

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Manual

Fall 2017

Basic steps

Step 1

About 4 months before your program end date, read the entire *OPT Manual* carefully. To avoid denial of your application, be aware of the filing deadlines on page 10!

Step 2

Email ONLY your completed *OPT Request Form* to oiss@pepperdine.edu. This form can be found on the OISS website, right next to this *OPT Manual*.

Step 3

If you plan to pick up your new *Form I-20*, you can attend the *OPT Workshop* and have your OPT application materials reviewed at the same time. Call 310-506-4246 to reserve a space, every Wednesday starting at noon.

Reasons to apply early

- It may take up to three months or more for United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) to process your application!
- If your application is denied, you will have a second chance to apply while your 60-day grace period is still in effect!
- If your employer wants you to start working earlier than the date you requested, you must decline the offer or wait until you receive your employment authorization card (EAD)!
- If you apply late, USCIS may change your start date to a later date, so do not assume your start date will be the same on your EAD as what you requested!
- It is not possible to request expedited processing unless the employer can prove there will be extreme financial loss to the company due to your inability to start work!
- You cannot renew your driver license without your EAD!
- Your case may be delayed due to problems with your application or mail delivery!
- If you travel abroad, reentry will be easier if your OPT has been approved!

What if OPT is your “Plan B?”

- If you plan to enroll in another program of study at the same educational level, you may not want to apply for OPT at this time. You may receive only one 12-month period of OPT for each program level (bachelor’s, master’s, doctoral, etc.).
- You may apply for OPT without a job offer. If you do not begin employment within 90 days of your OPT start date, however, you will lose your OPT.
- If you decide not to use or to stop using your OPT, be sure to send an “*exit statement*” to the OISS (see page 29) in order to have your SEVIS record updated, to avoid problems entering the US in the future. Students typically transfer to another school to begin a new program of study or return to their home country.

Table of Contents

The following sections contain information that will help prevent denial or loss of your OPT and F-1 status! Reach each page carefully.

Section A: Preparing the Application	6
Section B: Filing the Application	13
Section C: While Application is pending	19
Section D: After Application has been Approved	23
Section E: Cap-gap and 24-month STEM OPT extensions	30

Section A:

Preparing the Application



- ✓ **What is Practical Training?** **7**
- ✓ **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)** **8**
- ✓ **Optional Practical Training (OPT)** **9**
- ✓ **Important filing deadlines!** **10**
- ✓ **Select your OPT start date** **11**
- ✓ **Cancelling/withdrawing your application** **12**

What is Practical Training?

8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(10)

Practical training. Practical training may be authorized to an F-1 student who has been lawfully enrolled on a full time basis, in a Service-approved college, university, conservatory, or seminary for one full academic year. This provision also includes students who, during their course of study, were enrolled in a study abroad program, if the student had spent at least one full academic term enrolled in a full course of study in the United States prior to studying abroad. A student may be authorized 12 months of practical training, and becomes eligible for another 12 months of practical training when he or she changes to a higher educational level. Students in English language training programs are ineligible for practical training. An eligible student may request employment authorization for practical training in a position that is directly related to his or her major area of study.

There are two types of practical training:



1. Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

1. Optional Practical Training (OPT)
 - i. Pre-completion OPT
 - ii. Post-completion OPT
 - iii. STEM extension OPT

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(10)(i)

Curricular practical training. An F-1 student may be authorized by the DSO to participate in a curricular practical training program that is an integral part of an established curriculum. Curricular practical training is defined to be alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school. Students who have received one year or more of **full time*** curricular practical training are ineligible for post-completion academic training. Exceptions to the one academic year requirement are provided for students enrolled in graduate studies that require immediate participation in curricular practical training. A request for authorization for curricular practical training must be made to the DSO. A student may begin curricular practical training only after receiving his or her Form I-20 with the DSO endorsement.

For immigration purposes, “part-time” CPT is defined as up to 20 hours per week. “Full-time” CPT is defined as more than 20 hours a week.



