

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

USF WORLD



GIVE NOW



ABOUT US ▼ INCOMING STUDENTS ▼ IMMIGRATION ▼ STUDENT EMPLOYMENT ▼ SCHOLARS ▼ EMPLOYEES

Off-Campus Employment (Internships)

Office of International Services / Student Employment / Off-Campus Employment (Internships)
/ STEM OPT

OVERVIEW

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT) INTERNSHIPS

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

STEM OPT

ACADEMIC TRAINING (AT)

J-2 DEPENDENT EMPLOYMENT

OUTSIDE US

OTHER VISA TYPES

BACK TO STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

STEM OPT

WHAT IS STEM OPT?

STEM OPT is a 24-month extension to a Post-Completion OPT period of practical training that directly relates to an F-1 student's program of study in a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) field.

The list of STEM fields that qualify for a STEM OPT extension is known as the STEM Designated Degree Program list and is available at [Study in the States](#).

To qualify, the CIP code associated with your major, as shown on page 1 of your I-20 under Program of Study, must be included on this STEM Designated Degree Program list.

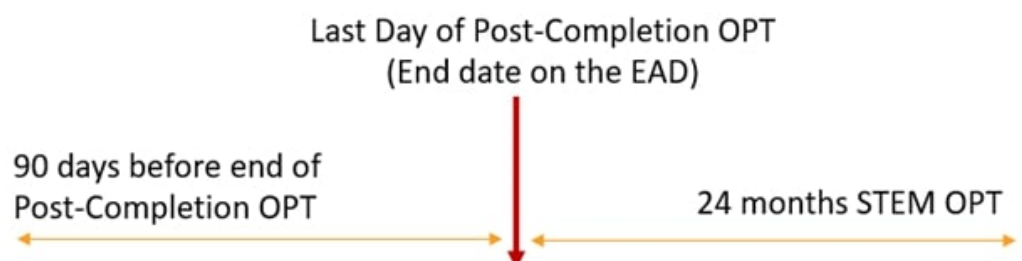
A list of USF STEM OPT eligible majors can be [viewed here](#). While we update this list frequently, it is not exhaustive. It should be used as a tool ONLY for STEM OPT exploration.

STEM OPT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Earned a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree at an accredited, SEVP-approved US institution in a major on the DHS STEM Designated Degree Program list and have been granted Post-Completion OPT that is currently valid.
- Work for an employer who meets all these requirements:
 - Enrolled in **E-Verify**
 - Agrees to DHS site visits and to report changes in employment within 5 days to a DSO at USF
 - Provides OPT employee with pay that is similar to US workers with the same duties and hours
 - Completes the Form I-983 to document the formal training plan between the employer and the OPT employee for the period of the STEM extension
- Your employment must be at least 20 hours per week with each unique employer
- You must not have accrued more than 90 days of unemployment during Post-Completion OPT
- Volunteer or unpaid positions do not qualify for the 24-month STEM OPT extension
- Self-employment does not qualify for the 24-month STEM OPT extension
- You may be able to use a previously obtained STEM degree to apply for 24-month STEM OPT extension
- There is an opportunity for a second period of STEM OPT after obtaining a degree at a higher level at an accredited, SEVIS-approved institution. Individuals are limited to two (2) STEM OPT extensions per lifetime.

WHEN TO APPLY

You may file for the 24-month STEM OPT Extension to USCIS as early as 90 days before the end of your Post-Completion OPT but no later than the last day of your Post-Completion OPT.



HOW TO APPLY

1. Complete your Form I-983
 - a. Download the **USCIS Form I-983**.

- b. Open this file which contains **important and necessary information to complete the I-983**.
 - c. If you have additional questions about how to fill out this form, please refer to the **USCIS I-983 Instructions**
2. Login to iStart at **<https://iStart.usf.edu>**
3. Select "F-1 Practical Training – Apply"
4. Open the "Request I-20 for STEM OPT Extension Application" E-Form and:
 - a. Pay the \$300 STEM OPT Management Assessment
 - b. Upload the completed I-983
 - c. Submit the "Request I-20 for STEM OPT Extension Application" after entering all the requested information

After OIS Staff has reviewed that your I-983 is complete, verified the training plan is appropriate, and confirmed payment of the STEM OPT Management Assessment, you receive a new I-20 that includes the STEM OPT recommendation on page 2 and instructions on how to file.

Note: Expect to receive the I-20 within 10 business days of the submission of the Request I- 20 for STEM OPT Extension Application E-Form.

5. Gather the following documents:
 - a. 2x2 passport style photograph
 - b. Photocopy of signed Form I-20 with STEM OPT Extension Request
 - c. Photocopy of non-immigration documents (Passport, Visa, I-94)
 - d. Photocopy of previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card(s) - front & back
 - e. Copy of Transcripts (recommended) and/or of the diploma, which states the program of study
6. File for your STEM EAD on the USCIS site.

Do NOT file with USCIS until you have obtained the signed form I-20 with STEM OPT Extension Request from the Office of International Services (OIS)

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS WHILE ON STEM OPT

Students with an approved STEM OPT must submit confirmation of personal and current employment details after 6, 12, 18, and 24 months on STEM OPT. Those reports are called "Validations". In

addition to confirming details, an evaluation is required with the 12- and 24-month Validation.

