BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Student Acknowledgment for **STEM OPT**
(F-1 Students)

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There are several important rules and procedures that must be followed after applying for an STEM Extension of Optional Practical Training (OPT) employment authorization. Complying with these rules and procedures is necessary to maintain lawful F-1 immigration status. This form includes a summary of key responsibilities only for STEM OPT students and does not include all rules related to F-1 immigration status and OPT/STEM OPT Employment authorization.

Please carefully review each item below, then sign this form to confirm that you understand your responsibilities and reporting requirements.

⬇ **SUMMARY OF STEM OPT RESPONSIBLITIES:** More detailed information about maintaining your F-1 status during your STEM OPT can be found on the ISSO website: www.bu.edu/isso/employment-internships/student-off-campus-work-and-training/optional/24-month-stem-opt/

⬇ **ADDRESS REPORTING:** Reporting of "Immigration-U.S." and "OPT Employer" addresses must be done through the BU Student Link (under the purple "Personal" tab, select Address and Phone): http://www.bu.edu/link/

⬇ **OPT WEB PORTAL:** Submit copies of immigration documents, your Form I-983 Training Plan, evaluations, and end of employment notifications through the BU ISSO OPT Web Portal: http://www.bu.edu/isso/optwebportal

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1. **Boston University as my F-1 sponsor:** During my STEM OPT Extension, I will still be in F-1 immigration status, under the sponsorship of Boston University.

   a. BU ISSO will continue to maintain my SEVIS immigration record and to advise me on travel and status questions.

   b. It is my responsibility to inform the ISSO of any updates to my OPT application (including USCIS requests for information, approval or denial decision), and to maintain up-to-date residential address and OPT employer information in BU systems, and to comply with all other responsibilities and reporting requirements, including those summarized in this document.

2. **Filing my STEM OPT Application:** My OPT application must be mailed and arrive at the USCIS within a specific timeframe. If my application is received before or after this timeframe, my application may be denied:

   a. Filed up to 90 days prior to expiration: My application must arrive at USCIS no sooner than 90 days prior to the expiration of my current OPT authorization.

   b. Filed no more than 60 days after DSO recommendation: My application must arrive at USCIS no later than 60 days after my ISSO advisor signs the OPT recommendation on my new Form I-20. If my I-20 will not arrive within 60 days I must request a new OPT recommendation from the ISSO.

   c. Continuing OPT employment based on timely filed STEM OPT extension: My application for STEM OPT extension may routinely take approximately 90 days for USCIS adjudication. If I submit a timely filed application for STEM OPT (if my application is received at USCIS *before* the expiration of my current EAD), then I may continue working for the STEM OPT Employer reflected on my I-983 Training Plan for a period of *up to 180 days* while my application is pending with USCIS. ISSO advises against travel during this 180 day period as I do not have the EAD that is required to apply for a new visa and return to the U.S.

   d. Cancelling my application: If extraordinary circumstances warrant it, I can attempt to cancel my OPT application only if the application has not yet been adjudicated (approved) by the USCIS Service Center. I will work with my ISSO advisor if cancellation becomes necessary.

4. **Working for qualified employers:** During STEM OPT I must only work in a job related to my STEM major and for a qualified employer.

   a. <u>Working in my STEM major field of study</u>**:** Any employment that I accept during my STEM OPT authorization must be directly related to my STEM major field of study and must be commensurate with my current level of education. I may apply for a STEM OPT extension on the basis of a previously obtained STEM degree, but all employment I accept must be related to that STEM field.

   b. <u>Working only for E-Verify employers</u>**:** During my STEM OPT authorization, I can work only for employers who are registered with E-Verify. I can have multiple employers, and/or I can change employers, but each must be registered with E-Verify.

   c. <u>Established employer/employee relationship</u>**.** During my OPT STEM extension, I must be formally employed by an organization that will monitor my progress and fulfill the Department of Homeland Security's reporting requirements. Contract work, work for a temp agency, and self-employment for a sole proprietorship, may not meet the required employer/employee relationship.

   d. <u>Training Plan for STEM OPT Students</u>**:** In order for BU ISSO to recommend me for a STEM OPT extension, I must first present a Form I-983 Training Plan for STEM OPT Students that has been completed and signed by me and my employer. Without a completed Form I-983, BU ISSO cannot recommend a STEM OPT extension. This form can be downloaded from the Department of Homeland Security's website: https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983.pdf.

   e. <u>Material Change in Employment</u>**:** If there is any material change made to my employer or the training plan outlined on my Form I-983, I must complete and submit an updated Training Plan to the ISSO at the earliest available opportunity.

