STEM Extension Workshop

Employment Authorization for STEM Majors

Spring 2024
About the Workshop

This workshop is required for all STEM Extension Optional Practical Training (OPT) applicants.

Unless specified otherwise, all information in this presentation refers to the STEM Extension OPT.

After viewing this presentation, you must visit compass.uga.edu to request the OPT recommendation I-20 form. This is required for your OPT application to the government.
Overview of STEM Workshop

PART 1  INTRODUCTION TO STEM OPT
PART 2  ELIGIBILITY
PART 3  UGA APPLICATION PROCESS
PART 4  USCIS APPLICATION OPTIONS
PART 5  LIFE ON STEM OPT
PART 6  IMPORTANT REMINDERS
INTRODUCTION

USE THESE SLIDES TO LEARN THE BASICS OF THE STEM OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING EXTENSION
Introduction to STEM OPT

F-1 Students with degrees in the following fields may be eligible for an extension of their Post-Completion OPT work permission:

- Science
- Technology
- Engineering
- Math

The STEM Extension is granted for 24 months.
Introduction to STEM OPT

The student and employer are required to use the Form I-983 Training Plan and follow all reporting requirements.

Employers must provide a 9 digit Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN).

Department of Homeland Security may conduct employer site visits to confirm that training plan goals are being met.
USE THESE SLIDES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OPT ELIGIBILITY
F-1 Students with degrees in STEM fields may be eligible for the extension. See list of eligible majors here:

Eligible CIP Codes

If a student's major is not listed on the Eligible CIP Code list, they may not be eligible for the STEM OPT Extension.

Students may be eligible to have two separate STEM OPT Extensions during their time in the United States, based on two degrees.

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.
Types of Jobs on STEM OPT

Volunteering is not permitted on the STEM OPT extension.

Students’ compensation must be similar to current U.S. workers in the position.

Self-employment is not permitted.

Small start-up companies: Some may qualify as long as the employer has an FEIN, student is considered an “employee” and a supervisor can complete the Form I-983.

Most temporary agency and contract work will not be eligible.

During the STEM OPT extension you could have up to 150 days of unemployment time (90 used during post OPT and 60 for STEM OPT).
STEM OPT PROCESS

BEGIN THE OPT APPLICATION PROCESS BY FOLLOWING THE STEPS BELOW

VIEW THIS ONLINE WORKSHOP
FULLY Review this Workshop

COMPLETE I-983 WITH EMPLOYER
Work with your employer to complete the form I-983

COMPLETE STEM OPT REQUEST FORMS IN COMPASS
Complete STEM OPT Request forms in COMPASS.UGA.EDU

RECEIVE & PRINT STEM OPT I-20
Receive your NEW STEM OPT I-20 from Immigration Services

PREPARE MATERIALS AND SUBMIT APPLICATION TO USCIS
Review application assembly guide and submit OPT application by mail or online
The Form I-983: Training Plan for STEM OPT

Click Here for the Form I-983 Training Plan

View the detailed guide provided by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program.
The Form I-983: Training Plan for STEM OPT

When preparing the Form I-983, you will be asked to include UGA's school code and the Designated School Official (DSO) recommending your STEM OPT

UGA School Code: ATL214F00222000

Use the Student Caseload Division to find your DSO

Contact Information for all advisors is below:
1324 S. Lumpkin Street
Athens, GA 30602
Phone: (706) 542-2900
APPLICATION TIMELINE

Important Reminders about the timeline for applying for the STEM OPT Extension.

90 DAYS BEFORE
Applications can be submitted NO EARLIER than 90 days before the current OPT end date.

AFTER OPT END DATE
ALL STEM OPT Applications must be received by the USCIS BEFORE the Post-Completion OPT End Date. There is no option to file after this date.

PROCESSING TIMES
On average, USCIS may require 3 months to process and issue the STEM OPT Employment Authorization
USE THESE SLIDES TO REVIEW THE NECESSARY MATERIALS AND OPTIONS WHEN APPLYING FOR THE STEM OPT EXTENSION WITH THE USCIS
USCIS APPLICATION: 2 METHODS

The USCIS provides two ways to submit the OPT application.

**Online:**
Applicants who wish to submit the OPT application online, may do so by creating an online account on the USCIS website. All materials and payment will be uploaded to the online e-form.

**By Mail:**
Applicants who wish to submit the OPT application by mail may do so by preparing the required paper forms, printed materials, and necessary fees.

**Instructions:**
Complete, step-by-step instructions on applying to USCIS by mail or through the online application system will be sent to students when their immigration advisor processes their OPT request.
The USCIS Online Account stores the mailing address used in the most recent application.

If you used OGE's address, please use this again. If you did not use OGE's address for the Post-Completion OPT application, and have moved, please ensure that you have updated your address through the AR-11 form.

It is recommended that you update this at least 30 days prior to submitting your STEM OPT extension application.
Application Materials for OPT: ONLINE SUBMISSION

- USCIS Online account creation and online I-765 submission

- $470.00 paid by Credit Card on Pay.gov.

New: Premium Processing for quicker adjudication

- Scanned copy of I-20 with OPT recommendation on 2nd page, signed by Immigration Services advisor and student applicant on the 1st page. This is issued after an advisor reviews your OPT request.