What is STEM OPT Validation



To submit your STEM OPT Validation:

- Go to <http://istart.usf.edu>
- Select F-1 Practical Training - Report
- Select Report STEM 6/12/18/24 Month Validation

How to submit STEM OPT Validation Reports



Students must submit their 6/12/18/ or 24-Month STEM OPT Validation within 10 days of the due date. The OIS Staff has 21 additional days from the student's submission of the E-Form to report it in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System). Once the validation is reviewed by the OIS Staff and no corrections need to be made, the student receives an email confirmation.

Note: Failure to comply may have future immigration implications, and SEVP (Student and Exchange Visitor Program) has warned that failure to report within the allotted time may result in the SEVIS record's termination.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

— Does USCIS offer premium processing?

USCIS is accepting premium processing applications/requests with the filing of the Form I-765 for the OPT employment authorization application. Premium processing Form I-907 is filed at the same time you file form I-765 and the additional fee is \$1,685. The premium processing timeframe is 30 calendar days after USCIS receives all necessary documentation. USCIS accepts both online and paper filings of Form I-907.

More information is available at this link:

<https://www.uscis.gov/forms/all-forms/how-do-i-request-premium-processing>

— Can the Form I-983 be signed electronically?

Yes. On September 18, 2023, DHS announced a change in signature requirements for the Form I-983 to include electronic signatures. SEVP will now accept the following formats:

Physical/Wet Signature

Electronic signatures using software programs or applications

Electronically reproduced copies of a signature

Further details about these acceptable I-983 signatures can be found in the **Form I-983 Instructions**.

— Where can I find the CIP code on my I-20?

The CIP code is a 6-digit code included on page 1 of the I-20. It is listed immediately after the major.

SCHOOL INFORMATION		
SCHOOL NAME University of South Florida University of South Florida (Tampa)		SCHOOL ADDRESS International Services, CGS101, 4202 East Fowler Avenue, Tampa, FL 33620
SCHOOL OFFICIAL TO CONTACT UPON ARRIVAL Tran Nguyen International Student Advisor		SCHOOL CODE AND APPROVAL DATE MIA214F00043000 28 JANUARY 2003
PROGRAM OF STUDY		
EDUCATION LEVEL BACHELOR'S	MAJOR 1 Electrical and Electronics Engineering 14.1001	MAJOR 2 None 00.0000
PROGRAM ENGLISH PROFICIENCY Required	ENGLISH PROFICIENCY NOTES Student is proficient	EARLIEST ADMISSION DATE

— If my major is not listed on the DHS STEM Designated Program List can I apply for an extension of my OPT?

At this time, the extension is only for F-1 students who have completed a program in a STEM major.

— Can I work with an expired EAD while my STEM extension is pending?

Yes. Your work authorization is automatically extended for up to 180 days while the 24-month STEM extension application is pending.

— **Can I work for multiple employers while on STEM OPT?**

Yes, but you must provide a complete I-983 for each employer using the Report New OPT Employer E-Form.

— **Can I use a previously obtained STEM degree for a 24-month extension?**

Students on Post-Completion OPT based on a non-STEM degree may be eligible to use a prior STEM degree earned from a US institution of higher learning to apply for the 24-month STEM OPT extension if:

- The prior degree was earned from a currently accredited and SEVP certified institution
- You did not already receive STEM OPT Extension for that prior degree
- The eligible STEM degree was awarded less than 10 years ago
- The prior degree is in a degree program category included on the current STEM Designated Degree Program List at the time of the DSO recommendation
- The practical training opportunity that is the basis for the 24-month STEM OPT extension must directly relate to the prior STEM degree
- The prior degree was actually conferred (i.e., a student who uses a prior degree cannot take advantage of the "all but thesis or dissertation" exception)

— **If I am approved for an extension, can I work for a non-E-verify employer while still employed by the E-Verify employer named on the I-765?**

Students may NOT be concurrently employed at a non-E-verify employer. While on a STEM OPT extension, the student is only allowed to be employed by employers who are registered with E-verify.

— **What if my employer is not enrolled in E-verify?**

Employers need to be enrolled in E-verify to be able to employ students on STEM OPT extension. The application is free and **information about how an employer can enroll in E-verify is available on this site.**

If you have any further questions or concerns, please come to **OIS**
walk-in or virtual advising hours.



UNIVERSITY of
SOUTH FLORIDA

4202 E. Fowler Avenue, BEH 255,
Tampa, FL 33620, USA
813-974-5102



[About USF](#)

[Academics](#)

[Admissions](#)

[Locations](#)

[Campus
Life](#)

[Research](#)

[Administrative
Units](#)

[Regulations &
Policies](#)

[Human
Resources](#)

[Work at USF](#)

[Emergency &
Safety](#)

[Title IX](#)

[USF
Health](#)

[USF
Athletics](#)

[USF
Alumni](#)

[Support
USF](#)

[USF
Libraries](#)

[USF
World](#)

Copyright © 2024, University of South Florida. All rights reserved.

This website is maintained by **Office of International Services.**

[Privacy](#) | [Contact USF](#) | [Visit USF](#) | [Accessibility](#)