5. **Reporting requirements:** In order to maintain my F-1 immigration status while on STEM OPT, I must meet the following reporting requirements:

   a. <u>Maintain up-to-date U.S. address:</u> I must maintain an up-to-date U.S residential address on record. This must be updated within 10 days of any move. This information must be reported in **BU Student Link,** under **"Immigration-U.S." Address.**

   b. <u>Report EAD Approval to the ISSO:</u> I must provide the ISSO with a copy of my new STEM OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD) as soon as it is approved by the USCIS in order to update my ISSO record, and to amend my I-20, if needed. This report can be made through the **OPT Web Portal**.

   c. <u>OPT Employer Name, Address and Dates</u>: I must maintain up-to-date OPT employer information in the BU Student Link for each OPT employer. This information must be reported in **BU Student Link** under **"OPT Employer" Address.**

      o The OPT Employer address requires the name and address of each OPT employer, my first day of work at that employer, the number of hours per week worked, and a brief description of how each job is related to my STEM major field of study.

      o I may work for multiple employers, but am required to work more than 20 hours per week at each one.

      o If I stop working at any employer, I must update the information to reflect my last day of employment at that job. I may not surpass a maximum of 150 days of unemployment combined during OPT and my STEM OPT extension.

   d. <u>6-Month Validation Report</u>: I must contact the ISSO every six months from the start date of my OPT extension to confirm that my name, residential address, employer information, and employment status are current and accurate. The report is due to the ISSO within 10 business days of each reporting date. This report can be made through the **OPT Web Portal.**

   e. <u>12-Month Annual Evaluation</u>: For each STEM OPT employer, I must complete a 12-month evaluation to summarize the progress I have made toward the training goals outlined on my I-983 Training Plan. This document must be signed by an appropriate individual at my place of employment, and must be submitted to the ISSO no later than 10 days following the conclusion of the 12-month reporting period. This report can be made through the **OPT Web Portal.**

   f. <u>Final Evaluation</u>: For each STEM OPT employer, I must complete a final evaluation upon ending my employment, to summarize the progress I made toward the training goals outlined in my Training Plan. This document must be signed by an appropriate individual at my place of employment, and must be submitted to the ISSO no later than 10 days following the conclusion of my employment. This report can be made through the **OPT Web Portal.**

a. <u>Employer reporting during STEM OPT extension</u>**:** If my employment is terminated by me or by my employer, my employer must report to the ISSO – within 48 hours of the termination – that I am no longer working. If I am absent from work more than five days without my employer's approval, my employer must also report that I am no longer working.

6. **Unemployment during STEM OPT:** I must keep complete and accurate records of my dates of active employment and periods of unemployment.

   a. <u>Maximum Period of Unemployment</u>: I may not accrue an aggregate of more than 150 days of unemployment during the entire 36 month OPT period - including my post-completion OPT authorization and the subsequent STEM OPT extension.
   b. <u>Reporting dates of employment through BU Student Link:</u> I must report my start and end date for each STEM OPT employer through the "OPT Employer" address in the BU Student Link.
   c. <u>Termination of SEVIS Record after exceeding maximum unemployment</u>**:** If I pass the 150-day mark for unemployment, or if I do not report corrected dates of employment in the "OPT Employer" address, my SEVIS record may be terminated by U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Termination of my SEVIS record ends my lawful F-1 immigration status and STEM OPT employment authorization.