- Scanned copy of a passport-style, color photo of yourself taken within 30 days of filing application

- Scanned copy of official UGA or Previous School’s transcript showing conferred degree

- Scanned copy of passport biographical information page (showing passport expiration date & photo)

- Scanned copy of your F-1 visa

- Scanned copy of your I-94 record from cbp.gov/194 OR copy of I-94 card—front and back (dark enough to show the red stamp on the front of it)

- Scanned copy of I-797 Approval Notice if you changed status in the U.S. (if applicable)

- Scanned copies of all old I-20s for Full-Time CPT (if applicable)

- Scanned copies of all previous EAD cards (if applicable)
Application Materials for OPT: MAIL SUBMISSION

• **G-1145** Electronic Notification Form, Paper App Only

• Completed and signed **I-765**. Only print the form I-765 found on the USCIS website. The USCIS will NOT accept outdated forms.

• $520.00, payable to The U.S. Department of Homeland Security by check or money order OR use a completed **G-1450** Form to pay by credit card.

• I-20 with OPT recommendation on 2nd page, signed by Immigration Services advisor and student applicant on the 1st page. This is issued after an advisor reviews your OPT Request in compass.uga.edu.

• Two identical, passport-style, color photos of yourself taken within 30 days of filing application

• Copy of official UGA or Previous School’s transcript showing conferred degree

• Photocopy of passport biographical information page (showing passport expiration date & photo)

• Photocopy of your F-1 visa

• Print-out of your I-94 record from **cbp.gov/194** OR photocopy of I-94 card—front and back (dark enough to show the red stamp on the front of it)

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LIFE ON STEM-OPT

USE THESE SLIDES TO REVIEW THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE ON STEM OPT.
Employment Requirements

Employment must be within the student's field for which OPT was authorized.

Employees should engage in a minimum of 20 hours/week of work.

Employment must be paid.

The Employer must be enrolled in E-Verify.
STEM OPT REPORTING

STUDENTS & EMPLOYERS MUST REPORT
Any change to the following information on the I-983 must be reported to Immigration Services:
• Employer Name & Address
• Decrease or Increase in student's compensation
• Reduction in hours worked to less than 20 hours a week
• Employer's EIN
• Termination of Employment STEM

OPT REPORTING STUDENTS REPORT
Any change to the following information must be reported to Immigration Services:
• Legal Name
• Residential address
• Employer name and address
• Change in status of current employment, including loss of employment, change of status to H-1B, transfer to another F-1 program, or change of employers.
In addition to changes in employment, students on the STEM OPT Extension must confirm their employment every 6 months to Immigration Services.

Students will be required to upload an evaluation at the 12 and 24 month points of their extension period.

Reporting will be submitted through compass.uga.edu.

STEM OPT Reporting Requirements Resource
ADDRESS REPORTING

• STEM OPT applicants with *pending* or *approved* applications to the USCIS must report changes to their residential or mailing address to UGA Immigration Services **AND** USCIS using the E-COA.

• When reporting your address changes to **UGA Immigration Services**, please visit compass.uga.edu. Select F-1 Employment – Practical Training. Submit the OPT Personal Information Update.

• When reporting your address changes to **USCIS** using the E-COA, follow the instructions linked below: [https://www.uscis.gov/addresschange](https://www.uscis.gov/addresschange)
USCIS Site Visits

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security may conduct site visits of employers that train STEM OPT students.

How to Prepare:

• Make sure employer information and home addresses are up-to-date in the SEVP Portal or reporting employment in Compass.

• The employer’s address should be the address reported for work

• Keep all records of employment and report ANY change in employment history, pay, etc. in the SEVP Portal or in Compass.

For more information, please visit: Employer Site Visits
The H-1B visa is the most common employment option & is sponsored by employers.

There are two types of H-1B Visas: (1) Cap-Subject and (2) Cap-exempt.

For more detailed information on H-1B Visas, please see the USCIS Website - USCIS.gov.

Cap-gap benefits are available to F-1 students only with a properly filed cap-subject H-1B petition with USCIS.

Click here for more information.
Students who obtain a 24-month STEM OPT extension are allowed a maximum of 150 days of unemployment. This includes the 90 days of unemployment from the Post-Completion authorization.

If you change employers or if details of your employment change - you must report this update in compass.uga.edu.

If your employment ends, please submit an I-983 with the evaluation page completed. A new I-983 will be required if you begin a new position.
REMINDER:
You may apply for OPT with USCIS for up to 90 days prior to your Post-Completion OPT end date. If you do not file your application within this timeframe, your application will be rejected or denied.

REMINDER:
There are 2 ways to file the OPT application- By Mail or Online. You must choose only one method to apply for OPT. You must have the I-20 issued by Immigration Services BEFORE applying.

REMINDER:
Visit compass.uga.edu to request the OPT recommendation I-20s needed for the application. Detailed Filing Instructions will be provided after this step.
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International Student Compliance Fee

As the Immigration Services Office is a cost recovery program, we are funded in large part through fees. The ISCF revenue is used to assist staff in compliance with Student and Exchange Visitor Program regulations, and in supporting our international student and scholar populations. During your time at UGA, this fee was paid through your student account.

Immigration Services will continue to assist and advise you during your OPT application process and your time on OPT. UGA-sponsored F-1 or J-1 students who are applying for work authorization through the Immigration Services office continue to pay the ISCF fee.

You will pay the fee when you apply for your OPT I-20 in Compass.
Visit compass.uga.edu

Questions: Contact your immigration advisor