



Office of International Education
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www.iup.edu/international

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR OPT 24-month EXTENSION? IUP degrees on the DHS STEM Designated Degree Program list include: (For current list of CIP codes, check www.iup.edu/registrar/faculty/promajcodes/program-major-concentration-minor-and-certificate-codes.html).

Undergraduate:

Anthropology, BA
Biochemistry, BS
Biology (all programs)
Chemistry (all programs)
Computer Science, BA, BS
Environmental Engineering, BS
Geography & Geographic Information Science, BA
Geology (all programs)
Mathematics, BS (all tracks)
Medical Imaging (all tracks)
Medical Technology, BS
Natural Science (all tracks)
Physics, BS (all tracks)
Safety Health, & Environmental Applied Sciences, BS

Graduate:

Applied Archaeology, MA
Applied Mathematics, MS
Biology, MS
Education, Training, and Instructional Technology, MA
Geographic Sciences and Planning (MS)
Safety Science, PhD (certain conditions apply)
Supply Chain Management, MBA

The OIE will assist those who are eligible for the 24-month STEM extension. To qualify the student:

- Must have successfully completed a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in a field that is on the DHS STEM Designated Degree Program List, from a SEVIS-certified college or university. STEM CIP CODE LIST: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension>
- Must be currently participating in a 12-month period of OPT, working for a U.S. employer in a job directly related to the student's major area of study.
- The student's application must be received by USCIS before the 12-month post-completion OPT is completed – plan ahead and contact the OIE for application information. More information can be found at studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub
- Must have a job offer from an employer for 20+ hours/week and that is registered with the E-Verify (see www.uscis.gov – search E-verify – for more information) employment verification system. Employment for STEM OPT cannot be volunteer.
- Must submit completed Form I-983: Training Plan for STEM OPT to the OIE for review. This form is to be completed by student and their employer before it is submitted to the International Student Advisor (no later than two weeks before current OPT period is ending).
- Must have updated I-20 recommending STEM OPT Extension prior to filing with USCIS.

DRIVER'S LICENSES

If your Driver's License is expiring soon, note that your new OPT I-20 extends your status for two years. This is a good time to renew your license. Note that in Pennsylvania and some other states, you must have at least 6 months or more remaining on your I-20 to be issued a driver's license.

LINKS FOR EMPLOYERS

Please share this link with employers to explain what the STEM OPT extension is.

studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub

This page also lists important reporting information for the student during STEM OPT:

<https://www.uscis.gov/>

(search STEM OPT)

HOW TO APPLY:

Bring documents listed below to appointment with your OIE Advisor. If you are not in Indiana, PA, scan to cloud drive & email link to intl-education@iup.edu.

Do not file with USCIS until you have I-20 recommending STEM OPT extension. USCIS will deny the application and keep filing fees if submitted without STEM I-20.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:

- Complete IUP Office of International Education OPT Request Form (below)
- Letter from Company—with E-verify # listed or confirmed in email to OIE
- Copy of current EAD card—front and back
- Proof of completion of STEM designated degree (diploma and transcripts)
- Completed Form I-983: Training Plan for STEM OPT (<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub>)
- Photocopy of current passport, visa, and I-94 (<http://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>)
- **Draft I-765** if filing online (guide available from OIE) do not pay fee yet or
- Typed G-1 I 45 and I-765 fillable pdf if filing by mail. Available from—www.uscis.gov—click on “FORMS” - print and sign with black pen (cannot type signature)
 - 1.a.—check “Initial permission to accept employment”
 - 12. filed I-765 prior - check “YES”
 - For #27 use (c)(3)(C) for STEM OPT Extension
 - 28.a—list BS, BA, MS, MA, PhD,...type of degree and CIP code
 - 28.b—list employer name as it appears in E-Verify (confirm with employer)
 - 28.c—list E-Verify # (ask employer if you don't know)
 - 29-31—leave blank
- If STEM degree was completed at a previous education level at a university other than IUP—evidence that university is SEVP authorized

IUP does not need to review, but you will also need to prepare USCIS filing fee and two color passport photographs (U.S. style passport photo— 2 inches x 2 inches) – (OIE, post office, or pharmacies are recommended in Indiana). Request digital photo if filing online. If filing by mail write last name in CAPS and SEVIS number on back of both photos in pencil and place in envelope.

PROCESSING TIMES: US Citizenship & Immigration Service Centers process all OPT applications. It currently takes 1-4 months from the time they receive your document to process OPT. Students applying for the 24-Month OPT STEM Extension can apply 90 days prior to completing their OPT. Application must be marked *received* by USCIS by final day of OPT as listed on the EAD card.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE: Current regulations allow students to keep working continuously for up to 180 days provided I-765 extension was timely filed—and not have to wait for a new OPT card. Once the new card comes, email scan/picture to OIE and update your employer's records.

HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR F-1 STATUS ON STEM OPT

You are still in F-1 status while waiting for your approval and throughout STEM OPT period. You are in legal F1 status and permitted to continue work up to 180 while waiting for your case to be adjudicated, provided you filed in your window.