7. **Traveling outside the U.S.** If I travel outside the U.S. during my STEM OPT authorization, I may need the following items to apply for a new F-1 visa and re-enter the U.S. Without these items, I may experience difficulty when returning and could, be prohibited from re-entering the U.S. in F-1 status:

   a. <u>Valid passport</u>
   b. <u>F-1 visa</u> in my passport that will be valid on the day I plan to return to the U.S. If I do not have a visa that will be valid for my return, I will obtain one at a U.S. consulate or embassy while outside the U.S.
   c. <u>Travel signature</u> on my Form I-20 that is less than six months old.
   d. <u>OPT Employment Authorization Document</u> (EAD, also known as "OPT Card")

      NOTE: If your initial OPT period has ended, you should not depart the U.S. until your STEM OPT extension has been approved and you have received your new Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

   e. <u>Proof of OPT Employment</u>, such as a letter from my employer to show that I have a job or OPT activity to resume when I return to the U.S., or that I will begin a job/activity upon my return to the U.S.

8. **Ending OPT:**
   a. <u>Invalidating OPT</u>: My STEM OPT will be cancelled or invalidated if I:

      (1) Enter the U.S. in another immigration status or change status in the U.S. (including as a visitor);
      (2) Begin a new program of study or transfer my SEVIS record to a new school;
      (3) Engage in unauthorized employment; or
      (4) Otherwise violate my F-1 immigration status.

   b. <u>Sixty-day "grace" period after OPT</u>**:** Following the end date on my OPT, I am permitted a period of 60 days to remain the U.S. I may **not** work during this period unless my immigration status is changed to a classification that permits employment, or unless I qualify for "Cap-Gap" extension (described below).

      I can use this grace period to transfer my F-1 status to another school, apply for a change of immigration status, process a level change to begin a new program of study, or to depart the U.S. (which I must do no later than the sixtieth day). Once I depart the U.S. during my grace period, I am not longer eligible to return in F-1 status unless I have a new I-20 for a new program of study.

   c. <u>"Cap-Gap" Extension</u>**:** If, during my OPT or STEM OPT extension, my employer files a timely-filed petition to change my status to H-1B to begin on October 1st, I may be eligible for an extension of F-1 status (and OPT work permission, if applicable) through October 1st.

      I will need to provide the ISSO with a copy of my USCIS receipt or approval notice in order to request a "Cap-Gap" I-20. Cap-gap extension for shorter dates may also be available if I have an H-1B petition that was filed (but not receipted) or waitlisted by USCIS.

9. **Limits on future periods of OPT:** I may be eligible for an additional 12-month period of OPT if I move to a higher level of education in the U.S. Furthermore, I may qualify for a *second* STEM OPT Extension if I move to a higher degree of education in a qualifying STEM major. I am only eligible for two lifetime STEM OPT Extensions. If I am granted a STEM OPT extension at one degree level, I will not be able to apply for another STEM OPT extension based on the same education level on a future STEM OPT application.

STEM OPT Dates and Acknowledgement

STEM OPT Extension dates are calculated automatically through SEVIS, beginning the day after my current OPT ends and ending 24 months later.

STEM OPT Start Date (day after current OPT ends)	02/29/2020	**STEM OPT End Date** (24 months after start date)	03/01/2022

Have you attended an "OPT Transitions" Workshop?	☐ Yes – Date of Workshop: _____
	☑ No – Please make certain to carefully review all information above and on our website to make certain you understand your reporting responsibilities.
Did you pay the ISSO OPT Processing Fee?	☑ Yes – Receipt attached (ISSO Initials: _____)

STEM OPT Acknowledgement:

✓ *I have read and understand the above rules and procedures and will abide by them.*

✓ *I verify that I have not used any period of OPT or STEM OPT at my current educational level or a higher educational level that would disqualify me from the OPT authorization I now seek.*

✓ *I verify that I have not been previously approved for more than one other OPT STEM Extension.*

✓ *I understand that I must maintain accurate and current employment information on record with ISSO to ensure that my SEVIS record remains up-to-date during OPT.*

✓ *I give permission to Boston University ISSO to release information to the employer named on my I-983 about my F-1 status and employment authorization as related to this OPT STEM extension.*

binchi zhang

Signature of Student	12/23/2019
	Date

Original to student / Scan to OnBase file