Note: Receiving one year or more of part-time CPT will not affect your eligibility to apply for OPT. Receiving one year or more of full-time CPT, however, will make you ineligible for OPT. For instructions on how to apply for permission to engage in CPT, go to the “employment information for F-1 students” section in the OISS website.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(A)

General. Consistent with the application and approval process in paragraph (f)(11) of this section, a student may apply to USCIS for authorization for temporary employment for optional practical training directly related to the student's major area of study. The student may not begin optional practical training until the date indicated on his or her employment authorization document, Form I-766. A student may be granted authorization to engage in temporary employment for optional practical training:

- 1) During the student's annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session, if the student is currently enrolled, and is eligible for registration and intends to register for the next term or session;
- 2) While school is in session, provided that practical training does not exceed 20 hours a week while school is in session; or
- 3) After completion of the course of study, or, for a student in a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree program, after completion of all course requirements for the degree (excluding thesis or equivalent). Continued enrollment, for the school's administrative purposes, after all requirements for the degree have been met does not preclude eligibility for optional practical training. A student must complete all practical training within a 14-month period following the completion of study, except that a 17-month extension pursuant to paragraph (f)(10)(ii)(C) of this section does not need to be completed within such 14-month period.

Note: The regulation cited above was written prior to the date the 24-month STEM OPT extension became effective.

If you engage in part-time OPT before completion of your course of study, it will be deducted from the 12 months of OPT at the 50% rate.



Important filing deadlines!

8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(11)(i)(B)

Filing deadlines for pre-completion OPT and post-completion OPT.

(1) Students may file a Form I-765 for **pre-completion OPT** up to 90 days before being enrolled for one full academic year, provided that the period of employment will not start prior to the completion of the full academic year.

(2) For **post-completion OPT**, the student must properly file his or her Form I-765 up to 90 days prior to his or her program end date and no later than 60 days after his or her program end date. The student must also file the Form I-765 with USCIS within 30 days of the date the DSO enters the recommendation of OPT into his or her SEVIS record.



An application is considered to be **"filed"** on the date it is received by USCIS, not on the date you mail it (therefore, use trackable next-day shipping to be sure you file on time). USCIS will deny your application if you file it:

1. Too early (more than 90 days prior to the program end date)
2. Too late (more than 60 days after the program end date)
3. More than 30 days after the *Form I-20* requesting OPT was issued

If your application is denied, you will still have time to file another application before the deadline, provided you applied early the first time.

Select your OPT start date

8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(11)(i)

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. A student may not begin employment prior to the approved starting date on his or her employment authorization except as noted in paragraph (f)(11)(i)(C) of this section. A student may not request a start date that is more than 60 days after the student's program end date. Employment authorization will begin on the date requested or the date the employment authorization is adjudicated, whichever is later.



Enter the date you wish to begin working on the **OPT Request Form**, which is available on the OISS website, right next to this **OPT Manual**.

- You may choose any date within 60 days after your program end date (your program end date is the date you complete graduation requirements, not the date of the graduation ceremony)
- You may not change the OPT start date after you have filed your application, even though you receive a job offer that starts earlier.
- **WARNING!** You are not allowed to start working, with or without pay, until you receive the EAD from USCIS!

Canceling or withdrawing your application

SEVP Policy Guidance 1004-03

What happens if a student (excluding those students who have completed all program requirements aside from thesis or equivalent) applied for post-completion OPT before his or her program end date and subsequently fails to complete the requirements for his or her program?

- ✓ The student should contact his or her DSO immediately for guidance.
- ✓ If the employment authorization application has not been adjudicated by USCIS, the student may withdraw the application by notifying the Service Center where the application was filed. The DSO should also withdraw the recommendation for OPT in SEVIS.
- ✓ If the employment authorization application has already been approved, the DSO should extend the student's program end date to the appropriate date. The student may work **part time** while enrolled in courses to complete the requirements for his or her program and full time during breaks and vacations. After successful completion of all the program requirements, the student may work full time.
- ✓ However, even though the student's program end date was extended, because the OPT was granted as post-completion OPT, the student is subject to the 90-day limitation on unemployment.

Source: http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/opt_policy_guidance_042010.pdf

Immediately notify the OISS if your program end date changes! If you do not finish your program requirements on time, your options are limited. Consult the OISS right away!



- You cannot request an extension of your program end date after the program end date printed on your *Form I-20*.
- You cannot request a withdrawal of your OPT application after it has been approved.
- If your OPT application has been approved, you must limit your OPT work hours in accordance with the regulations above.