RESPONSIBILITIES TO MAINTAIN F-1 STATUS DURING OPT:

• **REPORT APPROVAL & SUBMIT EAD CARD COPY TO OIE**

Scan a copy of your EAD card or approval notice & email it to intl-education@iup.edu. SEVIS is not always accurate, if your approval is not noted in SEVIS by USCIS, your I-20 could be accidentally automatically canceled.

• **REPORT ALL CHANGES OF U.S. ADDRESS, VISA STATUS & EMPLOYMENT TO OIE**

Email intl-education@iup.edu with changes and/or submit our online form at www.iup.edu/intl/students/reportopt. Substantial changes require a new or updated I-983 submitted to the OIE. Substantial changes include but are not limited to: employer name change, employer address change, employer EIN change, decrease in compensation, reduction in hours worked to less than 20 per week, end of employment, new employer.

• **COMPLETE STEM OPT REPORTING WITH OIE EVERY 6 MONTHS**

OIE is required to verify your STEM OPT participation every six months. At the 12- and 24-month intervals, you will also need to work with your supervisor to complete I-983 self-evaluation. You must submit this to the OIE. If your personal email changes, notify the OIE so you are able to receive and respond to verification requests.

• **CAN I KEEP WORKING—DO I HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE NEW OPT CARD TO WORK?**

Students who timely file an application for the 24-month OPT extension will be able to continue employment while the extension application is pending, until a final decision on the I-765 or for 180 days, whichever comes first. You will receive a new EAD card with your STEM OPT dates. Submit a copy to the OIE. For STEM OPT, the employer must agree to report the termination or departure of the student to the DSO or through "any other means or process identified by DHS." An employer must consider a worker to have departed when the employer knows the student has left employment, or if the student has not reported for work for a period of five consecutive business days without the employer's consent. Students cannot remain unemployed for more than a total of 150 days for the entire 36-month period and must update the DSO (OIE) with any changes in address and employment within 10 days & update I-20 signature every six months.

• **TRAVEL WITH PROPER DOCUMENTS**

You must be in the US when you file with USCIS. We do not recommend traveling while your application is pending. For international travel during STEM OPT period, we recommend hand carrying: passport valid at least 6 months into the future, valid visa*, valid I-20 with current employer information on page 2 and travel signature within the last six months, valid EAD, employment letter, and COVID protocol. *Renewing a visa while on OPT is possible, but not guaranteed. If you have a pending H1B application, check with your employer about any travel plans. For updated info see: www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq_f.htm

• **TAKING CLASSES -ENROLLING IN A NEW DEGREE PROGRAM**

If you choose to begin a new degree program at another university while you have OPT time left, you will forfeit the rest of OPT. Once a new I-20 is issued for a new program of study—OPT ends.

• **TAXES**

~~Students who have been in the US for less than 5 calendar years are exempt from Social security and Medicare taxes. Let your employer know this. Be sure to file taxes the year after you work, even if you depart the US.~~
H1B CAP-GAP: For basic information on filing for an H1B visa—see: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2015/05/the-h-1b-visa-and-the-cap-gap-extension> Your employer must file an H1B application for you. H1Bs can be renewed for up to 6 years.

Cap-Gap Work Permission: See DHS guidance at <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2015/05/the-h-1b-visa-and-the-cap-gap-extension>. Students who have timely filed an H-1B petition requesting an October 1 start date can remain in the US with work authorization and duration of F1 status. No extra application is necessary. Contact OIE with evidence of your H-1B filing to request Cap-Gap I-20. This does NOT apply to those who filed for H-1B with a start date other than October 1. The extension of duration of status and work authorization would automatically terminate upon the rejection, denial, or revocation of the H-1B petition filed on the student's behalf. Students have a grace period of 60-days after the notification of H-1B rejection to change status, change educational levels or leave the U.S. Those who are approved for the H-1B can continue working at their place of employment until the H-1B starts in October of the year of filing.

IUP OPT STEM Request Form

NAME _____ DATE _____

NON- IUP E-MAIL _____ BANNER ID @ _____

CURRENT ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE # _____ SIGNATURE _____

OPT REQUEST:

- Employer—E-Verify # _____
- Employer Name: _____
- Degree from IUP : _____
- STEM Degree from previous university (if applicable): _____
- Previous university where STEM degree completed (if applicable): _____
- Contact phone number for previous university: _____
- Current OPT Dates: _____
- EAD#: _____

Supplemental Documents - Copies:

- Current EAD card (front and back)
- Proof of completion of STEM designated degree- diploma & transcripts (www.iup.edu/transcripts)
- Job offer letter on company letterhead—with E-verify # and position listed
- Completed Form I-983: Training Plan for STEM OPT (<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub>)
- Photocopy of current passport, visa, and I-94 (<http://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>)
- **Draft I-765**
- Receipt for IUP [OPT SEVIS maintenance fee](#)
- Evidence of university accreditation - only required if applying based on a previous STEM eligible degree. If previous degree was completed at IUP, find evidence at www.iup.edu/academicaffairs/accreditation

Contact the OIE with questions or to request guides intl-education@iup.edu