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This manual contains instructions on how to apply for the 24-month STEM OPT extension. If you are applying for the 12-month OPT, go to the "OPT Manual."

**Warning:**

The information in this manual is subject to change. Therefore, discard any copies you have googled, downloaded, or bookmarked!





# STEMOPT eligibility requirements

- Your employment must be directly related to your STEM major
- You must be paid, and you must work **at least 20 hours** per week with each employer, if you have more than one employer
- The employer completing the *Form I-983* cannot be a staffing/placement agency unless the staffing/placement agency is the employer that provides and oversees the training. If employment




# Benefits of filing online

# Extremely important filing deadlines!

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You may ask the OISS to cancel your STEM OPT request if you have not submitted your application.

If you have already submitted your application, you should immediately send a letter to USCIS requesting a

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## Steps to apply

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# Submit your STEM *OPT Request e-form* to the OISS

*Student responsibilities.* A student must initiate the OPT application process by requesting a recommendation for OPT from his or her DSO. Upon making the recommendation, the DSO will provide the student a signed Form I-20 indicating that recommendation.

*Start of employment.*



# "Getting started"

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# "About you"

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The *Alien Registration Number (A-Number)* is a number typically issued to individuals who apply for immigration (permanent residence) benefits. If you are applying for the STEM OPT extension, enter the USCIS Number on the front of your current EAD card.

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# "Evidence"

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# "Additional information" Part 1

This section allows you to provide any additional explanation or information that may be helpful to USCIS. Be sure to include the following information:

If you have had more than one SEVIS number, provide all of the numbers you used before your current one:

1. For "section," select "about you"



# "Additional information" Part 2

Provide additional information about your STEM major:

- 1.



## C While your application is pending

Respond to a "Request for Evidence" 20

Changing your employer or address 21

## Respond to a "*Request for Evidence (RFE)*" on time

Check the "documents" tab in your online account frequently in case you have been issued a *Request for Evidence (RFE)*. You should expect the *RFE* to be mailed to your mailing address.

If you receive a *Request for Evidence (RFE)*

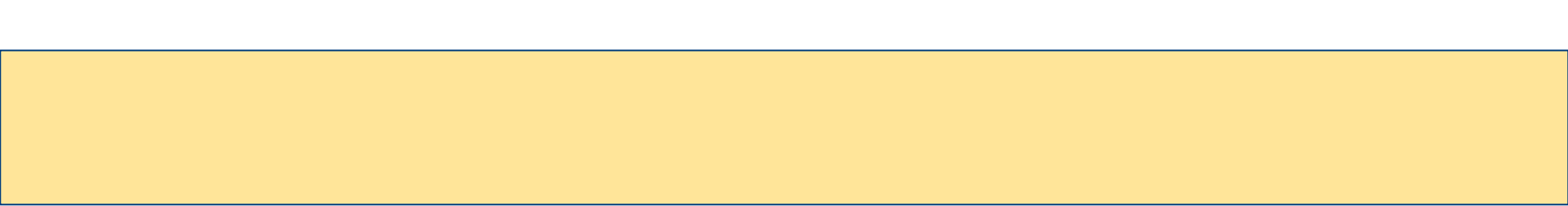
# Changing your employer or address

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# Submit the *OPT STEM Report* to the OISS

As soon as you receive your EAD, you must report to the OISS by submitting the *OPT STEM Report* e-form.

**Step 1:** Go to <https://oiss.pepperdine.edu/istart/controllers/start/StartEngine.cfm> and click on "New Student/Scholar Login"

**Step 2:** Select "Email me my Limited Information" at the bottom of the page.

**Step 3:** Enter and submit your University Identification Number (CWID).

**Step 4:** After receiving the confirmation message, open a new browser window or tab and check your email to retrieve your PIN. Your PIN will be emailed to your alternate email, as provided to Pepperdine through your Wavenet account. Then, go back to the OISS Home Page.

**Step 5:** Fill in your CWID, Date of Birth, and PIN in the appropriate fields and click "Login."

**Step 6:** On the left column, click on "F-1 Educational Training" and complete the *Of Report*, making sure that all required fields are correctly filled in. Click "Submit" to submit your form.

If you have technical issues, clear your cache or try using a different browser.

# STEMOPT reporting requirements

- **Annual Report** : Due every six months during the STEM OPT period. The purpose of this report is to verify that your information is still correct. Therefore, submit the **Annual Report** even if the information has not changed.
- **Training Report** : The purpose of this report is to verify that you have received adequate training and new skills in your job. Complete page 5 of the **Annual Report** and submit



# The SEVP Portal

# How long can you be unemployed?

If your STEM OPT extension is approved, an additional 60 days of unemployment will be added, allowing up to **150 days** of unemployment

If you exceed 150 days of unemployment days, you will be considered out of status! Before you lose your status, prepare for departure or pursue other options, such as

# What if your STEM OPT is denied?

## Unlawful Presence

An STEM OPT denial may trigger the INA § 222(g) visa cancellation and INA 212(a)(9)(B) unlawful presence provisions. If you are present unlawfully for more than 180 days but less than one (1) year, and you voluntarily depart the US prior to the initiation of removal proceedings, you will be rendered inadmissible for 3 years. If you are present unlawfully for one (1) year or more, you will be rendered inadmissible for ten (10) years.

We strongly recommend that you consult experienced immigration counsel if you wish to apply for reinstatement to F-1 status (unlawful presence accrual will stop while reinstatement is pending) or file a motion to reopen or reconsider the OPT denial on Form I-290B within 30 days from the date of the denial.

## Arrests

Several cases were reported by other schools in which OPT was denied if students had a DUI, substance-related (including marijuana), or other type of arrest. Furthermore, an arrest can trigger a cancellation of your visa by the Department of State. We strongly recommend that you consult with an experienced immigration attorney if you have an arrest record. Do not travel abroad until you have been fully counseled and are prepared to apply for a new visa.

# Travel during STEM OPT



# H-1B cap-gap OPT Extension

Students who wish to continue working after STEM OPT usually apply for the H-1B visa. Go to the USCIS website for more information on the H-1B and other temporary work visas.

Each Fiscal Year (FY) a limited number (or “cap”) of H-1B visas may be approved. Each filing period begins in early spring, with the requested employment date to begin not earlier than October 1. Due to the high demand for H-1B visas, a random selection process has been used to limit the number of cases that will be accepted for processing.

The following employers are exempt from the cap:

- institutions of higher education
- nonprofit entities related to or affiliated with an institution of higher education
- nonprofit research organizations
- governmental research organizations

If you are selected for H-1B processing, and your STEM OPT is still valid at the time you file your H-1B petition, your OPT will be automatically extended to September 30, if your STEM OPT will expire before that date. This is known as the “cap-gap” OPT extension.

To request a new *Form I-2*

*If you are a* *ne<sup>3</sup>*

# If you terminate or complete your STEM OPT

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*Duration of status while on post-completion OPT.* For a student with approved post-completion OPT, the duration of status is defined as the period beginning when the student's application for OPT was properly filed and pending approval, including the authorized period of post-completion OPT, and ending 60 days after the OPT employment authorization expires (allowing the student to prepare for departure, change educational levels at the same school, or transfer in accordance with paragraph (f)(8) of this section).

*Termination of practical training* Authorization to engage in optional practical training