- ✓ OPT checklist 14
NOTE: Follow additional instructions in *Section E* if you are applying for the 24-month STEM extension.
- ✓ Completing the *Form I-765* correctly 15
- ✓ Photo requirements 16
- ✓ Final check before sending your application 17
- ✓ Where to send your application 18

OPT checklist



1. **Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization**, go to <https://www.uscis.gov/>
NOTE: Do not file the I-765 electronically, because you will receive additional instructions from USCIS, including an appointment notice to have your fingerprints taken.
2. **Form G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance**, <https://www.uscis.gov/>
3. Personal check made payable to “US Department of Homeland Security.” Check the fee chart at <https://www.uscis.gov/> for the Form I-765. Do not use “temporary checks” that have no name or address in the upper left-hand corner. If you purchase a money order or cashier’s check, make sure the financial institution that issued it is able to track and verify payment. In the memo line, write your name, date of birth and *Form I-94* number.
4. Two US–style passport photos taken within 30 days prior to filing the application. Gently write your name and *Form I-94* number on the back of each photo with a pencil or a felt pen with fast-drying ink.
5. Copy of *Form I-20* requesting OPT (**WARNING**: this *Form I-20* will expire!!! See page 14)
6. Copy of previously issued *Form I-20*’s
7. Copy of previously issued employment authorization cards or approval notices from USCIS
8. Copy of your passport, visa, and most recent *Form I-94* (go to www.cbp.gov/I94 to print your *Form I-94*)

Completing the *Form I-765* correctly

Download the current *Form I-765* at <https://www.uscis.gov/>

- For the the 12-month OPT, check the “permission to accept employment” box.
 - For the 24-month STEM OPT extension, check the “renewal” box (see page 34 in *Section E* for additional information on how to complete the *Form I-765* for this category)
- #1 If you do not enter your name very clearly you will have problems later with incorrect spelling, or incorrect family and/or first name on your EAD! If you run out of space just enter the first letter of your middle name.
- #3 If you do not have a long-term address you may list an address in care of another person by adding “c/o” in front of the person’s name and address. If you need more space, attach a sheet of paper with “I-765 addendum, complete mailing address” written on top. Do not use an on-campus mailbox!
- #11 If you check “yes,” write the USCIS office where your previous application was processed. You can find this information on your EAD or notices you received from USCIS. For example, if your receipt number begins with “YSC,” your application was processed at the Potomac Service Center. For “dates,” enter the employment start and end dates you were granted.
- #16 (c) (3) (B) for 12-month post-completion OPT (Note: the letter “B” is capitalized)
(c) (3) (A) for 12-month pre-completion OPT (Note: the letter “A” is capitalized)
(c) (3) (C) for 24-month STEM OPT extension (Note: the second letter “C” is capitalized)

Photo requirements

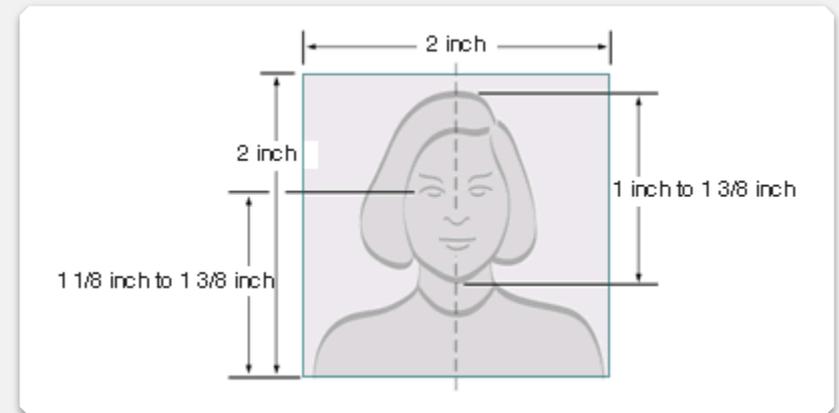
You must enclose two (2) US –style passport photos. You may be asked to resubmit your photos if they do not meet these specifications. For more information on photo specifications go to:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/photos/photo-composition-template.html>



Photos must:

- ✓ Be in color
- ✓ Be taken within **30 days** before filing your application
- ✓ Show full face, frontal view on a white to off-white background
- ✓ Have no shadows
- ✓ Measure exactly 2 inches by 2 inches
- ✓ Be printed on thin photo-quality paper with a glossy finish, and be unmounted and un-retouched



- ✓ Photo must be 2 inches by 2 inches
- ✓ The height of the head (top of hair to bottom of chin) should measure 1 inch to 1 3/8 inches (25 mm - 35 mm)
- ✓ Make sure the eye height is between 1 1/8 inches to 1 3/8 inches (28 mm – 35 mm) from the bottom of the photo
- ✓ Using pencil or felt pen, lightly print your name and I-94 number (11 digits) on the back of the photos.

