.
- Be sure to check your email for reminders from SEVIS and OISPS.
  - Top portion of Page 5 is for your 12-month self-evaluation
  - Bottom portion of Page 5 is for your 24-month/Final evaluation.

***See EMPLOYMENT and REPORTING REQUIREMENTS for additional information regarding the completion of your I-983.
Traveling Abroad While On STEM OPT

• Complete Travel Application Online - [https://www.lamar.edu/forms/international/travel-request-application1.html](https://www.lamar.edu/forms/international/travel-request-application1.html)

• Documents required to re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 status:
  • Valid Passport
  • Endorsed I-20 (each travel authorization signature is valid for 6 months from the date it was last signed and must be valid at the time of entry to the U.S.)
  • Valid Post-Completion EAD Card/Valid STEM OPT EAD card

• Attempting to re-enter the U.S. close to the expiration date of your OPT/STEM OPT can be risky.

• You must not enter the U.S. in a status other than F-1. This may result in the loss of your OPT eligibility.

• There is a higher risk associated with travel and return while your STEM OPT is pending after the program completion date of your Post-Completion OPT EAD. If there are any problems with your application, you may not be able to respond to USCIS in a timely manner, which could delay the processing of your EAD.
Completing STEM OPT & Grace Period

• You have a 60-day grace period following the end of your STEM OPT EAD
• The only additional extension available is the H-1B Cap-Gap Extension, for students who have an accepted H-1B application.
• If you do not extend your STEM OPT via the H-1B Cap-Gap, and your EAD expires, you have the following options before the end of the 60-day grace period.
  • Exit the U.S. within 60 days.
  • Continue your F-1 Status & Studies
  • Change of Status
What is it?

Cap-Gap extends an eligible F-1 student’s status and post-completion OPT/STEM OPT Extension period to “bridge” the period/gap from the end of student’s F-1 status to the start of student’s H-1B status allowing students to remain and work in the U.S. during the “gap”.

Who is eligible?

- F-1 students working on OPT/STEM OPT or in their 60-day grace period as of April 1 of the current calendar year
- There is no major restriction – non-STEM students may apply

***The student’s employer must have filed a timely H-1B petition for the student with a start date of Oct 1st (prior to the expiration of their OPT or 60-day grace period)***

How to request your Cap Gap I-20?

- Complete the [Cap-Gap Application](#) on OISPS website
- Once processed, the Cap-gap I-20 will show evidence that you are either:
  - Authorized to work during the Cap-Gap dates listed on the I20 or;
  - Extension of your grace period thus allowing you to stay in the U.S.
Resume Studying

• If student will resume studies, the updated I20 must be printed prior to the start of class and prior to the 60-day grace period ending.
• Your OPT work authorization ends on the date your new I20 is generated.
• Ending OPT early is allowed.
• If resuming study at another institution – SEVIS record MUST be transferred PRIOR to the student’s 60-day grace period ending. Please submit our transfer out form in order to proceed with this option.
• First day of classes MUST be within 5 months of the OPT EAD card end date
Changing Status

• Applications for change of visa status **must** be received by USCIS prior to the end of the 60-day grace period

• Work with immigration attorney regarding a Change of Status application to a new visa category. You will need to check with your immigration attorney regarding your allowed period of stay or required exit date if you have a pending change of status when your grace period ends.