Final check before sending your application



- Check again to make sure you have included all of the documents listed on page 14.
- **WARNING!** Your application will be denied if it is received by USCIS 30 days after the *Form I-20* requesting OPT was issued! Contact the OISS if you need a new *Form I-20*. Also, do not send your application more than 90 days before your program end date!
- Make a copy of everything for your records.
- Read *Section C* carefully to make sure your EAD is delivered to you safely and on time!

Where to send your application

If the address on your Form I-765 is in one of the following states, use the address on the right:

Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Guam, or the Commonwealth of Northern Marina Islands.

YOU MUST USE A TRACKABLE COURIER/EXPRESS NEXT-DAY DELIVERY SERVICE!

**USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100
Phoenix AZ 85034**

If the address on your Form I-765 is in one of the following states, use the address on the right:

Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, US Virgin Islands, Or West Virginia

YOU MUST USE A TRACKABLE COURIER/EXPRESS NEXT-DAY DELIVERY SERVICE!

**USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S State Hwy 121 Business
Suite 400
Lewisville TX 75067**



- ✓ “Notice of receipt”
from USCIS 20
- ✓ How to report change of address
to USCIS 21
- ✓ “Request for Evidence (RFE)”
from USCIS 22

"Notice of receipt" from USCIS



- ✓ About 2 weeks after filing, you should receive a paper and electronic notice of receipt from USCIS, containing your receipt number and instructions on how to check the status of your application.
- ✓ If you do not receive a notice of receipt within 2 weeks of filing, check the mail delivery tracking information to make sure your application was delivered to USCIS.
- ✓ If your check has not been processed for payment, wait one more week. If you still do not receive a notice from USCIS, email your evidence of filing to the OISS, so we can help you investigate the reason for the delay.
- ✓ Track your case status as often as possible at <https://egov.uscis.gov> using the information provided in the notice of receipt.

How to Report Change of Address



If you change your address while your application is pending, and there is no one to receive the EAD on your behalf at the address you listed on your *Form I-765*, immediately report your new address by following these steps:

- ✓ Check the status of your application at <https://www.uscis.gov/>.
- ✓ Report your new address at <https://www.uscis.gov/> by clicking on “check your case status” and “change of address.”
- ✓ Call the *National Customer Service Center (NCSC)* at (800) 375-5283 to be sure the new address has been entered into the USCIS system.
- ✓ Don't forget to also report your new address to the OISS.

“Request for Evidence (RFE)” from USCIS



- ✓ If there is a problem with your application, you will receive a “*Request for Evidence (RFE)*” from USCIS. Immediately send a copy of the RFE to oiss@Pepperdine.edu.
- ✓ You must submit the requested evidence by the deadline listed on the notice, along with the original RFE from USCIS, in the envelope provided by USCIS.
- ✓ If you fail to meet the deadline, your application will be denied.

Section D: After Application has been Approved



- ✓ Report immediately to the OISS! 24
- ✓ Do NOT accrue 90 days of unemployment! 25
- ✓ What types of employment are allowed? 26
- ✓ Send employer information to the OISS 27
- ✓ Travel with caution during OPT 28
- ✓ Send an “exit statement” to the OISS 29

Do NOT accrue 90 days of unemployment!

8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(E)

Periods of unemployment during post-completion OPT. During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial post-completion OPT authorization. Students granted a 17-month OPT extension may not accrue an aggregate of more than 120 days of unemployment during the total OPT period comprising any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial post-completion OPT authorization and the subsequent 17-month extension period.

Note: The regulation cited above was written prior to the date the 24-month STEM OPT extension became effective.



WARNING!

A student who has exceeded 90 days of unemployment has violated his or her status and is considered to be "*out of status.*" Keep track of your days of unemployment! See page 26 for different types of work allowed while on OPT.

If you are unable to start work within 90 days, or if you decide not to engage in OPT, you must send an "*exit statement*" to the OISS before exceeding 90 days of unemployment. See page 29 for instructions.

What types of employment are allowed?

SEVP Policy Guidance 1004-33

- ✓ **Multiple employers.** A student may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the student's degree program and, for pre-completion OPT, can not exceed the allowed per week cumulative hours.
- ✓ **Short-term multiple employers (performing artists).** A student, such as a musician or other type of performing artists, may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration.
- ✓ **Work for hire.** This is also commonly referred to as 1099 employment, where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. If requested by DHS, the student must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract period and the name and address of the contracting company.
- ✓ **Self-employed business owner.** A student on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. The student must be able to prove that he or she has to proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to the student's degree program.
- ✓ **Employment through an agency or consulting firm.** A student on post-completion OPT must be able to provide evidence showing he or she worked on average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.
- ✓ **Paid employment.** A student may work part time (at least 20 hours per week when on post-completion OPT) or full time.
- ✓ **Unpaid employment.** A student may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, where this practice does not violate any labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week for a student on post-completion OPT. 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.

Source: http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/opt_policy_guidance_042010.pdf



IMPORTANT! Employment must be directly related to your degree program; the hours of work must total at least 20 per week; and you cannot accrue more than 90 days of unemployment.

Send employer information to the OISS

8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(12)

General. An F-1 student who is authorized by USCIS to engage in optional practical training (OPT) employment is required to report any change of name or address, or interruption of such employment to the DSO for the duration of the optional practical training. A DSO who recommends a student for OPT is responsible for updating the student's record to reflect these reported changes for the duration of the time that training is authorized.



- ✓ Within 5 days of starting a job, you must send an OPT employer letter to oiss@pepperdine.edu with “OPT employer letter” in the subject line.
- ✓ The letter must be written in the format provided on the OISS website and printed on business letterhead.
- ✓ Each time you send a new OPT employer letter, include in your email the last date you worked for the previous employer. In addition, students in the 24-month STEM OPT period must ask the employer to directly notify the OISS of the last day of employment within 5 business days!
- ✓ If you decide not to continue OPT, you must send an “*exit statement*” to the OISS (see page 29).

Travel with caution during OPT

8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(13)

Temporary absence from the United States of F-1 student granted employment authorization.

An F-1 student who has an unexpired EAD issued for post-completion practical training and who is otherwise admissible may return to the United States to resume employment after a period of temporary absence. The EAD must be used in combination with an I-20 ID endorsed for reentry by the DSO within the last six months.



You must:	You must NOT :
...submit a completed "Travel Permission for OPT" form to oiss@pepperdine.edu before each trip and obtain an updated <i>Form I-20</i>depart the U.S. before applying for OPT! You cannot apply for OPT after you have departed.
...make sure the DSO's travel endorsement signature on the back of your <i>Form I-20</i> is dated within <u>6 months</u> before the date of your reentry to the U.S.	...enter the U.S. as a visitor (B-1, B-2, WB or WT) or any other visa classification. You will lose your OPT!
...apply for a new F-1 visa before returning to the U.S. if your F-1 visa has expired.	...throw away your <i>Form I-20's</i> or any other immigration documents after they have expired. You may need them in the future.

Send an “exit statement” to the OISS

8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(10)(ii)

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 employment is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level.



At any time during your OPT period, send an “**exit statement**” to oiss@pepperdine.edu if you decide to end your OPT, or if you are approaching 90 days of unemployment.

WARNING! Unfortunately and inexplicably, many students fail to report their employer information or departure from the U.S. This may lead to problems with, or denial of, future admission to the U.S. and/or applications for a nonimmigrant or immigrant visa.

Section E: H-1B cap-gap and STEM OPT extensions



- ✓ H-1B cap-gap OPT extension 31
- ✓ STEM degrees 32
- ✓ Requirements for the STEM OPT extension 33
- ✓ How to apply for the STEM OPT extension 34
- ✓ STEM OPT reporting requirements 35

H-1B cap-gap OPT extension



- ✓ Students who complete a non-STEM major are not eligible for an extension of their OPT. Students who wish to continue working usually apply for the H-1B visa, a temporary visa for foreign workers in a specialty occupation. For complete information visit <https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-nonimmigrant-workers>
- ✓ Each Fiscal Year (FY) the H-1B visa has a “cap,” or limit, in supply. Each FY begins with the first day of filing on April 1, with the requested employment start date to begin not earlier than October 1. When the demand for H-1B visas exceeds the cap, a lottery system is used to select the petitions to be processed. Petitions that are not selected are returned, and the employer must wait until April 1 of the following year to file a new petition.
- ✓ 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 receive a receipt notice for your H-1B petition from USCIS, your OPT will be extended to September 30, allowing you to continue working until your status changes to H-1B on October 1 (provided your H-1B petition is approved). This is known as the “cap-gap” OPT extension. If your application is denied, your OPT will expire 10 days after the date of the denial.
- ✓ To request a new *Form I-20* with the cap-gap OPT extension, send a copy of the notice of receipt of your H-1B petition, issued by USCIS, to oiss@pepperdine.edu .

STEM degrees



The following Pepperdine University degrees have been designated as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) degrees, based on a comparison with the major descriptions found in the *Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP)* of the US Department of Education:

- ✓ BA/BS in Biology
- ✓ BS in Chemistry
- ✓ BS in Computer Science/Mathematics
- ✓ BS in Mathematics
- ✓ BA in Natural Science
- ✓ BS in Nutritional Science
- ✓ BS in Physics
- ✓ MS in Applied Finance
- ✓ MS in Applied Analytics

Requirements for the STEM OPT extension

Students on OPT based on a STEM degree may apply for an additional 24 months of OPT. The new STEM OPT rule, published at [*81 Federal Register 13039 on March 11, 2016*](#), introduced the following requirements, effective May 10, 2016:

- You must file your extension application before your OPT expires!
- Your job must be a paid job, for at least **20 hours** per week.
- Your employer must be registered in E-Verify.
- Your employer must have an Employer ID Number (EIN), also known as the Federal Tax Identification Number.
- You may not be self-employed.
- If your OPT period expires while your STEM extension application is pending, you are authorized to continue employment for up to **180 days** after the expiration of your OPT.
- An additional 60 days of unemployment will be added, allowing up to **150 days** of unemployment .
- You may apply for two STEM OPT extensions during your lifetime. The second STEM degree must be at a higher degree level.
- You may use a prior STEM degree to apply for a STEM OPT extension, even if your current 12-month OPT is based on a non-STEM degree, if the prior degree was earned from a U.S. institution of higher education not more than 10 years before the DSO recommends the extension.

For more information:

<https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/stem-opt>
<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub>

Fall 2017

How to apply for the STEM OPT extension

1. Submit a *Form I-983, "Training Plan for STEM OPT Students."* You must follow the [sample Form I-983](#) provided on the OISS website. A tutorial for the *Form I-983* is available at <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview>.
 - NOTE: A temp or staffing agency cannot complete and sign the *Form I-983*. The "official with signatory authority" must be an employee of the E-verified employer that provides the actual training to the student.
2. Submit a [STEM OPT employer letter](#) (must be written in the format provided on the OISS website and printed on business letterhead) to oiss@pepperdine.edu.
3. Request a new *Form I-20* (for you to pick up or to be mailed to you). In addition to the instructions on page 15, complete the *Form I-765* as follows:
 - Check the third box: "Renewal of my permission to accept employment."
 - #16 Enter eligibility category (c)(3)(C) Note: the second "C" is capitalized.
 - #17 For "degree," enter the CIP code and major name as they appear on your *Form I-20*. You can also enter information outside the box if space is limited.
4. In addition to the documents listed on page 14, you must send a copy of your STEM degree (diploma or official transcript). [Do NOT send the Form I-983 to USCIS!](#)
5. **Important "filing" deadlines:** USCIS must receive your application:
 - Before the expiration date of your 12-month OPT
 - Not more than 90 days before the expiration date of your 12-month OPT
 - Not more than 60 days after the date your new *Form I-20* was issued

Reporting requirements during 24-month STEM OPT

Student must send to oiss@pepperdine.edu a copy of the new EAD, any updates in personal and employer information within 5 days of change, and a new *Form I-983* and *STEM employer letter* for each new job.

Student must also send to oiss@Pepperdine.edu the following reports:

- “**Validation Reports**”--Every six months, containing the following: legal name, residential or mailing address, employer name and address, and status of current employment/practical training experience
- “**Self-Evaluations**”--Within 12 months of the STEM OPT start date (Evaluation of Student Progress), and at the end of the STEM OPT period (Final Assessment), a self-evaluation must be signed by the student and his or her immediate supervisor for each job. In these evaluations the student must specify the date range or timeline considered during the evaluation and:
 1. Assess their overall performance using the measures identified in the agreed upon training plan
 2. Evaluate their success in applying and acquiring the new knowledge, skills and competencies that were previously identified in the plan
 3. Discuss accomplishments, successful projects, overall contributions, etc., that occurred during the specified review period
 4. Address whether there are any modifications to the objectives and goals for projects or new areas for skill and competency development

Remind your employer to send the following information to the DSO:

- Any material changes to the *Form I-983*, including but 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 *Form I-983* 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, any decrease in hours below the 20-hours-per-week minimum required under this rule, and any evidence that the student is not receiving appropriate training as delineated in the *Form I-983*.
- **The termination or departure of the student, within five business days.**

Questions? Contact OISS



OISS@pepperdine.edu



310.506.4246



24255 Pacific Coast Hwy, Malibu CA 90263